

## Webinar on Intercultural Cities in the Asia-Pacific

Local experiences, regional cooperation

25 March 2021 (Thursday)

Follow-Up Summary

[\(CLICK HERE for the Concept Note and the Speakers' Bio\)](#)

### SUMMARY

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#### Opening Remarks

##### 1. Ms Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI, Former Deputy Secretary-General of CoE (video)

Ms Battaini-Dragoni expressed how pleased she was to follow the ICC taking roots and growing during her mandate as the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Indeed, it was within this frame that she made her first professional trip to Japan. She expressed the wish that integration policy models will be enhanced in a wider world and the relationship deepened between Japan and the Council of Europe.

##### 2. Ms Ivana D'ALESSANDRO, Head of Intercultural Cities Unit, CoE

Ms D'Alessandro told the audience that due to the globalisation, "interculturality is not anymore an eventuality, it is there". Hence, the necessity of developing evaluation tools and policies to benefit from it, as ICC does, is undeniable. It is one way of fostering equality which is within CoE's fundamental principles.

##### 3. Mr AKAMATSU Takeshi, the Permanent Observer of Japan to the CoE

Ambassador Akamatsu thanked all the organisers and participants, and reminded everyone of Japan's 25-year participation as an Observer State to the CoE. He pointed out the growing commitment of Japan in fostering diversity as an asset, as the cities of Kobe and Hamamatsu do.

## **Session 1: Education of Children with Diverse Backgrounds**

### **4. Presentation by Mr SUZUKI Mitsuo, Hamamatsu City, Japan**

Hamamatsu joined ICC in 2017. It is a major industrial city in Japan, with an increasing variety of nationalities and a growing number of long-term foreign residents, among them Brazilian citizens. Hamamatsu City Council engages the Zero School Refusal Project a zero school-non-attendance policy by monitoring school attendance and supports families with various stakeholders.

### **5. Presentation by Ms Alisha ABATE and Mr Christopher LYNCH, Maribyrnong City, Australia**

Maribyrnong lies in the suburbs of Melbourne. They developed a so-called “human relations program”, a sexual and reproductive health education program that also focuses on respectful relationships and gender equality. Attendants are newly-arrived young people between the ages of 12 to 25. The program is driven by a range of institutional partners under the monitoring of the City Council.

### **6. Comments by YANG Kee-Ho, Sungkonghoe University (Seoul, South Korea)**

Prof. Yang gave the audience a quick statistic overview of the situation of foreign children and youths in South Korea. He pointed out some of the good practices of the city of Ansan as well as Guro regarding education of migrant children. Then he raised some questions about the Zero School Refusal Project zero school-non-attendance program of Hamamatsu.

### **7. Comments by Frances SALENGA, City of Ballarat, Australia**

Ms Salenga mentioned that the program of Hamamatsu to help every foreign child to receive education is a great attempt. She noted that they engage the parents in the process in Ballarat City. She also mentioned Maribyrnong’s human relations program to overcome language, culture and religion is very ambitious. She suggested that both programs should be replicated in the whole Asia-Pacific.

### **8. Closing Comments by Yamawaki Keizo, Meiji University**

Prof. Yamawaki stated that the ICC offers important capacity building and mutual learning opportunities for cities in the Asia-Pacific. Then he emphasized that online communication has the potential to bring cities in different continents closer. Finally, he stated that Japan is very cautious about moving beyond a guest worker policy and constructing migrant integration policy, but that it was high time for Japan to come up with a new policy based on a new vision, which he believes the ICC will offer.

## **Session 2: Coping Together with Crisis: Engaging Newcomers through Multilingualism**

### **8. Presentation “Spreading information in a multitude of ways” by TANZAWA Yasushi, Director, International Department, Kobe City Government (Japan)**

In order to facilitate communication with residents with diverse origin (Korea, China, Vietnam, etc.), Kobe has set up an information policy in foreign languages for administrative procedures, daily life information and emergency responses, using various media such as: welcome packages for new residents, e-mails, social media. Due to a rapid socio-cultural diversification, limited interpretation capacities and the need for a common language became an important issue. As a solution, Kobe promotes the use of “Simple Japanese” to deliver information to foreign residents.

