



SJENICA

INTERCULTURAL CITIES INDEX ANALYSIS 2024



Diversity, Equality, Interaction, Participation

BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING WALLS



www.coe.int/interculturalcities



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Sjenica
INTERCULTURAL CITIES INDEX ANALYSIS

Published in XX 20XX

Intercultural Cities Secretariat
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France

www.coe.int/interculturalcities

INTRODUCTION.....	3
Intercultural city definition	3
Methodology	3
SJENICA: AN OVERVIEW	8
COMMITMENT	8
THE CITY THROUGH AN INTERCULTURAL LENS.....	11
Education	11
Neighbourhoods	13
Public Services	15
Business and the labour market	16
Cultural and social life	18
Public Space	20
MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	21
LANGUAGE	23
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION	24
INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK.....	26
INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE.....	27
WELCOMING NEWCOMERS	29
LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP	30
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION	32
PARTICIPATION.....	33
INTERACTION.....	34
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS	36
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	37

INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Cities is a Council of Europe flagship programme. It seeks to explore the potential of an intercultural approach to integration in communities with culturally diverse populations. The cities participating in the programme are reviewing their governance, policies, discourse and practices from an intercultural point of view.

In the past, this review has taken the form of narrative reports and city profiles – a form which was rich in content and detail. However, narrative reports alone were relatively weak as tools to monitor and communicate progress. Thus, an “Intercultural Cities Index” has been designed as a benchmarking tool for the cities taking part in the programme as well as for future participants.

At the time of writing (December 2024) more than 160 cities embraced the ICC programme and approach, and 136 (including Sjenica) have analysed their intercultural policies using the Intercultural Cities Index. The respective reports can be found [here](#).

Among these cities, 39 cities (including Sjenica) have less than 100 000 inhabitants and 41 (including Sjenica) have less than 10% of foreign-born residents.

This document presents the results of the Intercultural Cities Index analysis for Sjenica, SERBIA, in 2024, and provides related intercultural policy conclusions and recommendations.

INTERCULTURAL CITY DEFINITION

The intercultural city has people with different nationalities, origins, languages or religions/beliefs. Political leaders and most citizens regard diversity positively, as a resource. The city actively combats discrimination and adapts its governance, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population. The city has a strategy and tools to deal with diversity and cultural conflict and to enhance participation. It encourages greater mixing and interaction between diverse groups in the public spaces.

METHODOLOGY

The Intercultural Cities Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 86 questions (73 of which are mandatory) grouped in 12 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators have been weighed for relative importance. For each indicator, the participating cities can reach up to 100 points (which are consolidated for the general Intercultural Cities Index).

These indicators comprise the following (including the three new indicators in bold):

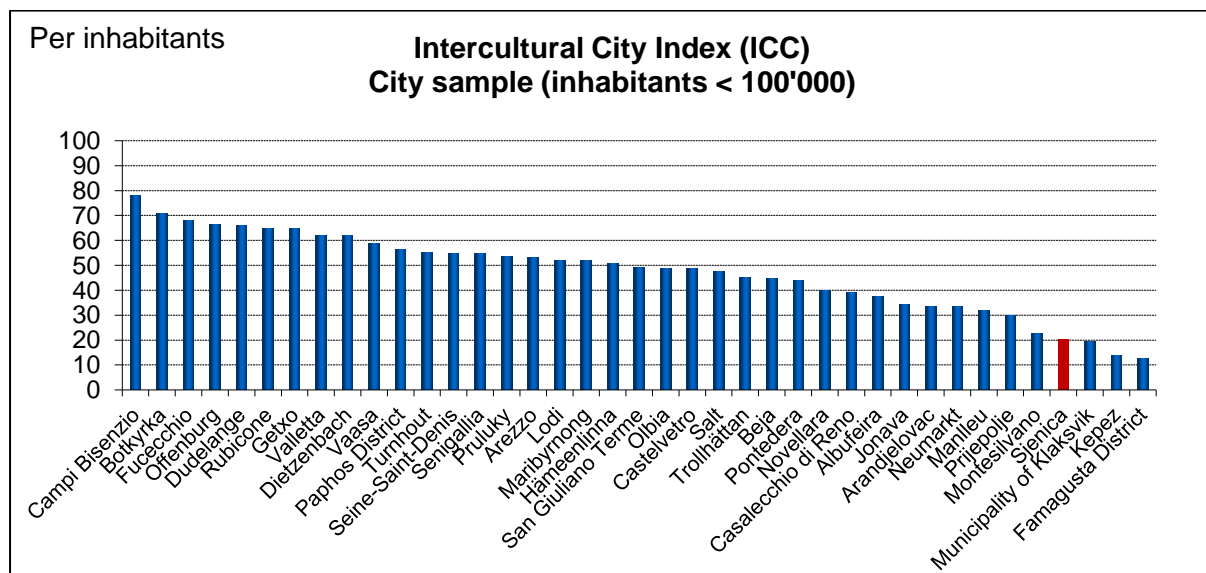
1. Commitment	
2. Intercultural lens	Education
3. Mediation and conflict resolution	Neighbourhoods
4. Language	Public services
5. Media and communication	Business and the labour market
6. International outlook	Cultural and social life
7. Intercultural intelligence and competence	Public space
8. Welcoming newcomers	
9. Leadership and citizenship	
10. Anti-discrimination	
11. Participation	
12. Interaction	

The comparison between cities is strictly indicative, given the large difference between cities in terms of historical development, type and scale of diversity, governance models and level of economic development. The comparison is based on a set of formal criteria related to the intercultural approach in urban policies and intended **only as a tool for benchmarking/benchlearning**, to motivate cities to learn from good practice.

Taking into account the above-mentioned differences between the cities and a growing number of new cities willing to join the Intercultural Cities Index, it has been decided to compare the cities not only within the entire sample, but also according to specific criteria. Two of these have been singled out insofar: the size (below 100 000 inhabitants; between 100 000 and 200 000; between 200 000 and 500 000; and above 500 000 inhabitants) and the percentage of foreign-born residents (lower than 10 per cent; between 10 and 15 per cent; between 15 and 20 per cent; and higher than 20 per cent). It is believed that this approach would allow for more valid and useful comparison, visual presentation and filtering of the results.

So far, 57 cities have used the Intercultural Cities Index containing the new indicators in their evaluations, including Sjenica. Thus, the city will be compared to the entire sample for all the indicators, and to the new sample for the new indicators relating to participation and interaction.

According to the overall Intercultural Cities Index results, *Sjenic* has an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index result of 20 (out of 100 possible points). The details of this result will be explained below.¹

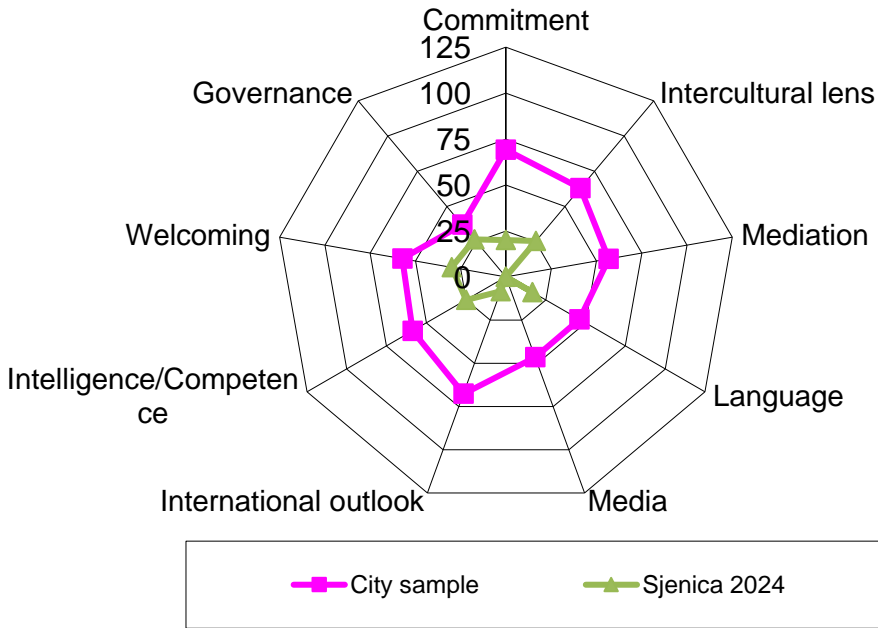
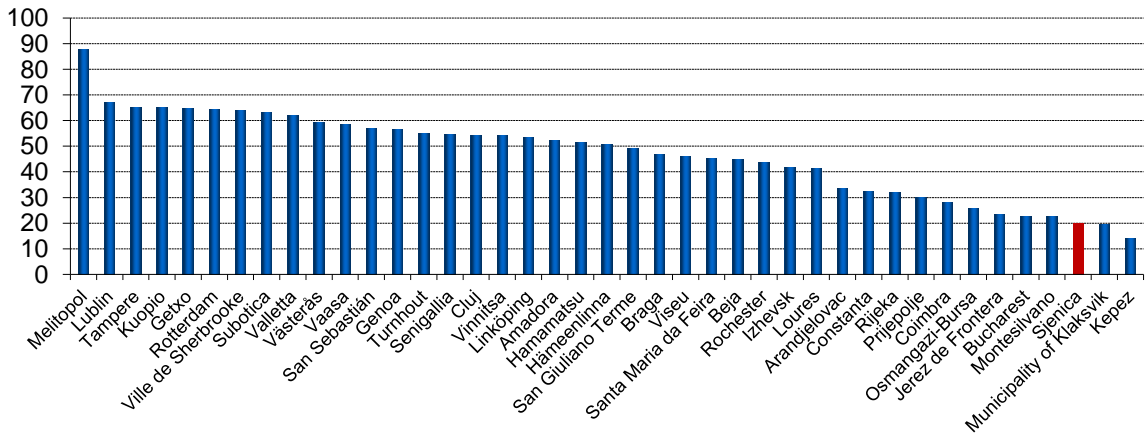


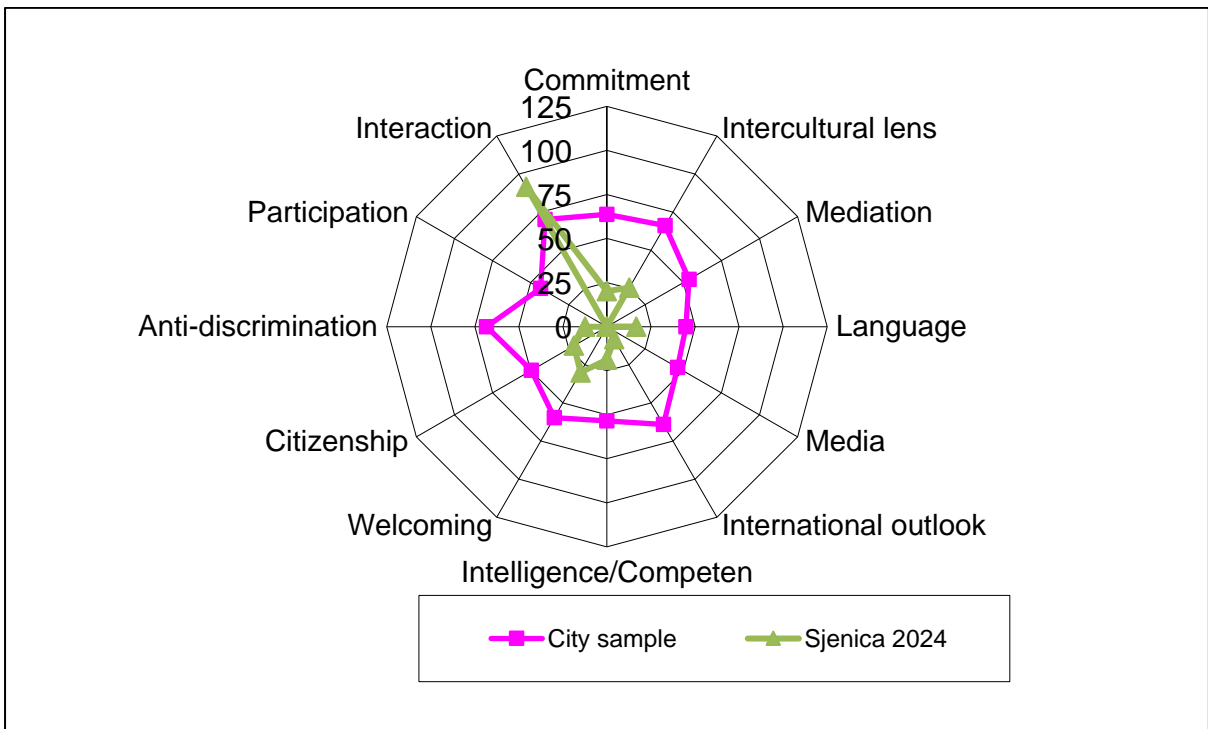
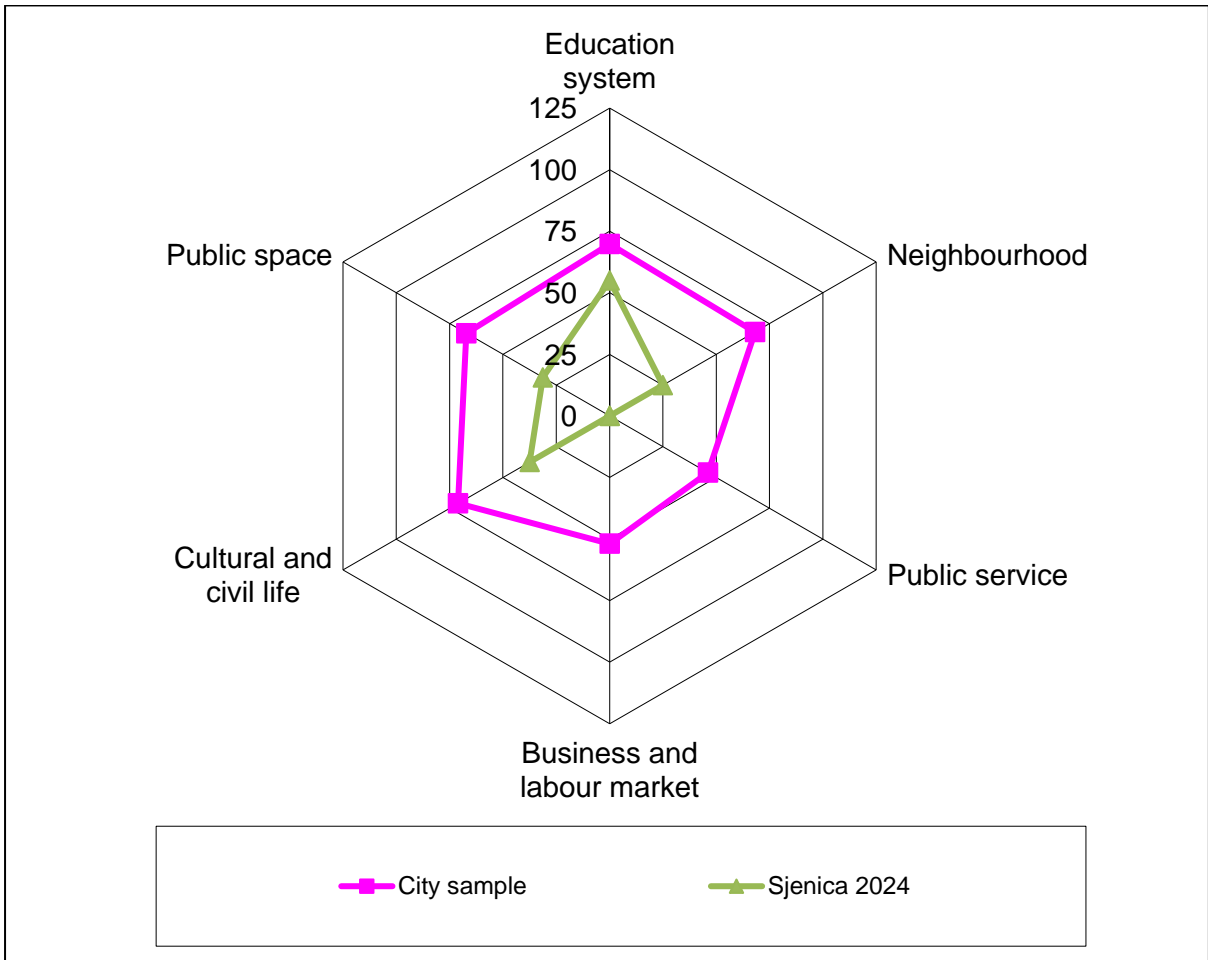
¹ The original Intercultural Cities Index contained 69 questions. The Intercultural Cities Index was updated in 2019, when additional questions were added, some questions were removed and completely new indicators were added (anti-discrimination, interaction and participation), resulting in the extended Intercultural Cities Index with 86 questions. As a main rule, the Intercultural Cities Index report applies the scoring from the original Intercultural Cities Index, to ensure the broadest possible comparison group in the global achievement rate.