### **9. Presentation “Engaging with New and Emerging Communities through Interculturalism” by Essan DILERI, Team Leader, Diversity and Intercultural Development, Melton City Council (Australia)**

Melton has a fast growing and increasingly diverse population. It has engaged with its new communities through interculturalism, and therefore set up a policy (intercultural, interfaith, language) and local mechanisms (intercultural advisory committee, working groups, interfaith network and annual calendar, specific programs). But several challenges remain: colonial legacy vs. aboriginal people, low economic pockets, segregation, and rapid population growth.

### **10. Presentation “Engaging Newcomers through Multilingualism : Guro” by KIM Hyon Sook, Director of Life & Welfare Bureau, Guro District, Seoul City (South Korea)**

Guro is an intercultural, child-friendly and smart city in the southwest of Seoul. Its vision is to be an intercultural city for all people. Its goals included: equitability, prosperity, liveability and citizenship. It therefore implements 52 programs and has satisfying grades in the ICC index analysis. Guro has also set up projects for promoting multilingualism among children, teenagers, students, immigrants and families, for a better inclusion in education and society.

### **11. Comments by Dani DE TORRES, ICC Expert, Director of Diversit**

Mr De Torres invited the audience to check the intercultural city index analysis reports of the cities presented here. He also stressed the importance of facilitating access to public services, considering not only linguistic but also digital divide between diverse residents (becoming manifest under the current pandemic situation), to implement the three principles of ICC, i.e. equality, diversity and interaction.

## Closing Comments

### **12. HARA Hideki, Director of the Americas Section at the Department of Japanese Studies, Japan Foundation**

Mr Hara noted that interculturalism was taking roots in some parts of Japan when the Japan Foundation made contact with the Council of Europe twelve years ago. He encouraged stakeholders to strengthen their efforts and their international ties on this topic.

### **13. FUJINAMI Kaori, Manager, Multiculturalism Promotion Division, Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)**

Ms Fujinami stressed the importance of the ICC index to increase awareness on this topic and implementation of policies among local and regional authorities of Japan, to adapt and create their own policies to help build a diverse, equal, and interactive society for all residents. CLAIR hopes to contribute to sharing ICC value through their network.

## Closing remarks

### **14. Irena GUIDIKOVA, Head of Division, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programs, Council of Europe**

Ms Guidikova said this exchange was extremely rich, and thanked all the participants, including the Consulate General of Japan, especially for the ICC booklet, Japan Foundation and CLAIR. CoE now intends to extend intercultural ideas to national policy-making. The intercultural journey has just started in the Asia-Pacific. She finally encouraged participants to spread intercultural ideas in their respective countries.

## Q & A

### **Q1 In Maribyrnong City, will the integration not cause any identity issues?**

**A1** At Maribyrnong City, there are a number of community groups, programs, activities and public recognition that focus on the preservation and celebration of culture. Some of these are: Festival of Colours (Holi), Festival of Flowers (Telangana Bathukamma), Macedonian Food Festival, Albanian Festival, Quang Minh Tet Festival (Lunar New Year), Wominjeka (Indigenous Australian), and Emerge in the West (African Australian). Moreover, we are seeking to support youth's transition into Melbourne. We go to great lengths to hear about and respect the culture/religion from which the youths are coming from, while giving them information on what they will come across when they go to mainstream schools.

### **Q2 Do classes at Maribyrnong City also incorporate Anglo-Australians so to increase their understanding and sensitivity of different cultures?**

**A2** The aim of this program is to resource newly-arrived students from interrupted schooling backgrounds with sexual and reproductive health knowledge and skills so that they can make safe, respectful and informed decisions about relationships and better ensure that they and their partners have optimal sexual and reproductive health. Also, the City runs respectful relationship programs in the mainstream schools that address this since the education and understanding needs to go both ways.

### **Q3 Have you considered separate sessions or programmes that actually place migrant children with "local" children to enhance the intercultural understanding from childhood?**

**A3** The Western English Language School have activities that introduce students to the mainstream schools. Unfortunately, the City Council is just a guest at the school and it is a privilege that we have been able to negotiate 5-week program with them.

### **Q4 In the programmes by Maribyrnong City, how is the gender taken into account while developing these programmes? Women's toilet arrangement in public spaces is an example.**

**A4** On the toilet example, Maribyrnong City recommends that the infrastructure of toilets should contain all gendered signs and ensure they are single-stalled, facing into a public space (no waiting room). In this way, they can be accessed by all, including gender diverse people. Regarding gender considerations more widely there is a strategy (<https://bit.ly/3m2epeV>). There is a requirement that we must assess all our policies, programs and activities in relation to gender equity. There is no true gender equity without including gender diversity.