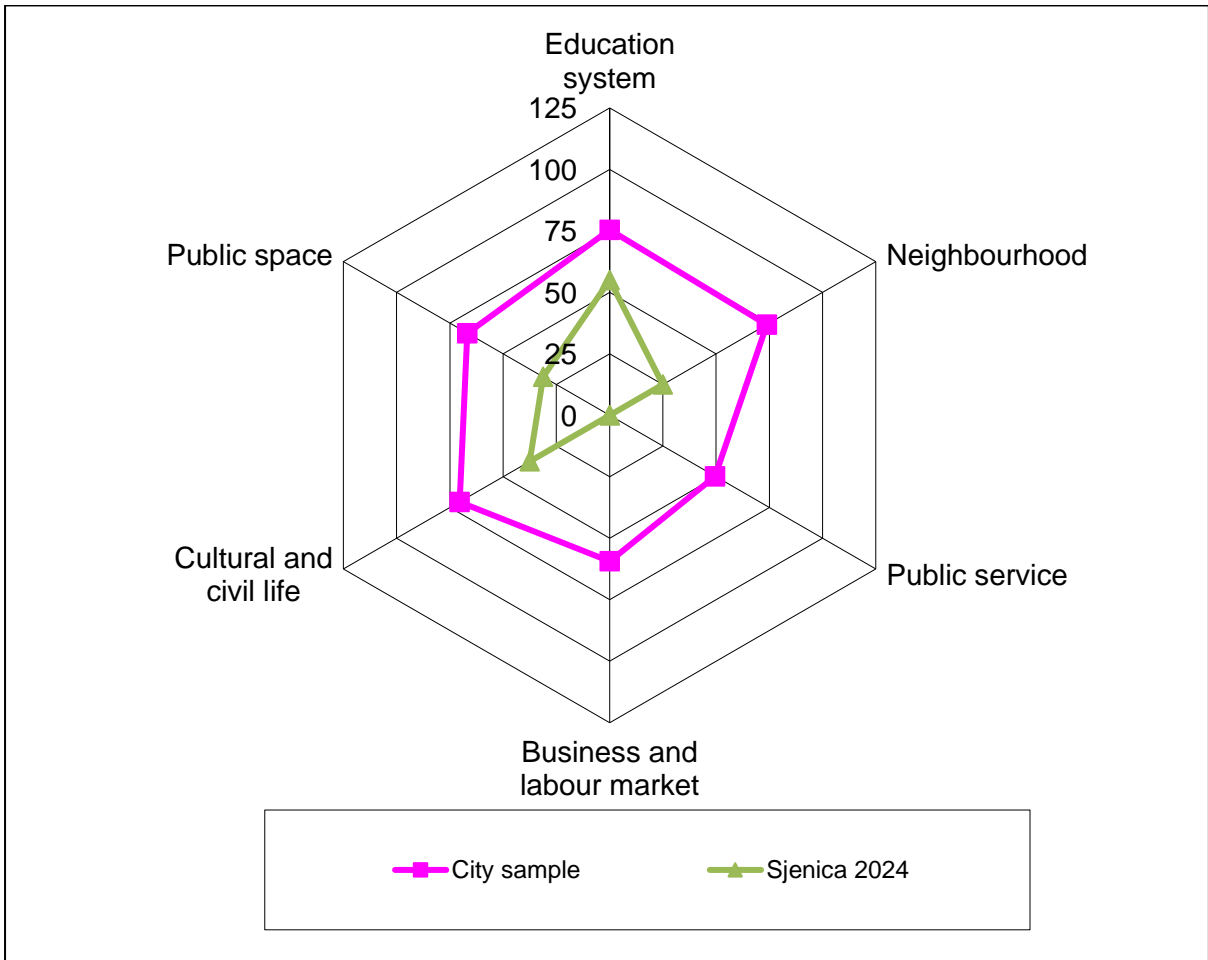
In addition, the scoring from the extended Intercultural Cities Index is provided in an explanatory footnote for all indicators where it is relevant. This scoring encompasses the assessment of the questions of the original Intercultural Cities Index as well as the new questions of the extended Intercultural Cities Index for each specific indicator. The scoring of the original Intercultural Cities Index and extended Intercultural Cities Index for the same indicator may hence differ based on the differing number of questions. Finally, the indicators which are completely new to the extended Intercultural Cities Index only include the scoring from the extended Intercultural Cities Index. This scoring for these indicators hence shows directly in the text and not in a footnote.

Per diversity

Intercultural City Index (ICC) City sample (non-nationals/foreign borns < 10%)







SJENICA: AN OVERVIEW

Sjenica is a municipality located in southwestern Serbia, within the **Zlatibor District**, renowned for its highland terrain and distinct climate. Situated on the **Pešter Plateau**, one of Europe's largest karst plateaus, Sjenica is recognized for its unique natural landscape, agricultural heritage, and livestock farming traditions. This geographical setting positions Sjenica as a pivotal centre for rural development and eco-tourism in Serbia.

As of the **2022 census**, Sjenica's municipality has a population of **24,083** inhabitants, with the town itself accounting for **12,989** residents. The population density stands at approximately **23.5 inhabitants per square kilometer**. The ethnic composition is predominantly **Bosniaks (73.4%)** and **Serbs (16.0%)**, alongside smaller communities of other ethnicities. This diverse demographic tapestry has cultivated a rich cultural identity, blending various traditions, languages, and heritage over the centuries.



Economically, Sjenica faces significant challenges, with an unemployment rate of around **50%** as of **2023**. Factors contributing to this include historical political instability and underdeveloped infrastructure, notably the absence of nearby international airports, motorways, and railways. The local economy is primarily anchored in **agriculture, livestock breeding, and food processing**, with the dairy and meat industries playing vital roles. Sjenica is particularly renowned for producing high-quality dairy products, especially its distinctive cheese. This underscores the need for economic diversification and infrastructure enhancement to stimulate growth and development.

The municipality encompasses a vast area of **1,059 square kilometers**, making it the **11th largest** in Serbia by territory. This expansive area includes numerous villages and settlements, each contributing to the municipality's cultural and economic fabric. The region's natural beauty, characterized by rolling hills, rivers, and rich biodiversity, offers substantial potential for eco-tourism and outdoor recreational activities.

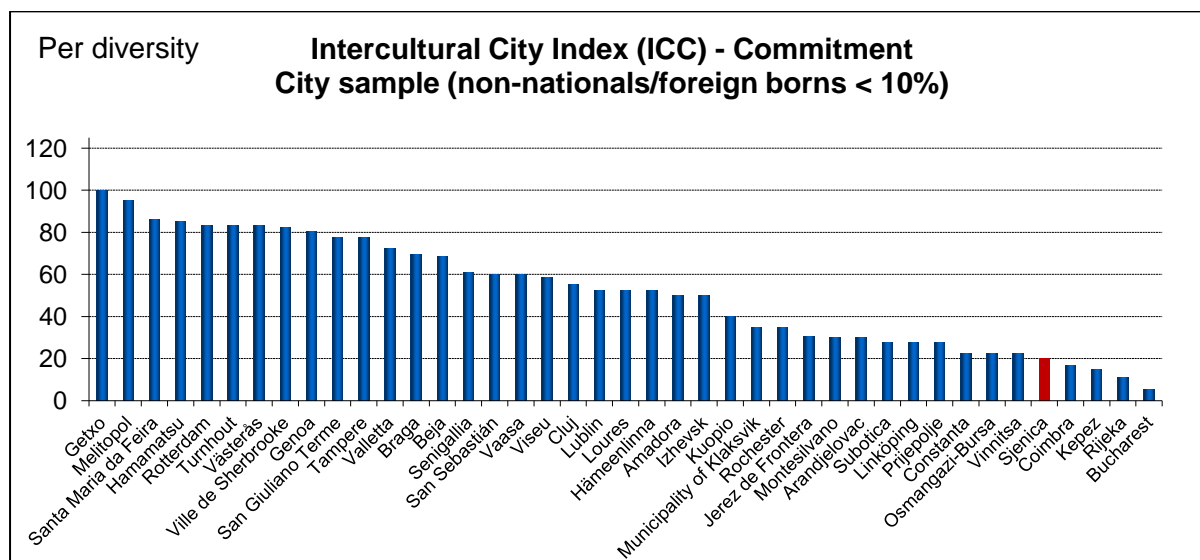
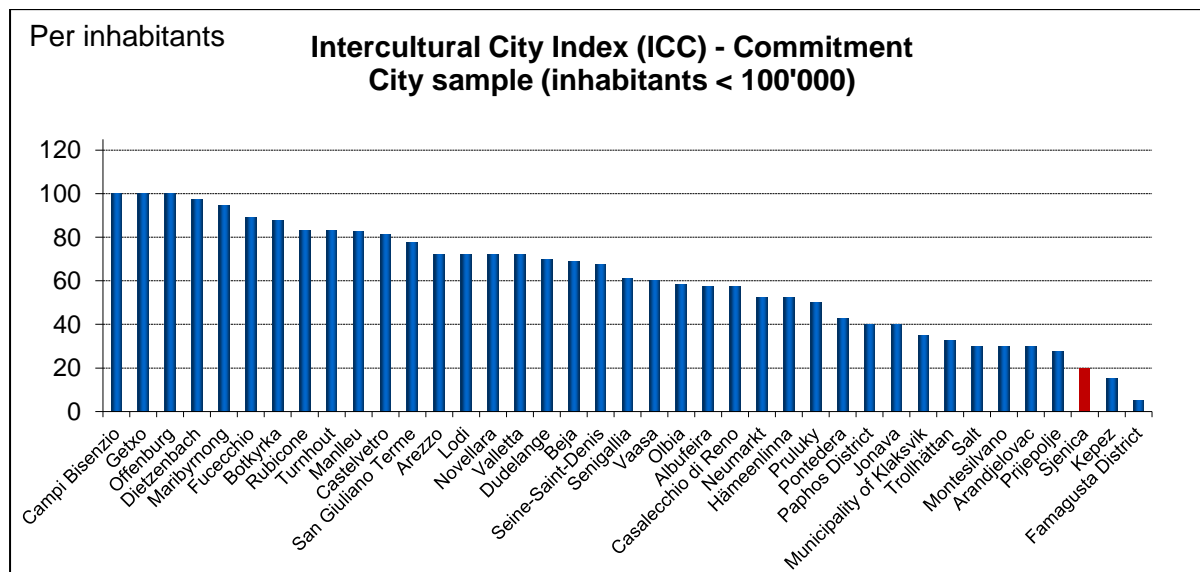
Sjenica's rich history of coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups has fostered a unique intercultural identity. Strengthening intercultural policies and governance frameworks could further enhance social cohesion, economic inclusion, and cultural exchange, ensuring that Sjenica continues to thrive as a diverse and inclusive community.

COMMITMENT

For intercultural inclusion to occur, city authorities need to send out a clear and well-publicised message

emphasising their commitment to intercultural principles, i.e. diversity, equality and interaction. Ideally, a majority of elected officials and senior policy officers will have a clear understanding of these core principles and their implications for policy-making. City authorities also need to initiate an institutional process to translate the principles of interculturality into concrete policies and actions. Most importantly, an intercultural city actively seeks to include residents of all nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups in the policy-making process. The authorities also highlight and nurture any intercultural practices that may already exist in the city.

Sjenica achieved a rate of 20, which is **considerably lower** than the city sample's achievement rate of 69. This result suggests that while Sjenica has taken initial steps toward intercultural commitment, there is room for significant improvement. By adopting structured policies and reinforcing intercultural strategies, the municipality can enhance its engagement with diversity and inclusion. The city's dedication to fostering coexistence provides a strong foundation for future progress.²



Sjenica has demonstrated a commitment to interculturalism through various initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. The city supports cultural events and community programs that encourage social cohesion and recognition of different cultural traditions. Local organizations and civil society groups actively engage in **intercultural dialogue**, contributing to efforts aimed at fostering coexistence among diverse communities. While these initiatives reflect an inclusive approach, there is **no officially adopted intercultural integration strategy or a structured municipal policy framework** dedicated to intercultural governance.

² Sjenica's achievement rate on Commitment in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 20 while the city sample achievement rate is 64.

The city lacks a dedicated municipal office or advisory body responsible for overseeing intercultural policies. Although there are occasional consultations with minority groups, **these engagements are not institutionalized**, limiting the long-term impact of diversity management efforts. Additionally, **communication on intercultural initiatives remains fragmented**, as there is no central online or offline platform where policies, initiatives, or achievements are regularly shared with the public. Establishing a **structured and strategic** intercultural approach would help Sjenica build a **more inclusive governance model** that strengthens cooperation between municipal authorities, civil society, and diverse community representatives.

Recommendations

To strengthen its commitment to intercultural policies, Sjenica could take inspiration from **Berlin-Neukölln (Germany)**, where an [Integration Charter](#) has been implemented to **outline clear objectives and commitments** for fostering inclusion. This approach ensures that intercultural principles are embedded in municipal decision-making and public services, making diversity an essential aspect of city governance. Developing a similar integration charter in Sjenica could **provide a structured vision** for inclusion and create clear guidelines for future intercultural initiatives.

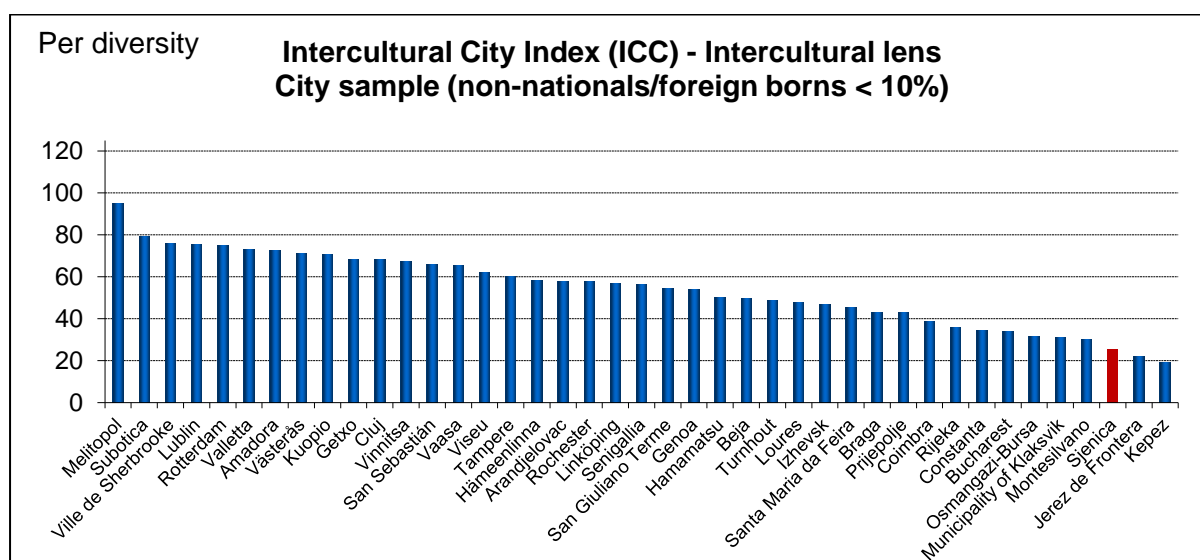
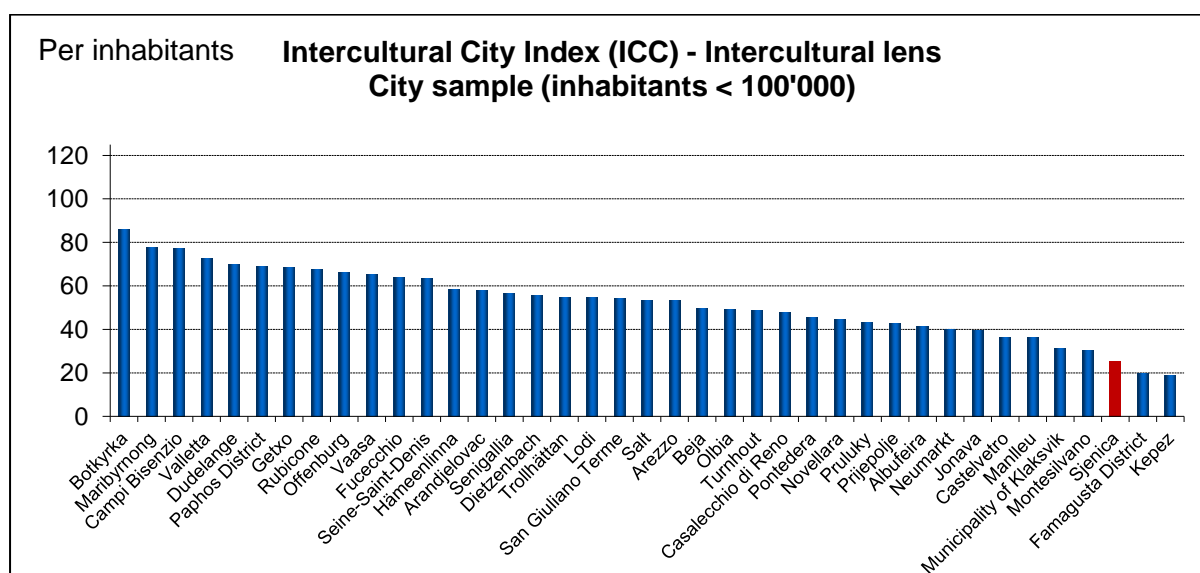
Another relevant example is **Limassol (Cyprus)**, which has established an [Intercultural Council](#) to **facilitate dialogue between municipal authorities, civil society, and community representatives**. This council plays a key role in advising the city on policies related to diversity management and inclusion. Establishing a similar advisory body in Sjenica could help **ensure continuous community participation** in shaping policies that impact diverse groups, creating a more transparent and participatory approach to intercultural governance.

By adopting these best practices, Sjenica can reinforce its **commitment to interculturalism** and create a **more inclusive and dynamic policy framework** that benefits all residents.

THE CITY THROUGH AN INTERCULTURAL LENS

Although the formal functions cities and other local authorities assume vary considerably from one country to another, all cities have the primary responsibility for maintaining social cohesion and preserving the quality of life in the city. The policies designed to achieve these goals will therefore be re-conceived and re-configured in order to assure they provide adequate service to all residents regardless of their nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientation and age group. This is most notably the case for policies concerning education, neighbourhoods, public services, business and the labour market, cultural and social life, and public space.

The overall rate of achievement of the urban policies of Sjenica, assessed as a whole through an "intercultural lens" is considerably lower to that of the model city: 25% of these objectives were achieved while the rate of achievement of the model city reaches 63%.³



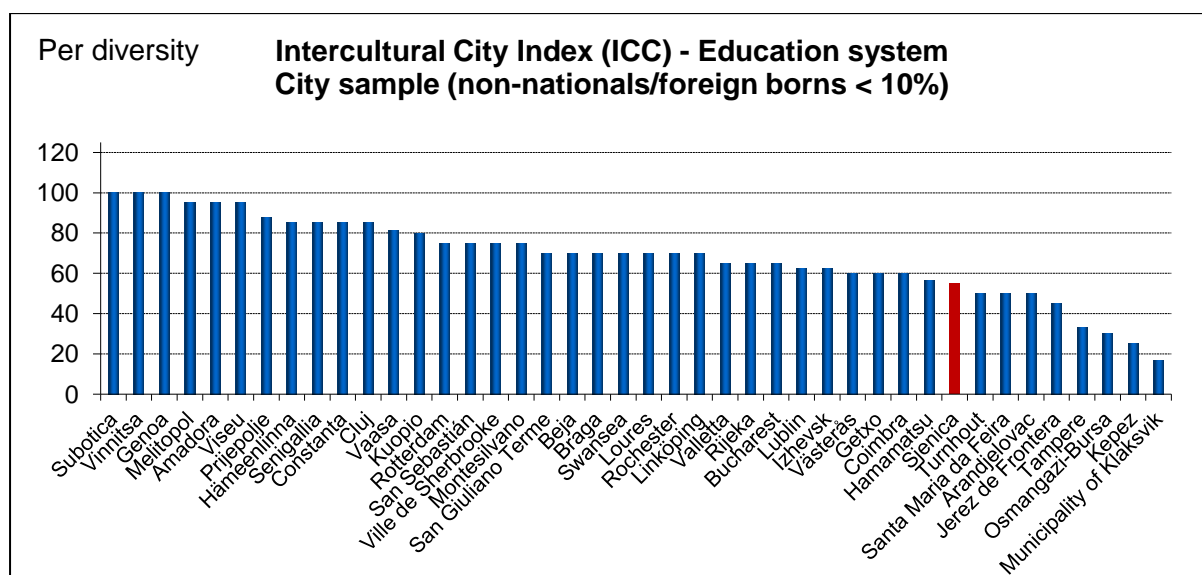
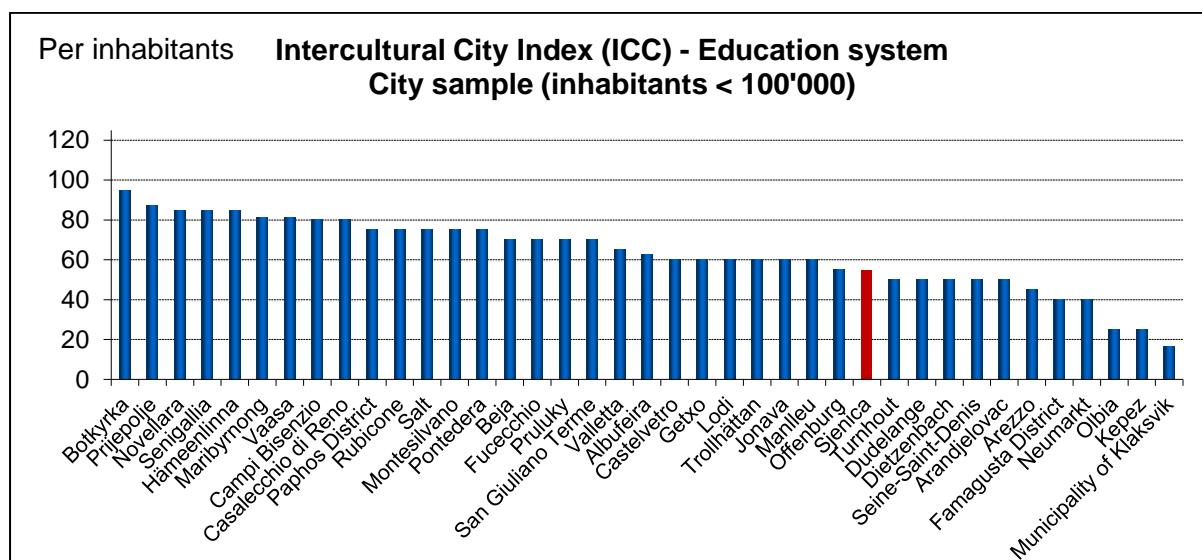
EDUCATION

Formal education and extracurricular activities have a powerful influence on how children will perceive diversity as they grow up. Schools therefore have a strong potential to reinforce or, on the contrary, challenge prejudices and negative stereotyping. Although school programmes are defined primarily at the national or regional level, local schools can look at alternative and innovative ways of providing opportunities for children of different cultures to build trust and mutual respect, and create thereby favourable learning conditions for all pupils, irrespective of their

³ Sjenica's achievement rate on Intercultural Lens in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 25, while the city sample achievement rate is 66.

nationalities, origins, languages, sexual orientation or gender identity, religions/beliefs. From the intercultural perspective, cultural and other diversities, including multilingualism are treated as positive opportunities and are nurtured accordingly. Intercultural schools also consider parents of pupils with migrant/minority backgrounds on an equal basis as other parents. They take steps to ensure that all parents overcome any reluctance they may have in engaging with the school and give them in this way the possibility of playing the educational role usually expected from parents.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **55**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **70**. This result reflects the fact that while schools in Sjenica have a degree of diversity, there are few structured policies to promote intercultural learning, ensure teacher diversity, or actively engage parents from different cultural backgrounds. The city's efforts in organizing cultural events and traditional activities demonstrate an awareness of its diverse population, but they do not translate into systemic approaches for fostering intercultural education.⁴



Schools in Sjenica host occasional cultural activities such as traditional dance, literary meetings, and annual town festivities, which provide opportunities for students to engage with different cultural perspectives. However, the city's education system does not systematically integrate intercultural elements into the curriculum, nor does it provide structured programs to encourage the inclusion of minority languages. The ethnic and cultural background of teachers does not fully reflect the composition of the student body, and schools lack policies aimed at fostering ethnic mixing or preventing segregation. Moreover, while parental engagement is encouraged through standard

⁴ Sjenica's achievement rate on Education System in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 55, while the city sample achievement rate is 75.

parent-teacher meetings, there are no targeted initiatives to involve parents from minority or migrant backgrounds in school activities in a meaningful way.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in the approach taken by **Cascais (Portugal)**, where the city has introduced a [comprehensive intercultural education program](#) aimed at fostering inclusion through education. The program incorporates **multilingual learning opportunities, diversity training for educators, and partnerships between schools and cultural institutions** to promote intercultural dialogue. Additionally, Cascais places great emphasis on parental engagement by organizing interactive workshops and cultural events that encourage participation from families of diverse backgrounds. This holistic approach helps ensure that education becomes a bridge for social cohesion and mutual understanding.

Another valuable example is the [Leeds Learning Alliance in Leeds \(UK\)](#), which brings together **schools, local authorities, and community organizations** to create an inclusive educational ecosystem. The initiative emphasizes **peer learning, teacher training in intercultural competence, and collaborative projects between schools and community groups**. A particularly effective feature of the program is its focus on **inclusive teaching methodologies**, ensuring that curricula reflect the diversity of the student population. Furthermore, Leeds has successfully **strengthened school-community ties** by actively involving parents in the learning process through mentoring schemes, discussion forums, and language support services. Such an approach could serve as an inspiration for Sjenica to further enhance its engagement strategies and educational inclusivity.

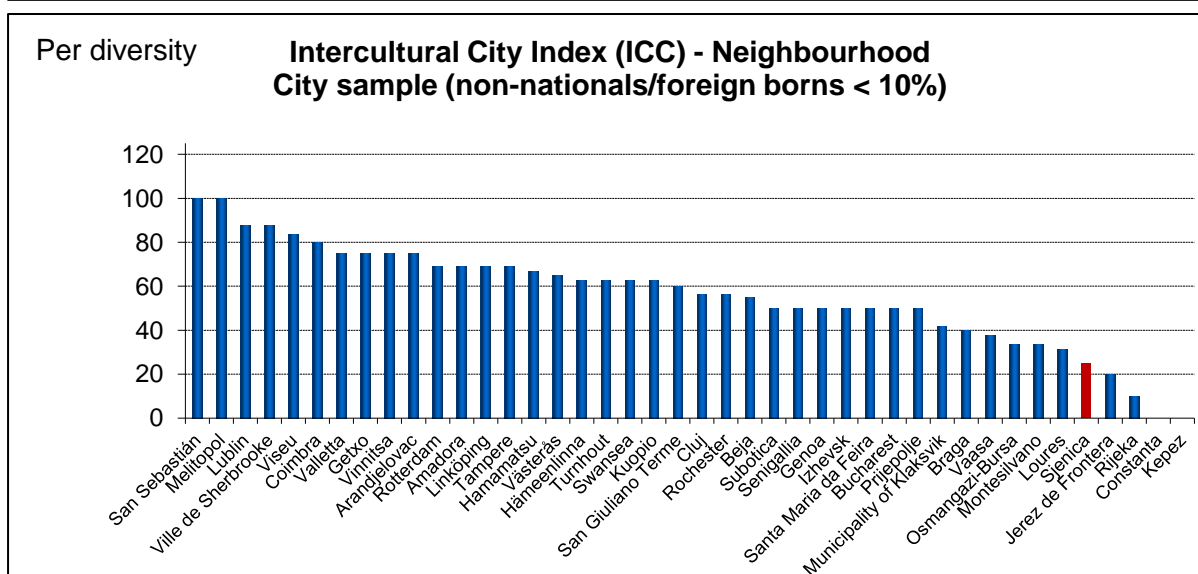
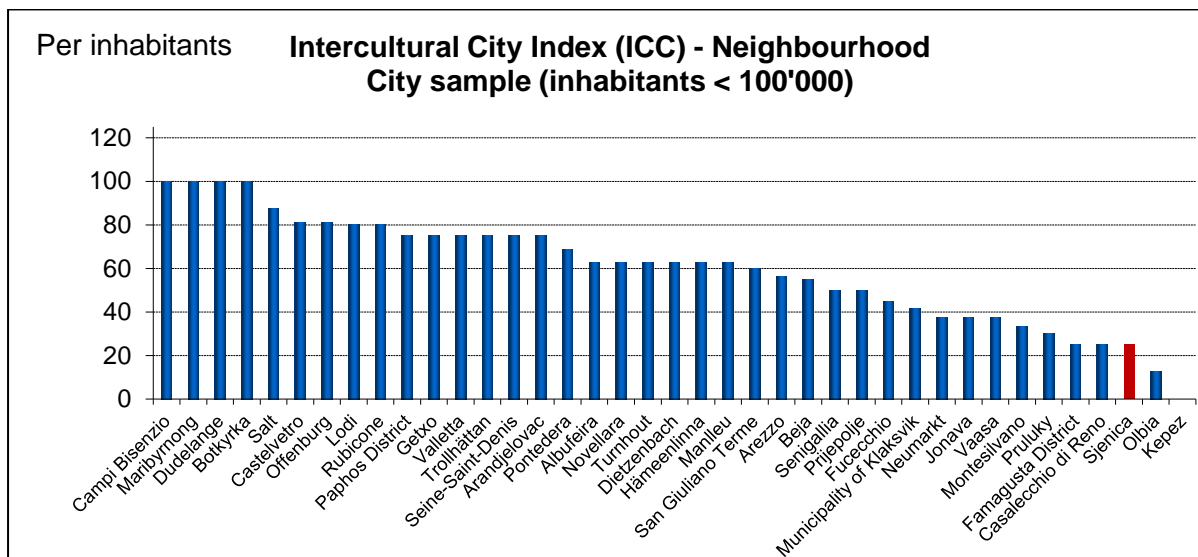
By developing policies that promote intercultural competence among teachers, increasing opportunities for parental involvement, and integrating intercultural dialogue into curricula, Sjenica can take significant steps towards **enhancing the inclusivity and diversity of its education system**.

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Within a city, districts, neighbourhoods, or other territorial sub-units, can be more or less culturally/ethnically diverse. People are indeed free to move and settle in the neighbourhood of their choice. To be intercultural, a city does not require a 'perfect' statistical mix of people in all neighbourhoods. It will however make sure that ethnic concentration in a neighbourhood does not convert into socio-cultural segregation, and does not act as a barrier to the inward and outward flow of people, ideas and opportunities. In particular, the intercultural city ensures the same quality of public service delivery in all the neighbourhoods and plans public space, infrastructures, social, cultural and sport activities to encourage intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **25**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **68**. This result suggests that while Sjenica is home to a diverse population, there are opportunities to **enhance intercultural interaction at the neighbourhood level** and to develop policies that foster inclusive, mixed communities. The city's neighbourhoods are characterized by their multicultural composition, with Bosniaks, Serbs, and other minority groups living in close proximity. However, Sjenica currently does not implement **formal policies** to promote interaction between different groups, nor does it have strategies in place to prevent **ethnic concentration or social segregation**.⁵

⁵ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Neighbourhoods** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **25**, while the city sample achievement rate is **74**.



At present, the city does not have specific initiatives that **encourage cross-community engagement or inter-neighbourhood collaboration**. Public events and cultural activities, while important in maintaining local traditions, are not yet strategically used as tools to **bring together residents from different ethnic backgrounds**. Additionally, Sjenica does not implement **urban planning measures** that support mixed housing policies or incentivize diverse residency patterns. While there is no formal segregation, the city has an opportunity to **strengthen social ties between communities** by fostering shared public spaces and encouraging dialogue between different neighbourhood groups.

Recommendations

Sjenica may wish to explore the approach taken by **Braga (Portugal)**, where the city has successfully implemented the [Rewriting Our Neighbourhood](#) initiative. This program is designed to **revitalize urban spaces while fostering social cohesion** by involving residents in the transformation of their communities. Through participatory urban planning, Braga encourages residents from different backgrounds to **co-create shared public spaces**, turning neighbourhoods into areas of inclusion and intercultural exchange. This initiative includes **public art projects, community-driven street redesigns, and cultural events** that bring people together in shared environments. By applying similar principles, Sjenica could develop **participatory planning mechanisms** that encourage diverse communities to collaborate on the future of their neighbourhoods.

Another inspiring practice comes from **Neukölln (Germany)**, where the [District Mothers](#) initiative has played a transformative role in strengthening **social networks at the neighbourhood level**. This program focuses on

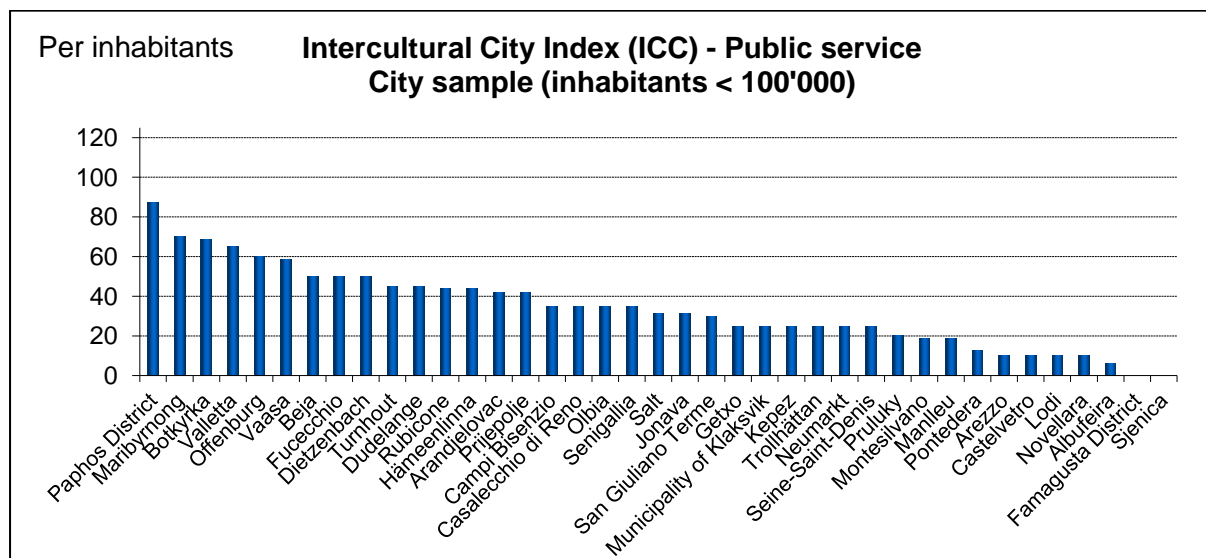
empowering women, particularly from migrant and minority backgrounds, to act as mediators and facilitators within their communities. These *District Mothers* receive training on intercultural communication, education, and social services, allowing them to **bridge gaps between local authorities and families who may otherwise feel disconnected from public life**. Through this initiative, Neukölln has significantly improved **social integration, access to services, and intercultural dialogue within neighbourhoods**. Sjenica may find value in **developing similar community-led programs** that empower local residents—particularly women and youth—to take active roles in fostering neighbourhood cohesion and intercultural exchange.