**Q5 Given the racism rate in Melbourne according to research and surveys, to which extent do you feel that the multicultural approach is actually contributing to a more accepting and peaceful society in Victoria?**

**A5** Within our intercultural framework, the City Council has commitments to reducing racism in community. More info at this web link (<https://bit.ly/3lYn5Tu>).

**Q6 Is there any program to introduce and integrate host societies and immigrants as well as immigrant communities? When we talk about immigrants and locals, too much focus on immigrants will distort the power relationship between immigrants and host societies.**

**A6** In order to encourage foreign residents to participate in local government affairs and establish a multicultural living environment in the city, the municipal government hosts two special meetings with foreign residents every year, where they can express their thoughts on local governance issues and make all kinds of suggestions. In addition, we also carry out community forums that act as a platform for both foreign and Japanese residents to discuss specific challenges related to local governance. Furthermore, while drafting our five-year action plan, called Kobe 2025 Vision, the city has also conducted a number of interviews with foreign residents.

While the city does not introduce immigrant communities, all immigrants moving to the city receive welcome packages, available in Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, Nepalese, Indonesian and Thai languages. These packages in turn feature information on our multilingual one-stop service center and interpreting services, disaster preparedness guides, and other information aimed to make it easier for them to start their life in Kobe.

Finally, in order to provide peace of mind to those foreign residents who just moved to the city, we also provide daily life advice on various local rules and norms in a number of languages at the Futaba International Center – a major multicultural hub in our city.

**Q7 If the entire Japanese society uses government subsidies, how could the country maintain resources while the number of children with roots in other countries?**

**A7** Through the Council for Cities of Non-Japanese Residents and other channels, we will continue to make recommendations to the national government to put in place basic laws and secure financial resources to ensure the implementation of concrete measures to create necessary systems such as the education of children. This will allow foreign residents to fairly participate in society as members of the local community.

**Q8 How can we make a community that is friendly for foreign language speakers during the era of economic recession?**

**A8** We have to effectively disseminate necessary information regarding daily life, health and safety such as public support and emergency information in multiple languages through social media, and improve the multilingual consultation system provided in cooperation with related organisations at the One-Stop Consultation Center.

**Q9 When the East Japan Earthquake happened, among vulnerable groups were irregularly residing migrants. How could a community support these people in an emergency?**

**Q9** In regard to illegal immigrants, the city may offer assistance to such persons at the time of a major disaster for humanitarian reasons, but as the issue of illegal immigration falls under the jurisdiction of the central government, the city cannot offer such assistance on a regular basis.

At the same time, whenever there is an emergency, the municipal government provides evacuation guidance in English, Chinese and Vietnamese via our official website, twitter and Facebook accounts. Furthermore, we also establish consultations desks for foreign residents at the Kobe International Community Center.

The city provides foreign communities with all kinds of information about emergencies and support systems available in the city. These communities in turn help us spread this information among foreign residents using internet radio and other social media, and provide the city with information on victims in their community.

For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, with support from the municipal government, these communities provided temporary housing and distributed foodstuffs among those foreign residents who found themselves in a difficult financial situation.

To summarize, the city government provides foreign communities with all kinds of information and they in turn act as hubs where foreign residents can access various municipal support systems.

**Q10 In the programmes by Maribyrnong City, how is the gender taken into account while developing these programmes? Women's toilet arrangement in public spaces is an example.**

**A10** On the toilet example, Maribyrnong City recommends that the infrastructure of toilets should contain all gendered signs and ensure they are single-stalled, facing into a public space (no waiting room). In this way, they can be accessed by all, including gender diverse people. Regarding gender considerations more widely there is a strategy (<https://bit.ly/3m2epeV>). There is a requirement that we must assess all our policies,

programs and activities in relation to gender equity. There is no true gender equity without including gender diversity.

## DOCUMENTS

### Booklet “An Introduction to the Intercultural City for Local Governments in Japan”

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|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <a href="#">Japanese</a> | <a href="#">English</a> |
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### PowerPoint Presentation

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| <a href="#">Booklet Introduction</a> | <a href="#">Hamamatsu City</a>            |
| <a href="#">Maribyrnong City</a>     | <a href="#">Kobe City</a>                 |
| <a href="#">Melton City</a>          | <a href="#">Guro District, Seoul City</a> |