By adopting a **participatory approach to urban planning**, strengthening **community networks**, and **promoting inclusive public spaces**, Sjenica can take meaningful steps toward enhancing **social cohesion and interaction at the neighbourhood level**. Encouraging cross-cultural engagement and ensuring that neighbourhoods serve as meeting points for all residents will be key to fostering an **intercultural city where diversity is seen as an asset**.

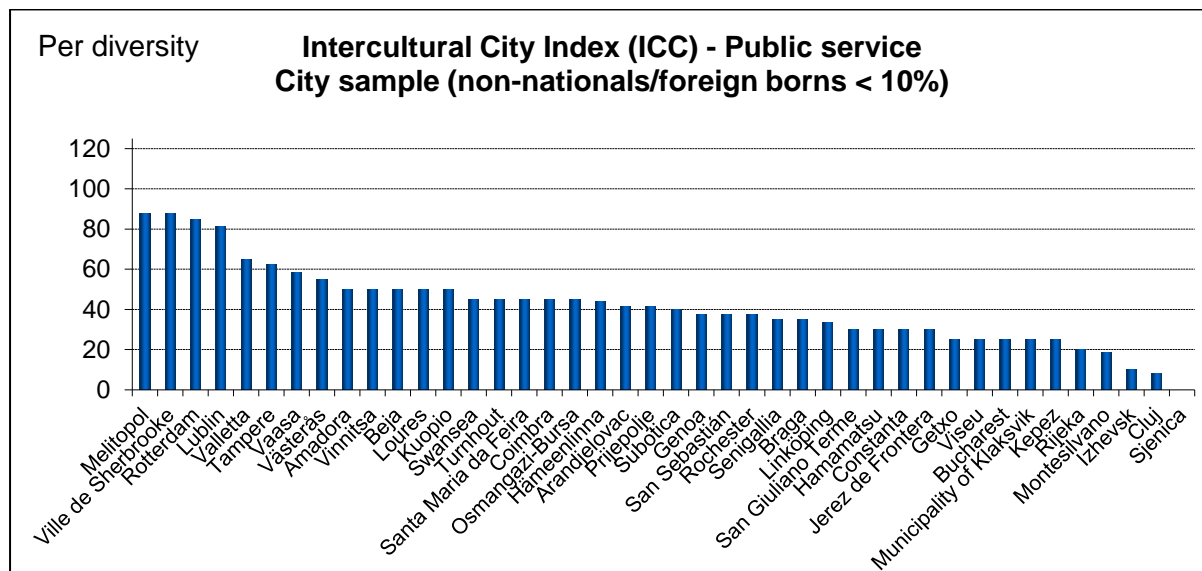
PUBLIC SERVICES

As their very name implies, public services work for the benefit of the public as a whole. If the population is diverse, public services will be more efficient in delivering adequate benefits and information if city officers, at all levels of seniority, are as diverse as the population in general. This requires much more than simply ensuring equal opportunities to access public service employment. When taking action to encourage a diverse municipal workforce, an intercultural city acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach to public services and actions does not guarantee equal access to public benefits. The city also recognises that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds should never be treated as passive consumers of public benefits but can contribute actively by suggesting new ideas and innovative solutions to public problems.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **0**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **46**. This result highlights that, while Sjenica offers public services to all residents, there is significant potential to **develop policies that ensure these services are more inclusive, accessible, and reflective of the city's diverse population**. At present, the city does not have recruitment strategies aimed at **ensuring diversity in the municipal workforce**, nor does it offer **tailored services that consider the cultural and linguistic needs of its residents**.⁶



⁶ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Public Service** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **0**, while the city sample achievement rate is **50**.



Currently, municipal services in Sjenica are delivered **uniformly**, without specific adaptations for residents from different cultural backgrounds. There are **no multilingual support services** in public offices, and interactions with local authorities are conducted exclusively in Serbian, which may present barriers for some residents. Moreover, there are **no targeted programs to address the specific needs of different communities**, such as intercultural training for public employees or specialized services designed to promote equal access to municipal resources. While Sjenica ensures **equal access to public services in principle**, adopting an **intercultural approach** could enhance **engagement, participation, and trust among all residents**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may wish to explore the example of **Cascais (Portugal)**, which has successfully implemented the **Counsellor for Equality** program. This initiative focuses on **ensuring fairness and inclusion in public services by appointing dedicated equality officers** who work within local government structures. These counsellors serve as **liaisons between public institutions and communities**, providing guidance on **how to make public services more inclusive** while also acting as advocates for underrepresented groups. By establishing a similar **equality advisory role within its municipal administration**, Sjenica could **enhance its ability to address the specific needs of diverse residents** and ensure that public services are delivered in a way that fosters inclusion and accessibility.

Another strong model comes from **Camden (UK)**, where the **Conscious Inclusion** initiative has been instrumental in **making municipal services more reflective of the community's diversity**. The program focuses on **recruitment strategies that promote diversity in the public sector**, ensuring that **municipal employees represent the city's multicultural makeup**. Camden has introduced **targeted hiring policies, training programs on cultural competence for public employees, and mentorship initiatives** to support employees from diverse backgrounds in leadership positions. This approach has contributed to **greater trust between residents and public institutions, as well as more effective service delivery**. Sjenica may find inspiration in this initiative by **developing structured diversity recruitment policies and providing training for municipal staff on intercultural competencies**.

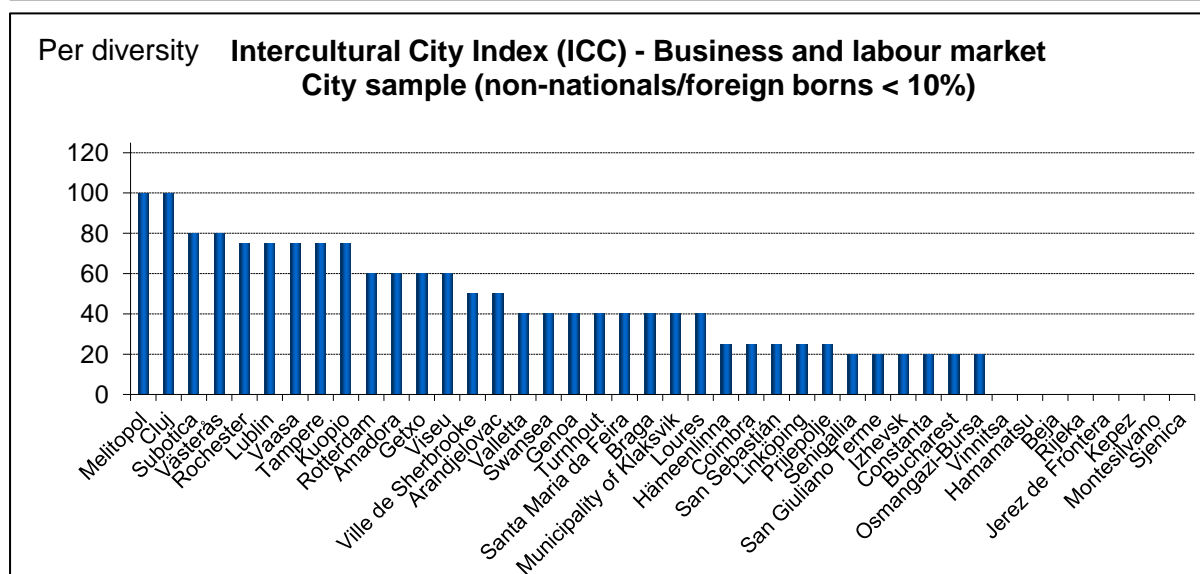
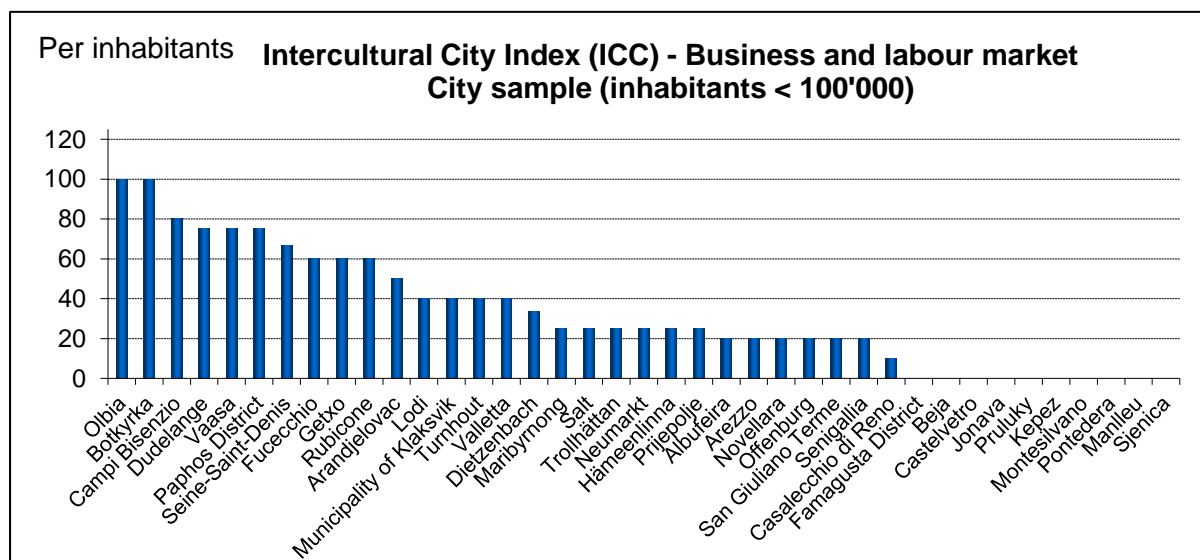
By adopting **inclusive recruitment policies**, introducing **multilingual support services**, and establishing **advisory roles focused on equality**, Sjenica can take meaningful steps toward making its public services **more accessible, representative, and responsive to the needs of all residents**. Ensuring that diversity is reflected in **both service provision and workforce composition** will contribute to an intercultural approach that strengthens **social cohesion and equal opportunities within the city**.

BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Access to the public sector labour markets is often restricted by national or regional legislation. When this is the case, the private sector may provide an easier route for people with migrant or diverse backgrounds to engage in economic activity. As a result, private companies and activities tend to offer much more diverse working environments than the public sector. Research has also proved that it is cultural diversity in private companies,

and not homogeneity, which fosters creativity and innovation. By constantly highlighting the diversity advantage in business, and partnering with their chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs, cities can influence how diversity is perceived in the private sector in such diverse sectors as shops, clubs, restaurants, industry, technical services and science.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **0**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **52**. This result suggests that while the city has a diverse population, there are **currently no structured policies or initiatives** in place to foster intercultural inclusion in the business sector or labour market. Ensuring equal access to economic opportunities and creating an environment where diversity is recognized as an asset can contribute to both **economic development and social cohesion**.⁷



At present, there are no specific **programs to support minority entrepreneurs** or initiatives to facilitate their transition from ethnic economies to mainstream business sectors. There are also **no diversity-focused recruitment strategies in place** to promote inclusive hiring practices within local enterprises or public employment. Additionally, Sjenica does not provide **targeted business training, networking opportunities, or mentorship programs** that could help individuals from different backgrounds integrate into the local economy. While businesses operate freely in the city, developing **intercultural economic policies** could help unlock the full potential of Sjenica's diverse workforce and entrepreneurial talent.

Recommendations

⁷ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Business and Labour Market** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **0**, while the city sample achievement rate is **59**.

Sjenica may wish to explore the approach taken by **Cascais (Portugal)**, which has successfully implemented a **creative entrepreneurship program** designed to foster economic inclusion by supporting business ventures led by individuals from diverse backgrounds. The initiative, A [Creative Approach to Promote Entrepreneurship](#), provides **mentorship, financial guidance, and training programs tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs from different cultural communities**. By facilitating access to resources and professional networks, Cascais has created an inclusive economic environment where diversity contributes to innovation and business growth. Sjenica could benefit from **developing a similar framework** to support and promote entrepreneurship among its residents.

Another inspiring practice comes from **Auckland (New Zealand)**, where the city has introduced a [Cultural Awareness Capability](#) program to **equip businesses and organizations with the skills needed to work effectively in a multicultural environment**. This initiative includes **intercultural training for employers, leadership programs aimed at fostering inclusive workplaces, and advisory services that help businesses recognize the economic advantages of cultural diversity**. Auckland's approach has led to **greater workforce inclusion, improved business performance, and stronger community ties**. Sjenica may consider introducing **cultural competence training for local businesses and supporting enterprises in adopting inclusive recruitment and workplace policies**.

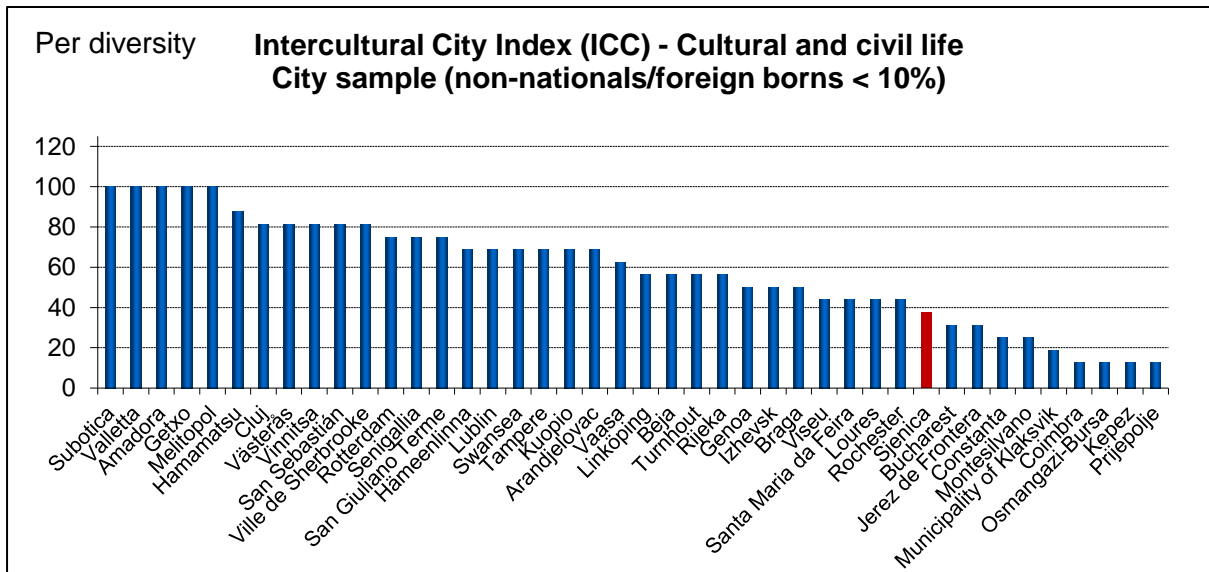
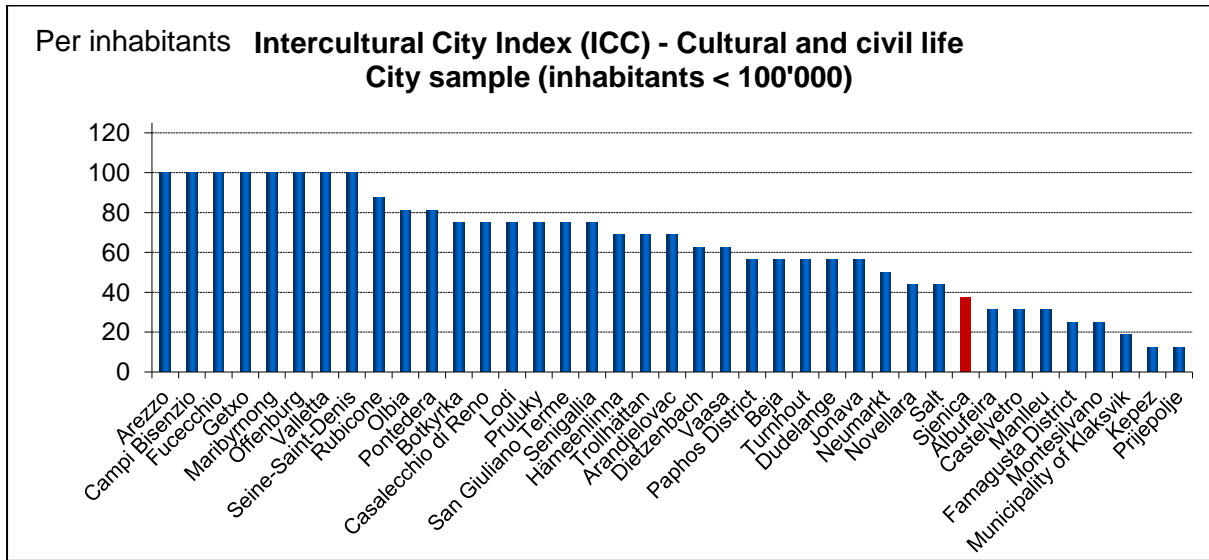
By **encouraging entrepreneurship among diverse communities, providing businesses with intercultural training, and fostering inclusive hiring practices**, Sjenica can take meaningful steps toward strengthening its **business environment and labour market integration**. Promoting diversity as an economic advantage will not only **enhance local economic growth but also reinforce Sjenica's position as a welcoming and forward-thinking city**.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Whereas people living in a city may have different migrant/minority or other backgrounds, they very often share the same interests and satisfaction when engaging in leisure activities, especially in the fields of arts, culture and sports. Such activities are sometimes structured along ethnic lines. That is quite understandable when they aim to preserve folklore traditions or the language and history of countries of origin. What is problematic is when cross-cultural leisure activities are organised along ethnic lines, for example when a football team only accepts players from one ethnic group. The intercultural city can encourage cultural openness through its own activities and by introducing intercultural criteria when allocating resources to artistic, cultural and sports organisations.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **38**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **71**. This result suggests that while cultural and social life in the city is enriched by a variety of traditions and community activities, there is **room to develop structured intercultural policies** that ensure cultural events and initiatives actively foster interaction between different communities. Promoting intercultural exchanges through arts, sports, and social initiatives can serve as a powerful tool for **strengthening social cohesion and encouraging participation** from all residents.⁸

⁸ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Cultural and Civil Life** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **38**, while the city sample achievement rate is **70**.



Sjenica's cultural scene is rooted in **traditional festivities, folklore events, and artistic performances**, which provide valuable opportunities for community engagement. However, most cultural activities are **not specifically designed to promote intercultural interaction**, and there are **no municipal policies that encourage cultural diversity in artistic programming**. While individual initiatives exist, such as occasional **music and dance events featuring various cultural influences**, there is no overarching strategy to **connect different cultural groups and highlight diversity as a city asset**. Additionally, the city does not have a **structured funding mechanism that supports cultural projects run by diverse communities or NGOs working in the field of interculturality**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may wish to draw inspiration from **Limassol (Cyprus)**, where the city has implemented [Boosting the Citizens' Social Life with Art and Festivities](#). This initiative focuses on using cultural events as a means to **connect people from different backgrounds, turning public spaces into meeting points for intercultural exchange**. Limassol has successfully **integrated intercultural themes into mainstream festivals and introduced cultural dialogue initiatives** that encourage collaboration between artists from various ethnic groups. By taking a similar approach, Sjenica could ensure that its **cultural programming actively promotes interaction and shared experiences across communities**.

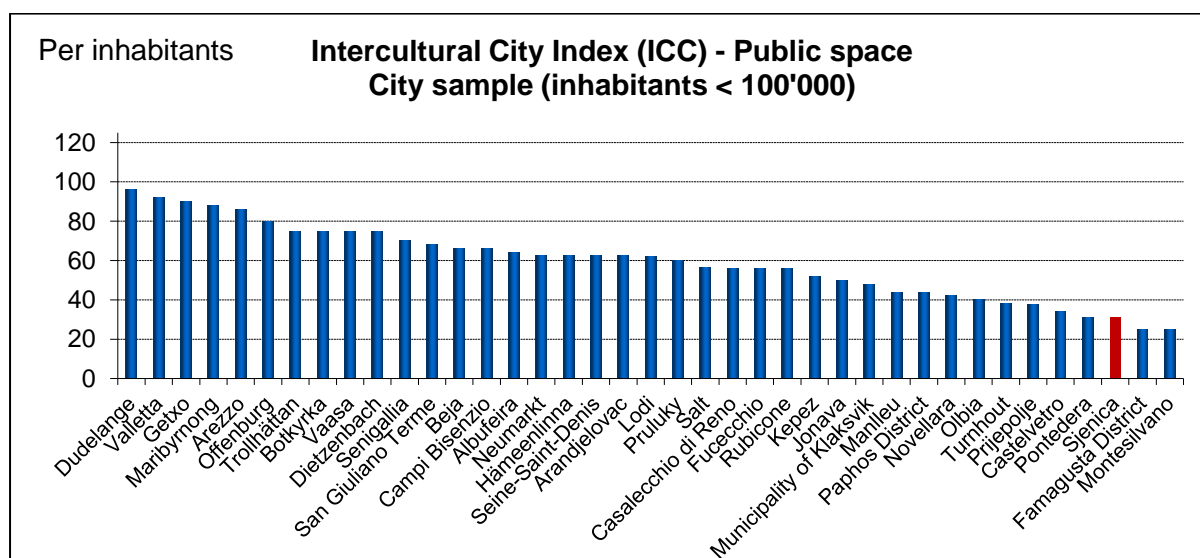
Another notable example comes from **Donostia (Spain)**, where the city has introduced [Supporting Culturally Diverse NGOs](#). This initiative provides **funding, networking opportunities, and capacity-building support** for NGOs working on intercultural projects. By **empowering community-led organizations**, Donostia has created a dynamic cultural sector where diverse voices contribute to shaping the city's cultural identity. Sjenica could benefit from developing a **dedicated grant system or municipal support mechanism** that encourages local NGOs and cultural groups to **propose and implement intercultural projects**.

By integrating intercultural perspectives into cultural policies, encouraging artistic collaboration between diverse groups, and supporting NGOs that work on intercultural initiatives, Sjenica can enhance its cultural and social life while fostering stronger connections between communities. Strengthening the role of culture as a tool for dialogue and inclusion will contribute to making the city a more vibrant and welcoming space for all its residents.

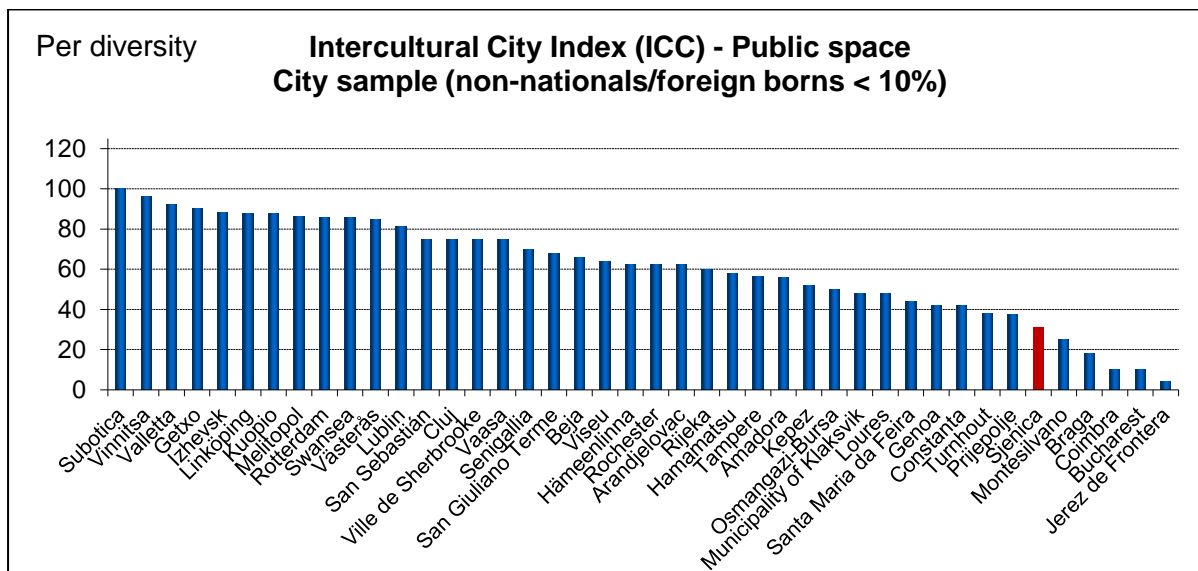
PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces (streets, squares, parks, etc.) and facilities (public buildings, day centres, schools, health centres, etc.) are places which most citizens are obliged to use. They offer the possibility of meeting people of different nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups. For encounters between diverse people to actually occur, such spaces and facilities should be designed and animated in a way that all residents feel comfortable when using them. Conversely badly-managed spaces can become places of suspicion and fear of the “other”. When this is the case, the intercultural city actively engages with all the people concerned, firstly to understand the local context from their perspective, and secondly to identify solutions largely support by them.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **31**, which is considerably lower than the city sample’s achievement rate of **67**. This result suggests that while public spaces in Sjenica are accessible to all residents, there is an opportunity to develop **intercultural policies that enhance inclusivity and encourage greater interaction among diverse communities**. Public spaces, including parks, squares, and recreational areas, serve as vital meeting points where people from different backgrounds can connect. A well-designed intercultural public space fosters a **sense of belonging, social cohesion, and active participation in urban life**.⁹



⁹ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Public Space** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **31**, while the city sample achievement rate is **67**.



Sjenica offers several public spaces that are widely used for **community events and gatherings**, such as town festivals and traditional celebrations. However, the city does not have a structured policy to **ensure that public spaces are designed and managed with interculturality in mind**. There are **no participatory urban planning initiatives that involve residents from diverse backgrounds in the design and use of public spaces**, and public art or urban design projects rarely reflect the city's multicultural character. Additionally, while green spaces and public areas are available, they are **not strategically used to promote interactions between different cultural groups**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Leeds (UK)**, where the city has successfully implemented [A Common Public Space through Cooperation](#). This initiative focuses on **creating shared public spaces that encourage interaction between diverse communities through co-design and participatory urban planning**. Leeds has involved local residents, businesses, and cultural organizations in **redefining the purpose of public spaces**, ensuring that they are welcoming to people of all backgrounds. By incorporating similar participatory planning processes, Sjenica could develop **inclusive urban areas that strengthen social bonds and reflect the city's diverse identity**.

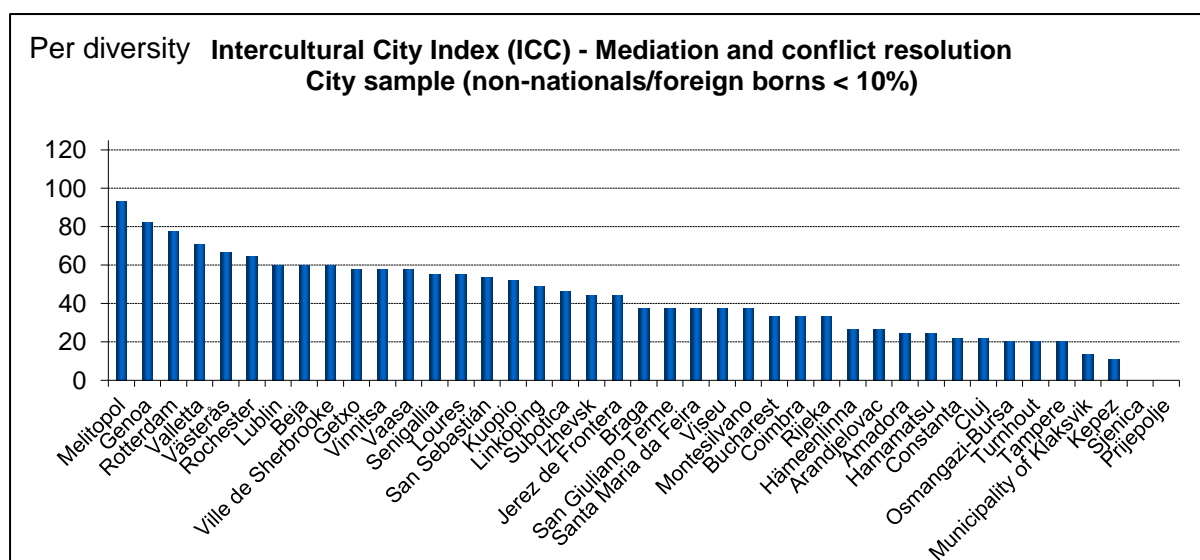
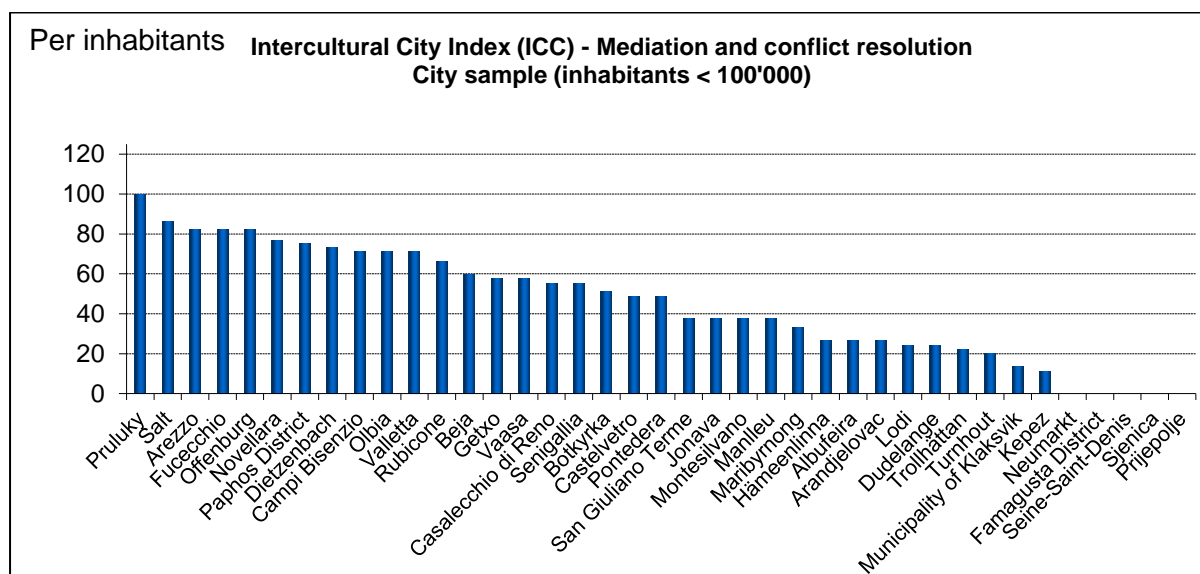
Another valuable example comes from **Lewisham (UK)**, where the city has introduced [Designing Intercultural Public Space](#). This initiative promotes **the development of public spaces that actively facilitate intercultural dialogue and representation**. Lewisham has worked with **urban designers, artists, and local communities** to create **intercultural spaces that celebrate diversity through artistic expression, cultural symbols, and inclusive infrastructure**. Sjenica may consider adopting a **similar approach by incorporating cultural elements into public space design**, ensuring that squares, parks, and recreational areas **serve as dynamic hubs for intercultural exchange**.

By **involving diverse communities in the planning and management of public spaces, incorporating multicultural artistic elements, and strategically using public areas to foster interaction**, Sjenica can create an urban environment that is **welcoming, inclusive, and representative of its diverse population**. A well-designed public space can act as a **bridge between communities, promoting dialogue and strengthening social cohesion**.

MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In diverse societies there is always the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over values, behaviour or resources. In cities, where people with different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses live together in close proximity, such tensions are natural and indeed part of everyday life. Instead of denying, ignoring, or repressing conflict, the intercultural city seeks to anticipate, identify, address and resolve issues to the satisfaction of all protagonists without compromising the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The intercultural city views conflict as a normal feature of free, dynamic and communicative communities and sees the very process of conflict mediation and resolution as an opportunity for innovation and sustainable social cohesion.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **0**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **57**. This result highlights the absence of **structured mediation mechanisms** in the city, despite the potential for intercultural mediation to play a key role in fostering social cohesion and preventing misunderstandings. In diverse communities, mediation services help **bridge communication gaps, resolve conflicts, and create an environment where all residents feel heard and represented**. Establishing structured intercultural mediation policies could strengthen **trust between different groups and improve overall community relations**.¹⁰



Currently, there are **no formal mediation structures in place in Sjenica**, and the city does not have **dedicated intercultural mediators working within local institutions or communities**. While some informal mediation occurs through **religious and community leaders**, there are no systematic programs that provide **professional mediation training, legal support, or structured conflict resolution services**. Additionally, there are **no municipal initiatives that promote dialogue between different cultural groups**, nor are there policies that integrate **mediation practices into public service delivery**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may wish to take inspiration from **Ballarat (Australia)**, where the city has introduced **Reconciliation Action Plan**, a framework designed to **foster intercultural understanding through structured dialogue and mediation programs**. This initiative brings together **local government, indigenous communities, and other stakeholders** to promote **historical awareness, reconciliation, and conflict resolution**. Ballarat's approach ensures that **cultural sensitivities are acknowledged in all municipal policies**, while also equipping public officials with **mediation training to handle intercultural challenges**. By adopting a similar structured approach,

¹⁰ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Mediation** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **0**, while the city sample achievement rate is **54**.

Sjenica could **enhance its mediation capacity and strengthen community trust through reconciliation-based dialogue initiatives.**

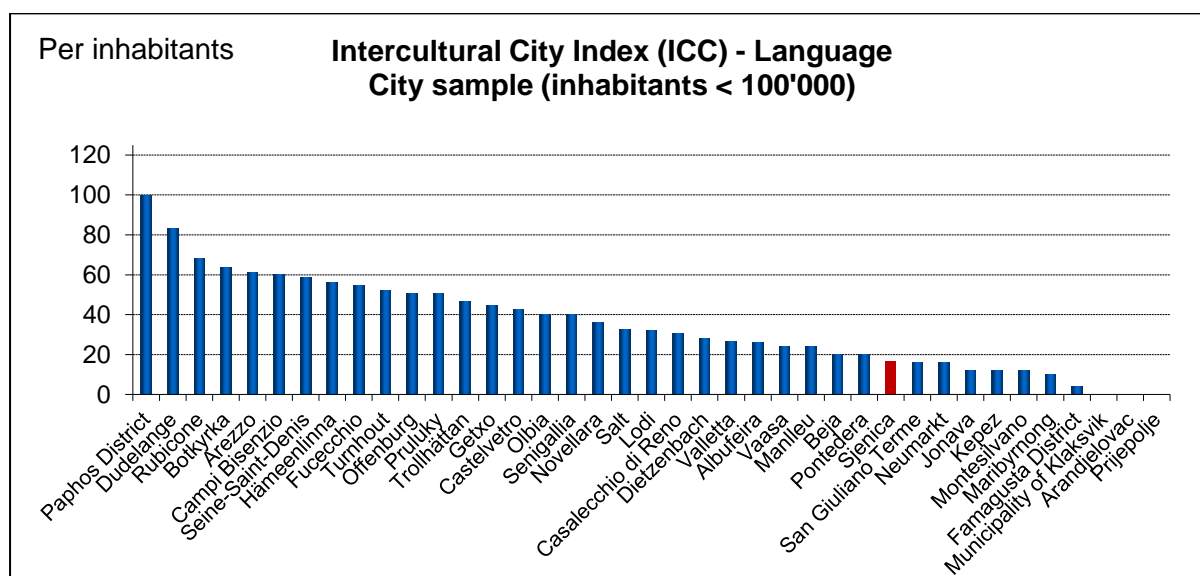
Another valuable example comes from **Camden (UK)**, where the city has developed [Providing Intercultural Mediation in Camden](#). This initiative focuses on **establishing professional intercultural mediation services** to assist in resolving conflicts between residents from different backgrounds. Camden has **trained mediators who work in schools, community centers, and public institutions**, ensuring that mediation is available as a tool to **prevent and de-escalate tensions before they become larger conflicts**. Sjenica may consider establishing an **intercultural mediation office or training program**, where mediators could work closely with local institutions to provide **conflict resolution services and cultural sensitivity training**.

By **introducing professional mediation services, training local mediators, and integrating mediation into public service frameworks**, Sjenica can develop a **proactive approach to fostering harmony and understanding within its diverse community**. Strengthening **intercultural dialogue and structured reconciliation efforts** will contribute to creating a **peaceful and cohesive environment where diversity is valued as an opportunity for growth and collaboration**.

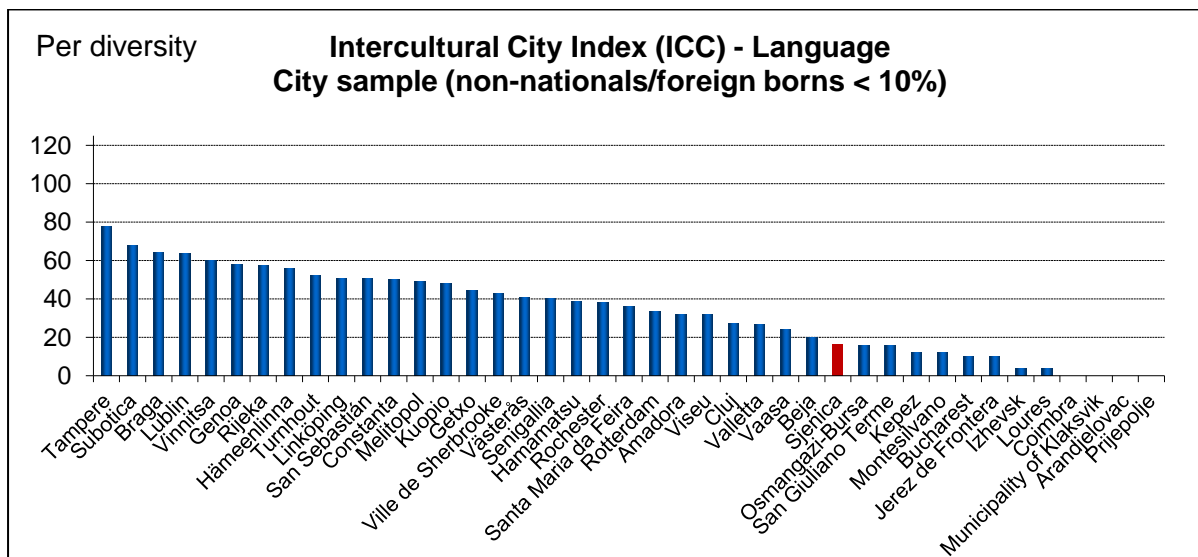
LANGUAGE

The provision of courses and other facilities for people with migrant backgrounds to learn the receiving country's language(s) is important to ensure social and economic integration. It does however need to be supplemented with activities which highlight the value of other languages, and enable people with migrant origins not only to preserve and transmit their languages to their children and other members of the community, but also to take pride in them as a heritage enriching the local community. An intercultural city promotes multilingualism as a resource for education, business, tourism, cultural life, etc. It underlines the value of all languages present in the city, for instance by giving opportunities to diverse language speakers to express themselves in their mother tongue in public and at cultural events and by promoting all events that offer opportunities for linguistic exchanges and mixing.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **17**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **46**. This result indicates that while the official language(s) are used in public life, there is **limited support for multilingualism and linguistic diversity in the city's policies**. Language is a fundamental aspect of intercultural integration, and **providing opportunities for residents to develop linguistic skills in both the majority and minority languages** can strengthen social inclusion, access to services, and participation in community life.¹¹



¹¹ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Language** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **17**, while the city sample achievement rate is **45**.



Sjenica has taken a **positive step** by establishing a **centre for migrants**, which offers activities designed to **support newcomers**. While this initiative is a valuable resource, there is potential to **further develop structured language support within the centre**, ensuring that migrants have **access to official language courses, multilingual information services, and tailored linguistic support for employment and education**.

Expanding linguistic support in **both formal and informal settings** could strengthen the **intercultural character of the city** and ensure that all residents—long-term and new—have equal opportunities to participate fully in public life.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Hamburg (Germany)**, where the city has successfully implemented [LUCIDE](#), a program designed to **promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism in urban spaces**. The initiative encourages **multilingual education in schools, language-friendly public services, and the integration of multiple languages into cultural and social life**. Hamburg’s approach recognizes **linguistic diversity as an asset for social cohesion**, ensuring that different language groups have equal opportunities to participate in public life. Sjenica could benefit from introducing **language-friendly policies in public institutions**, supporting **multilingual signage in key public spaces**, and offering **language-learning initiatives for both newcomers and long-term residents**.

Another valuable example comes from **Limassol (Cyprus)**, where the city has introduced [Multilingual Initiatives to Improve Intercultural Dialogue and Inclusive Integration](#). This initiative fosters **linguistic inclusion through multilingual storytelling events, intercultural language exchanges, and specialized support for non-native speakers in education and employment**. By creating an environment where multiple languages are celebrated and used in daily interactions, Limassol has **enhanced social cohesion and cultural understanding among diverse communities**. Sjenica may wish to consider adopting **similar multilingual cultural initiatives**, and further developing its **migrant centre to provide comprehensive linguistic support, including structured Serbian language courses and resources for preserving minority languages**.

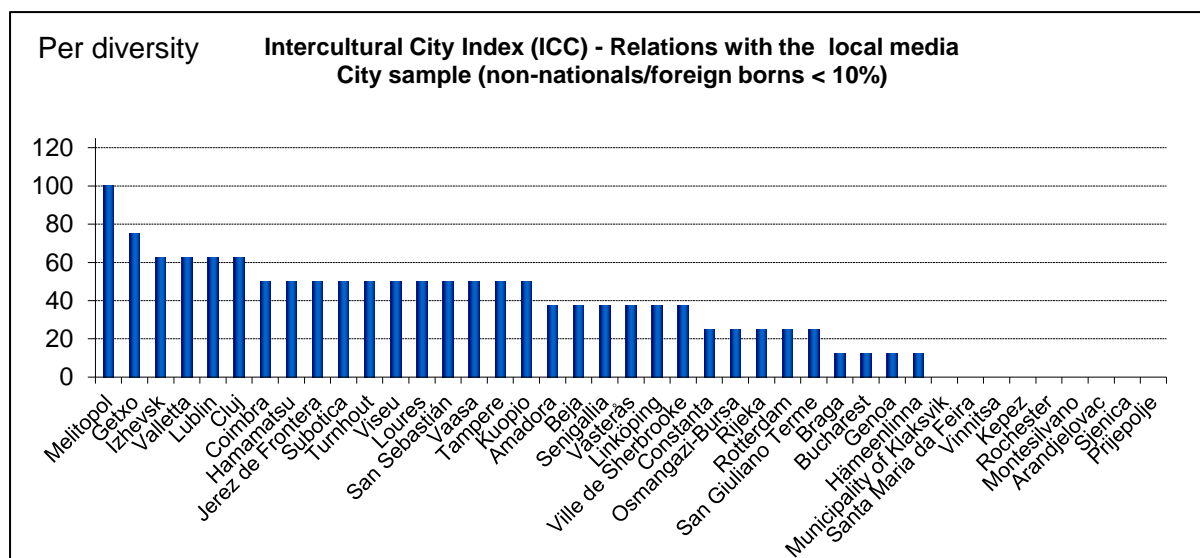
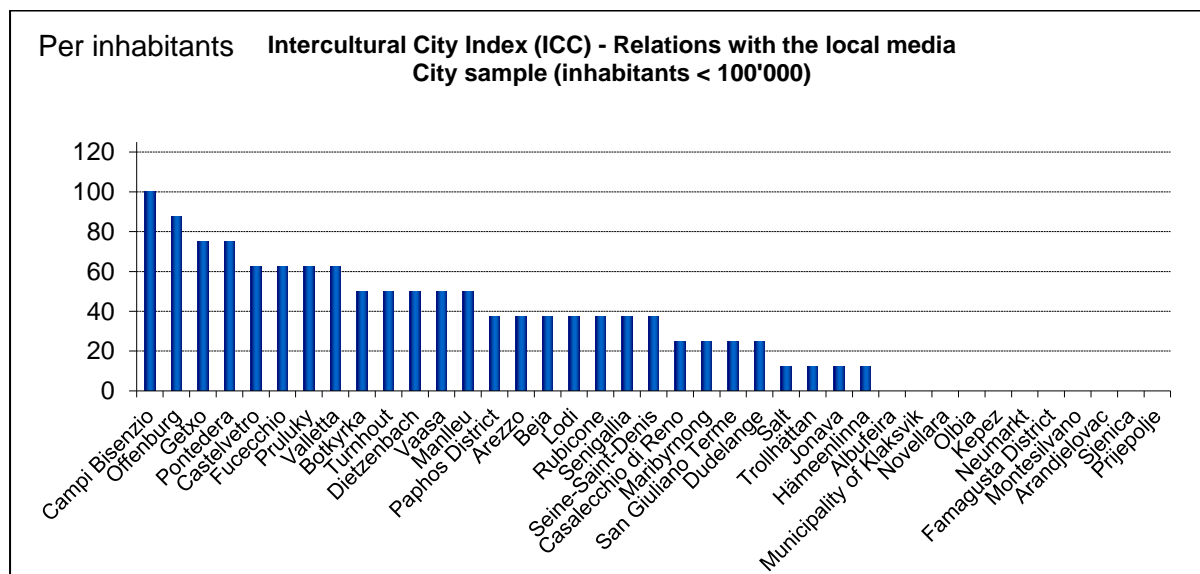
By introducing multilingual education initiatives, enhancing the role of the migrant centre in language learning, and promoting language diversity through cultural programs, Sjenica can take important steps toward fostering a more inclusive and linguistically diverse society. Encouraging language learning and linguistic exchange will not only enhance integration but also strengthen Sjenica’s position as an intercultural city where all residents feel valued and heard.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Traditional and social media have a very powerful influence on attitudes towards cultural diversity and other diversities. Much of the information people access is generated by international newsgroups, national media, or by private persons in the case of social media. Nevertheless, there is still much the city authorities can do to achieve a climate of public opinion more conducive to positive intercultural relations. In its communication, an intercultural

city constantly highlights the positive contribution of people with migrant/minority backgrounds to the social, cultural and economic development of the city. More importantly, the city partners with local media agencies so that they purvey a similar message and cover events occurring in the city in an objective and unbiased way.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **0**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **46**. This result suggests that while local media operate freely in the city, there are **no structured municipal policies to promote intercultural communication, combat stereotypes, or ensure balanced media representation of cultural diversity**. Given the important role that media play in shaping public perceptions, developing **media strategies that reflect the diversity of Sjenica's population** could help foster **social cohesion and positive intercultural dialogue**.¹²



Currently, there are **no official media guidelines or initiatives** in Sjenica aimed at encouraging **fair and diverse representation of cultural groups**. The city does not actively engage with media outlets to **promote intercultural narratives**, nor does it provide **training or incentives for journalists to cover diversity-related topics**. While some cultural events receive coverage, the **media landscape lacks a structured approach to showcasing positive examples of intercultural cooperation, migrant contributions, and community success stories**. Strengthening **collaboration between the municipality and media professionals** could help ensure that diversity is presented as an asset rather than a source of division.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Lublin (Poland)**, where the city has successfully launched [Faces of Lublin Awareness-Raising Campaign](#). This initiative seeks to **challenge stereotypes and promote positive**

¹² Sjenica's achievement rate on **Media** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **0**, while the city sample achievement rate is **46**.

representations of cultural diversity through storytelling and visual campaigns. By featuring real-life stories of diverse residents, Lublin has successfully raised awareness about the contributions of different communities and fostered a sense of shared identity among its inhabitants. Sjenica could benefit from developing a similar awareness campaign that highlights the diversity of its population through digital platforms, social media, and local news outlets.

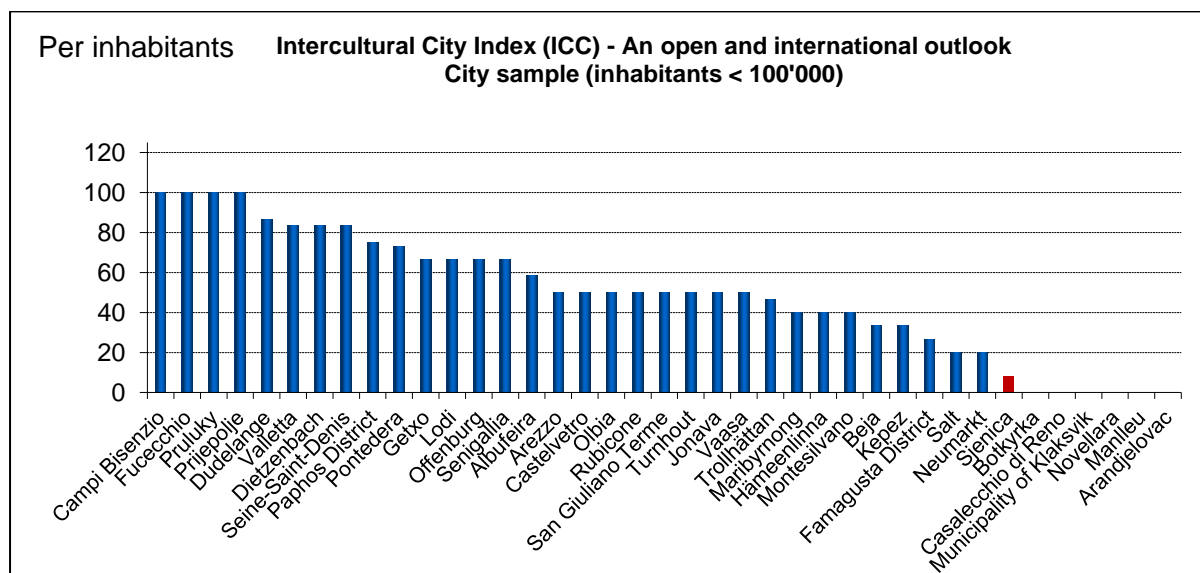
Another strong example comes from Leeds (UK), where the city has introduced [The Leeds City Region Diversity Dashboard](#). This initiative provides data-driven insights into the representation of diverse groups in local media and public discourse. By tracking media coverage of different communities, Leeds has been able to address biases and encourage more balanced reporting. Additionally, the dashboard supports collaboration between journalists, public officials, and community organizations to ensure that media content reflects the realities of the city’s multicultural population. Sjenica may wish to explore a similar approach, developing a monitoring mechanism to assess diversity representation in local media and providing support for inclusive storytelling.

By fostering partnerships with local media, promoting awareness campaigns that highlight intercultural contributions, and introducing mechanisms to track diversity representation in public discourse, Sjenica can take important steps toward creating a more inclusive and balanced media landscape. Strengthening media literacy and responsible journalism will not only improve intercultural relations but also contribute to a more informed and cohesive society.

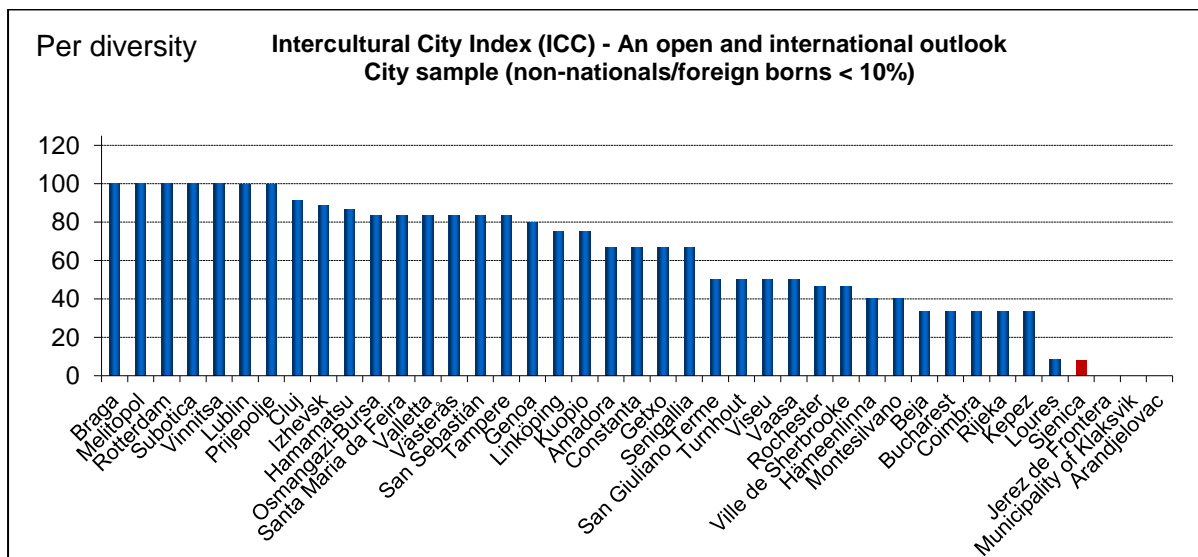
INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

Although cities have little or no competence in foreign policy, they can actively seek to make connections in other countries to develop business relations, exchange knowledge and know-how, encourage tourism, or simply acknowledge the ties the city may have elsewhere. An intercultural city actively encourages interactions with the outside world and in particular with the cities, regions or countries of origin of its inhabitants.

Sjenica achieved a rate of 8, which is considerably lower than the city sample’s achievement rate of 68. This result suggests that while the city benefits from cross-border connections through its diaspora, it currently lacks structured policies to foster international cooperation, knowledge exchange, and global engagement. Developing an international outlook strategy could allow Sjenica to strengthen its ties with other cities, attract investment, and enhance intercultural learning opportunities.¹³



¹³ Sjenica’s achievement rate on International Outlook in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 8, while the city sample achievement rate is 64.



One of Sjenica's strengths is its **connection with the Bosniak and Serb diaspora**, which plays an important role in the local economy through **various donations and financial contributions to the city**. However, these interactions are not yet formalized into an **institutionalized framework for international collaboration**. There are **no structured partnerships with other cities, no participation in international networks**, and no policies encouraging **study visits, business exchanges, or cultural cooperation beyond the immediate region**. While informal networks exist, establishing **official international partnerships and municipal-led initiatives** could help Sjenica **broaden its global reach and take advantage of intercultural opportunities**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Reggio Emilia (Italy)**, where the city has developed [A City International Policy](#). This initiative focuses on **fostering international partnerships, cultural diplomacy, and active participation in global networks**. Reggio Emilia has successfully built **bilateral agreements with other cities**, supporting **joint projects in education, business, and cultural exchange**. By adopting a similar approach, Sjenica could establish **structured cooperation agreements with cities where its diaspora is present**, encouraging not only financial contributions but also **knowledge-sharing, business investments, and cultural collaboration**.

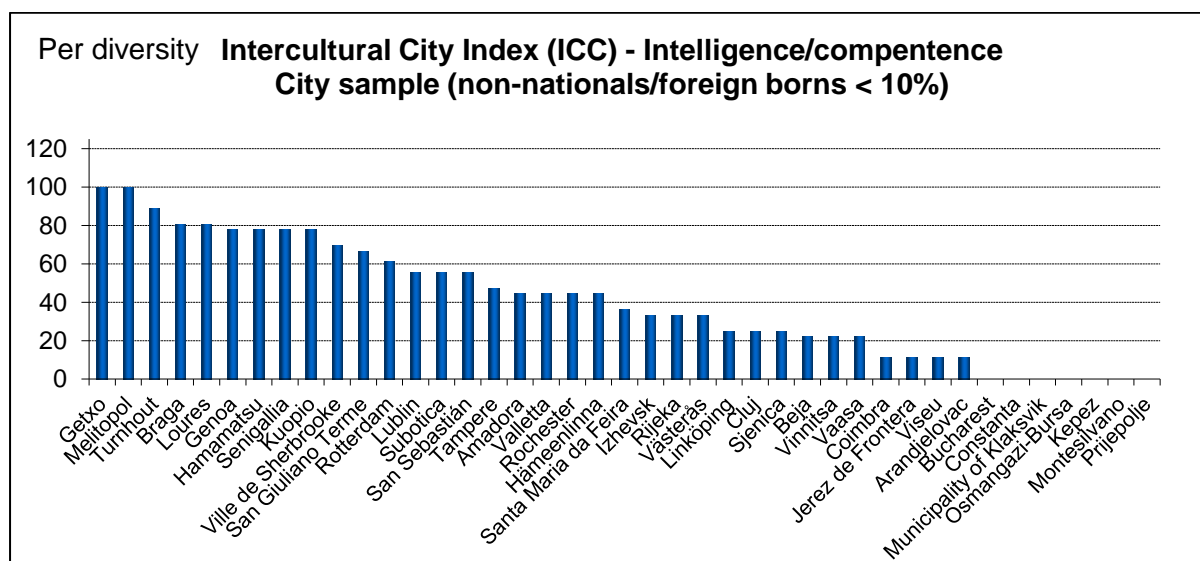
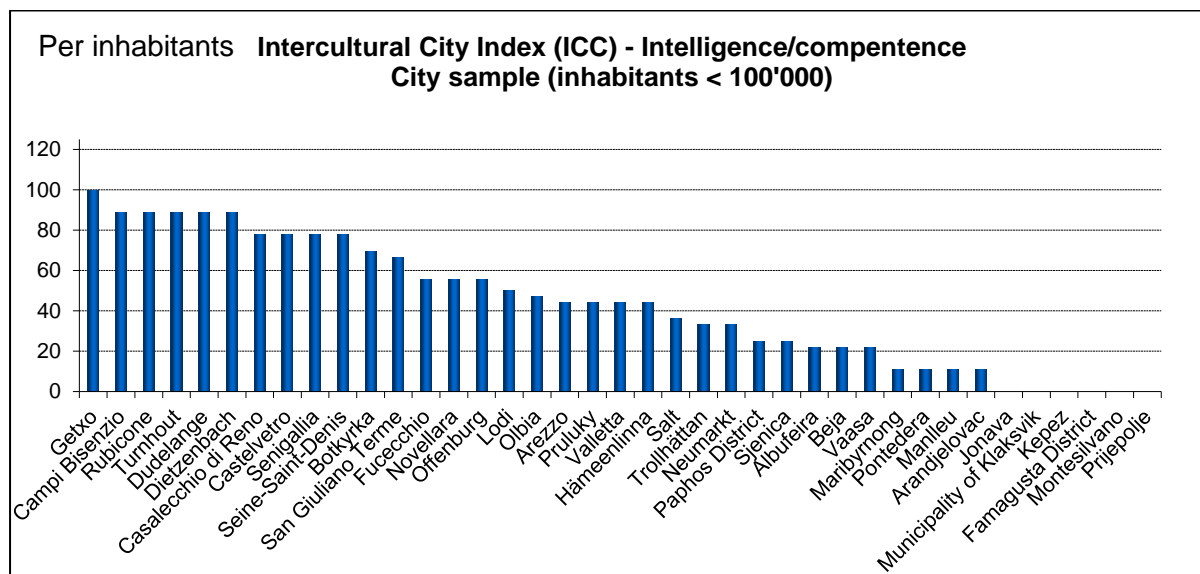
Another strong example comes from **Lublin (Poland) and Neuchâtel (Switzerland)**, which have successfully implemented [Collaboration with Neuchâtel: Study Visits and Exchange of Knowledge](#). This initiative has enabled municipal officials, educators, and civil society representatives to **engage in study visits and international exchanges**, fostering **new perspectives and best practice sharing in governance and community integration**. Sjenica could benefit from **developing similar exchange programs** to encourage **cross-border learning, economic collaboration, and international networking**, particularly within the framework of its diaspora connections.

By formalizing its ties with diaspora communities, developing structured international partnerships, and engaging in global networks and study exchanges, Sjenica can take significant steps toward expanding its international outlook and leveraging intercultural opportunities. Strengthening institutional cooperation and fostering an open, globally connected city will contribute to Sjenica's long-term economic and cultural development.

INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE

Nobody can be an expert in all the languages and cultures that coexist in contemporary cities. Yet, in an intercultural city, officials have an intercultural "mind-set" which enables them to detect cultural differences and modulate their responses accordingly. Intercultural intelligence and competence require a specific know-how when dealing with unfamiliar situations and not an in-depth and often elusive knowledge of all cultures. Such sensitivity and self-confidence is not commonly-seen. It is a technical skill which can be acquired through training and practice. In an intercultural city, the authorities view such skills as equally important and essential to the good functioning of the city as the other professional and technical skills usually expected from public employees.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **25**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **59**. This result suggests that while the city recognizes the importance of **intercultural awareness**, there is **no structured framework** for systematically **developing intercultural competencies among municipal staff and decision-makers**. Building intercultural intelligence requires **access to training, data collection on diversity, and mechanisms to assess intercultural policies**, which could help Sjenica **create a more inclusive governance model**.¹⁴



At present, Sjenica does **not conduct surveys or collect qualitative data** on intercultural relations to **inform municipal policies**. Additionally, **there are no training programs available** for local officials, civil servants, or frontline workers to **enhance their understanding of cultural diversity and improve intercultural communication**. While **some engagement with minority communities occurs informally**, it lacks a structured **policy to integrate these perspectives into governance and decision-making processes**ning intercultural intelligence would allow the city to **develop evidence-based policies, enhance public services, and ensure that cultural diversity is reflected in local governance**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Auckland (New Zealand)**, where the city has implemented **Ngā Kete Akoranga**, a learning framework that **equips municipal employees and community leaders with intercultural knowledge and skills**. The program includes **regular training sessions, interactive workshops, and tailored learning**

¹⁴ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Intercultural Intelligence/Competence** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **19**, while the city sample achievement rate is **54**.

pathways to improve **cross-cultural communication and responsiveness**. By adopting a similar approach, Sjenica could **introduce capacity-building programs for local authorities**, ensuring that all public officials are **trained in intercultural dialogue and inclusive governance**.

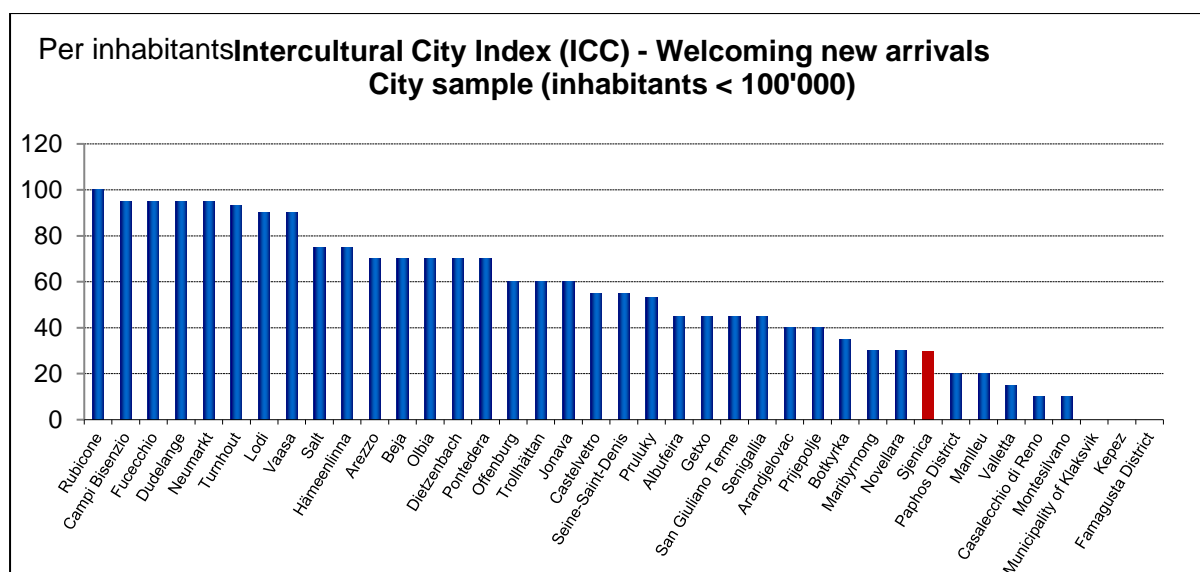
Another strong example comes from **Botkyrka (Sweden)**, where the city has implemented **Equality Planning**. This initiative ensures that **diversity and inclusion are systematically considered in all municipal decision-making processes**. The city collects **data on social inclusion, monitors public policies through an intercultural lens, and trains staff in cultural sensitivity**. Through these measures, Botkyrka has been able to **integrate intercultural intelligence into governance structures, making diversity a cornerstone of municipal development**. Sjenica could benefit from establishing an **intercultural monitoring system** that regularly assesses **the effectiveness of local policies in fostering inclusion and participation**.

By implementing intercultural training for municipal staff, introducing data collection mechanisms, and ensuring that governance decisions reflect cultural diversity, Sjenica can strengthen its intercultural intelligence and competence framework. Equipping public officials with the necessary knowledge and skills will help foster more inclusive policies and create a governance model that values and leverages diversity as a key asset for the city's development.

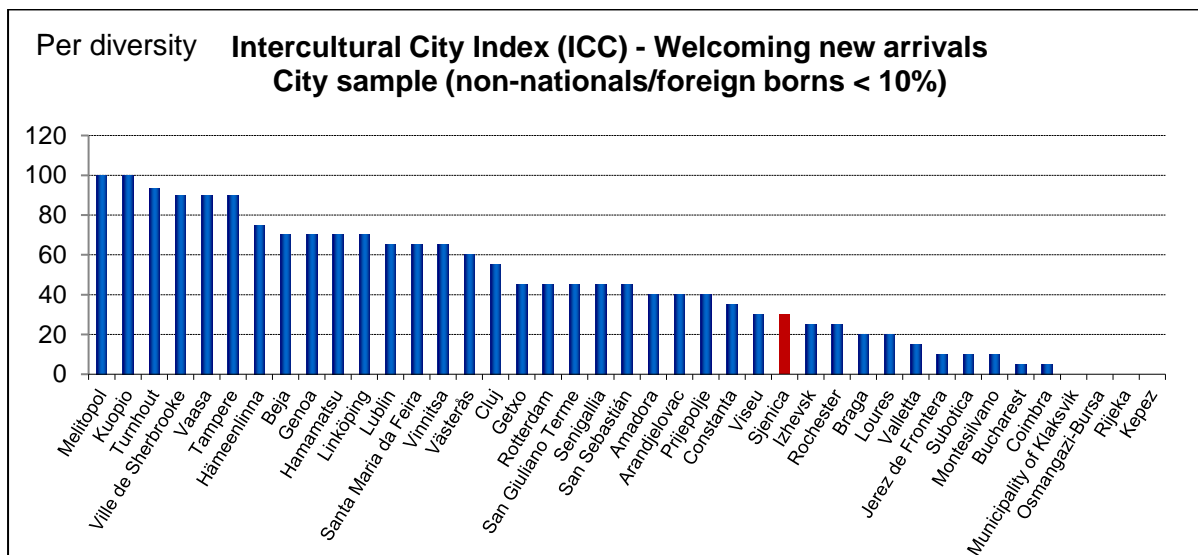
WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

People arriving in a city for an extended stay, whatever their circumstances (expats, migrant workers, spouses, refugees, unaccompanied minors, retired persons, etc.), are likely find themselves disorientated. The less familiar they are with the new environment, the more support they will need to feel comfortable and confident enough to start building a new social and professional network. The way in which the city coordinates and effectively delivers various support measures strongly conditions their capacity to integrate or, conversely, their tendency to remain confined to a cultural “ghetto”. This also depends to a great degree on whether the rest of the city’s population is open to the idea of welcoming newcomers in their capacity as residents and citizens or, on the contrary, is accustomed to viewing newcomers as outsiders who pose a potential threat. Again, it is the message the authorities convey on diversity, in communication or through concrete actions, that determines to a certain degree attitudes towards newcomers.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **30**, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **60**. This result suggests that while the city offers **some level of support to newcomers**, there is an opportunity to **strengthen welcoming policies and ensure that all new residents—whether migrants, returning diaspora, or other newcomers—feel fully included in social and economic life**. A structured **welcoming strategy** can help ease the transition for new residents, fostering **early engagement, social cohesion, and long-term participation in the community**.¹⁵



¹⁵ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Welcoming** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **30**, while the city sample achievement rate is **60**.



Sjenica has taken a **positive step** by providing a **centre for migrants that offers activities aimed at supporting newcomers**. This initiative reflects the city's **commitment to inclusion** and provides a **foundation for further developing structured welcoming programs**. However, the city does not yet have a **formalized strategy for welcoming newcomers**, nor does it provide **official orientation sessions, multilingual informational materials, or mentorship programs to help new residents integrate into local society**. There are **no targeted municipal initiatives that facilitate access to essential services, employment, or cultural participation for newcomers**. Strengthening these aspects could ensure that **newcomers feel valued and empowered to contribute to the community**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Auckland (New Zealand)**, where the city has introduced [The Welcoming Communities Initiative](#). This program **creates structured pathways for newcomers to integrate into the local economy, education system, and community networks**. It includes **mentorship programs, information sessions, and cultural exchange initiatives** designed to **connect newcomers with local residents**. By adopting a similar approach, Sjenica could establish a **comprehensive welcoming framework that provides newcomers with access to essential services, networking opportunities, and long-term support**.

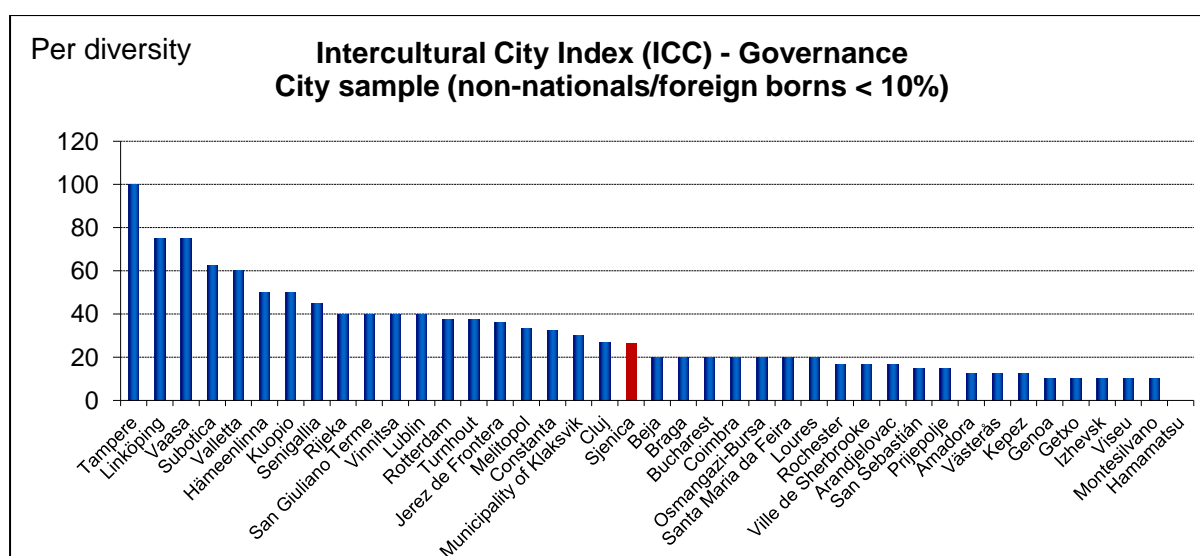
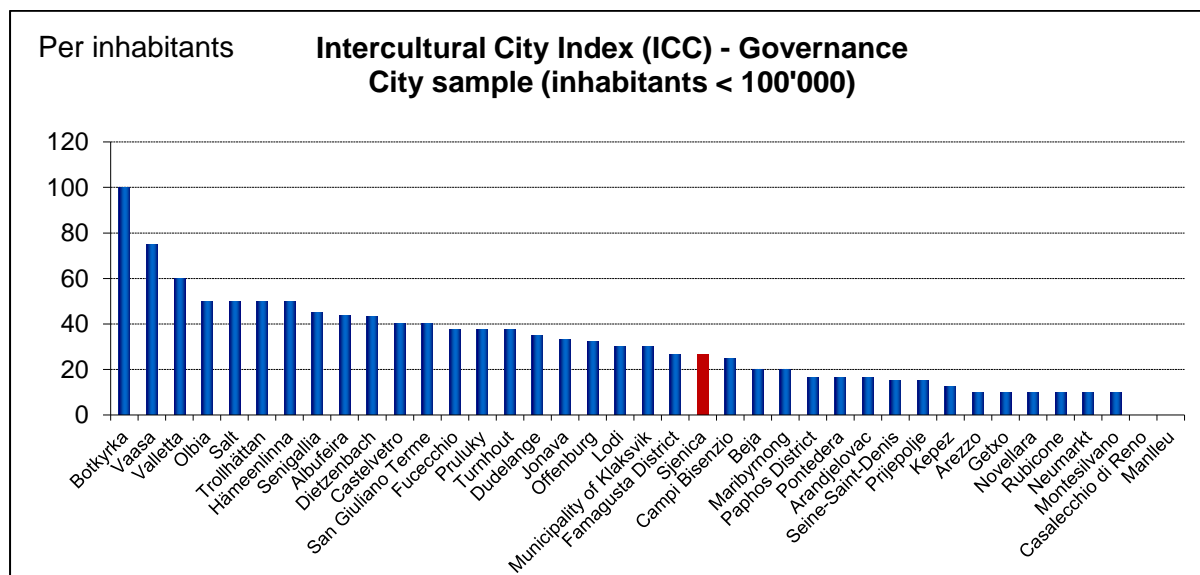
Another strong example comes from **Neuchâtel (Switzerland)**, where the city has implemented [Salut l'Étranger/ère](#), an initiative that offers **one-stop-shop services to newcomers, helping them navigate administrative processes, employment opportunities, and cultural integration**. The program ensures that **new arrivals receive guidance tailored to their individual needs, including legal assistance, language support, and social inclusion programs**. Sjenica may wish to **develop a similar initiative by expanding the role of its migrant centre into a formalized "Welcome Office" that offers structured integration support and personalized guidance**.

By formalizing its welcoming policies, expanding language and orientation services, and creating structured programs that connect newcomers with local residents, Sjenica can strengthen its ability to integrate diverse populations and build a more inclusive community. A comprehensive welcoming strategy will not only support newcomers but also enrich the social fabric of the city, ensuring that all residents can actively participate and thrive.

LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

The most powerful and far-reaching action a city can take to be more intercultural is to open up democratic representation and decision-making to all residents of the city irrespective of their origin, nationality or residence status. Formal political rights at the local level are determined nationally or at the regional level in some federal states. Nonetheless, there is much that a city council can do to influence the way in which diverse groups interact and co-operate around the allocation of power and resources. An intercultural city strives to include all residents in the policy-making process and ensures thereby that public services are provided according to their diverse needs and not according to their cultural or political proximity to public decision-makers.

Sjenica achieved a rate of **27**, which is slightly lower than the city sample's achievement rate of **37**. This result suggests that while the city is making efforts to **ensure participatory governance**, there is **room to strengthen policies that promote diversity in political leadership and decision-making structures**. Encouraging **greater representation of different cultural groups in municipal governance** can foster **trust, social cohesion, and a more inclusive approach to policymaking**.¹⁶



Sjenica has a **transparent municipal governance structure**, and residents have opportunities to engage in **public consultations and participatory decision-making processes**. However, the city does not have **formal mechanisms to encourage political participation among minority communities** or policies that **promote leadership diversity within local institutions**. There are **no targeted initiatives to support young leaders from different backgrounds**, and **no structured programs to foster civic engagement through mentorship or training in public administration**. Strengthening these aspects could help **increase representation and ensure that the city's leadership reflects its diverse population**.

Recommendations

Sjenica may find inspiration in **Valladolid (Spain)**, where the city has implemented [Valladolid Fosters Diversity Management in Various Sectors](#). This initiative integrates **diversity-sensitive policies across public institutions**, including leadership and governance structures. Valladolid has **developed training programs for public officials on inclusive governance, promoted the active participation of migrants in decision-making processes, and implemented diversity quotas in local administration**. By adopting a similar approach, Sjenica

¹⁶ Sjenica's achievement rate on **Citizenship** in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is **22**, while the city sample achievement rate is **50**.

structured anti-discrimination strategy limits the municipality's ability to comprehensively address challenges related to bias and inequality.

Currently, **there is no dedicated anti-discrimination office or monitoring system** in place to track and respond to cases of discrimination. While national legal frameworks provide some level of protection, **local mechanisms for reporting and addressing discrimination remain underdeveloped**. Additionally, **there is limited public awareness about anti-discrimination policies**, and no structured campaigns actively promoting diversity and equal rights.

To enhance its commitment to equality and non-discrimination, Sjenica could benefit from developing **a more structured local policy framework**, including stronger **institutional support, awareness-raising programs, and community engagement initiatives**.

Recommendations

To strengthen its anti-discrimination policies, Sjenica could take inspiration from **Leeds (United Kingdom)**, where the city has established an **Equalities Assembly**. This initiative provides **a structured forum where representatives of minority groups, local authorities, and civil society organizations engage in dialogue on equality issues**. By implementing a similar approach, Sjenica could create a **platform for consultation, policy development, and collaborative decision-making**, ensuring that diverse voices are heard in shaping local policies.

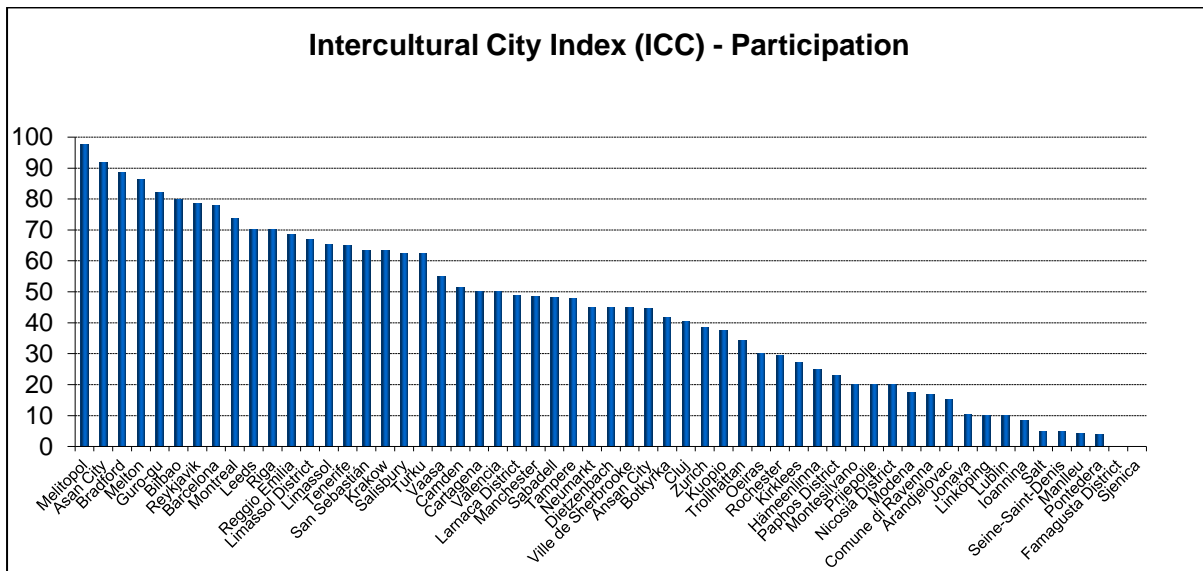
Another relevant example is **Bilbao (Spain)**, which has introduced a **Creative Anti-Rumour Writing Campaign** to challenge **stereotypes, misinformation, and discriminatory narratives** through literature and storytelling. Sjenica may consider **launching awareness-raising campaigns** that promote **positive narratives about diversity, engage local media in fighting misinformation, and foster intercultural understanding** through artistic and educational initiatives.

By implementing these best practices, Sjenica can **reinforce its commitment to equality**, foster greater social cohesion, and develop **effective mechanisms to combat discrimination and promote diversity**.

PARTICIPATION

Inclusion, power-sharing and participation are the golden keys of intercultural policy-making. A range of studies have demonstrated that inclusive integration policies produce better outcomes in terms of social cohesion, trust in the administration, safety, quality of services, welfare, good governance and economic growth. People with different backgrounds and experiences can bring innovative solutions to common challenges, as well as anticipate problems that might arise. Conversely, when people encounter barriers to participation, or otherwise choose intentionally not to participate, they may, passively, withdraw from social and public life or choose, actively, to live outside prevailing social customs and law. An intercultural city actively seeks the participation of all residents in the various decision-making processes that affect life in the city. By doing so, it increases support, and thereby the sustainability of local policies, while at the same significantly reducing the economic costs of social exclusion and instability.

Indicators on participation have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index in 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 57 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Sjenica's rate of achievement in the field of participation is 0 while the city sample is 44. This result suggests that the city is at the **beginning stages of developing policies for participatory governance and civic engagement**. While local communities may engage informally, structured mechanisms to promote participation in decision-making processes remain **underdeveloped**. Establishing participatory structures and encouraging broader civic involvement could help the city make progress in this area.



Currently, **Sjenica does not have formalized participatory mechanisms** that enable residents, particularly those from minority and migrant backgrounds, to engage in local governance. While consultations may take place on an ad hoc basis, there is **no structured platform for civic participation**, such as participatory councils, advisory boards, or community forums. Additionally, **there are no targeted programs to encourage underrepresented groups** to take part in decision-making processes, which limits the inclusivity of governance structures.

Furthermore, the municipality does not currently provide **specific funding or support** for civic initiatives that promote active participation. The absence of **structured community grants, participatory budgeting, or financial incentives** for engagement initiatives means that local organizations and residents have fewer opportunities to contribute to shaping municipal policies. Encouraging **civic participation through targeted programs, funding opportunities, and structured mechanisms** would help Sjenica foster a more inclusive and engaged society.

Recommendations

To strengthen civic participation, Sjenica could take inspiration from **Camden (United Kingdom)**, which has established various [participatory mechanisms and initiatives](#) to encourage all residents to engage in political life and local decision-making. Through **citizen forums, participatory budgeting, and advisory groups**, Camden ensures that diverse voices are heard in shaping municipal policies. **Sjenica may consider developing similar participatory mechanisms**, including regular community consultations, to **create a more inclusive governance framework**.

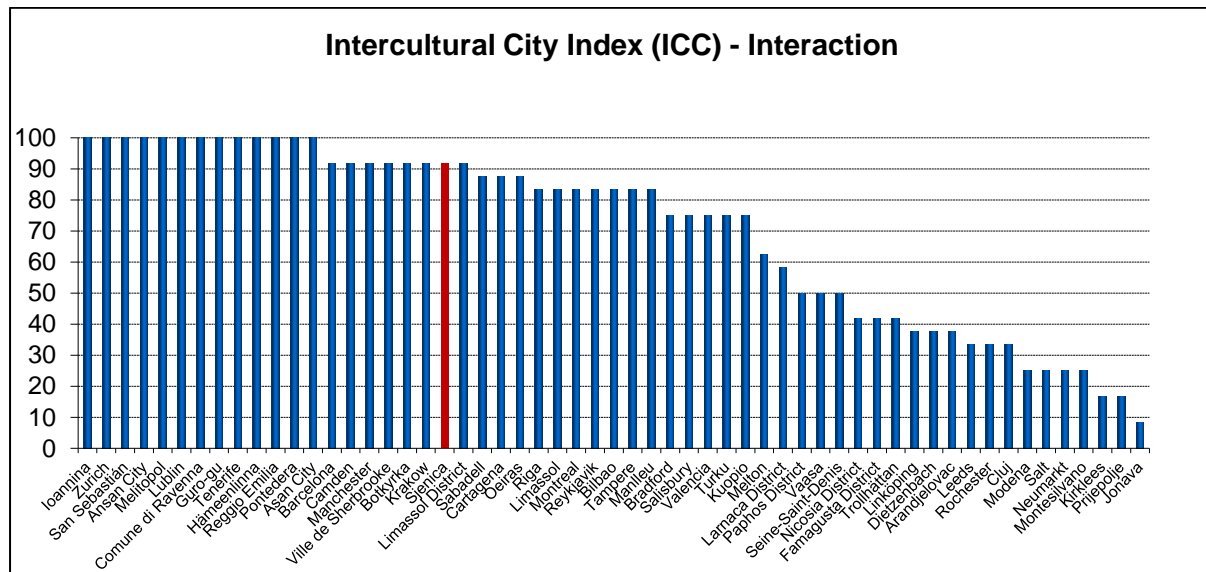
Another relevant example is **Dublin (Ireland)**, which has implemented a [Community Grants Program](#) that supports civic engagement initiatives led by local organizations and minority groups. By **offering financial support for projects that encourage participation**, Dublin fosters stronger community involvement in governance. **Sjenica may consider introducing similar grants** to encourage grassroots participation, strengthen community-led initiatives, and ensure that all residents have an opportunity to contribute to the city's development.

INTERACTION

Interaction between people of all kinds is what gives the intercultural city its distinctive value. Identity is not 'given' in a passive sense, but something which is 'enacted' and defined through interaction. In spite of protective laws, prejudice and discrimination can thrive where there is segregation or a lack of contact and dialogue between people. There is ample evidence to prove that, under certain conditions, the more contact people with different backgrounds and lifestyles have with each other, the less likely they are to think and behave in prejudicial ways. Therefore, an intercultural city develops, in partnership with other organisations, a range of policies and actions to encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups.

Indicators on interaction have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index in 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 57 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter.

Sjenica's rate of achievement in the field of interaction is 92 out of city sample of 70. This outstanding result highlights the city's strong emphasis on **fostering intercultural interaction and social cohesion**. The municipality has demonstrated a commitment to **bringing together different communities** through cultural events, social initiatives, and public engagement. Sjenica's success in this area serves as a **model for other cities**, showcasing the positive impact of structured intercultural programs.



Sjenica actively promotes **intercultural exchange** by organizing **cultural and social events** that encourage participation from diverse communities. The city places a strong emphasis on **community-led initiatives** that facilitate social interaction and foster a sense of belonging among residents. Through local festivals, educational programs, and public celebrations, Sjenica has **created opportunities for residents to connect and learn from one another**.

One of the key strengths of Sjenica's approach is **its focus on participatory engagement**, ensuring that **cultural diversity is celebrated and valued**. However, while these efforts have been highly successful, there is still room to **expand interaction initiatives beyond cultural events**. The city could further develop **structured programs that integrate intercultural exchange into everyday community life**, such as mentorship initiatives, language exchange programs, and joint social projects.

Recommendations

To build on its strong foundation, Sjenica could take inspiration from **Bilbao and Valencia (Spain)**, where **sustainable and inclusive tourism initiatives** have been used to **foster participation and a sense of belonging**. These cities have developed programs that ensure the tourism sector **actively promotes local diversity and intercultural engagement**. **Sjenica may wish to explore the potential of sustainable tourism** as a tool for social interaction, ensuring that visitors and residents alike engage in **shared cultural experiences** that strengthen community ties.

Another relevant example comes from **Ioannina (Greece)**, which established **"Akadimia," an intercultural centre** dedicated to fostering **social integration and community interaction**. This centre provides **education, training, and social programs** aimed at **bringing together people from diverse backgrounds** in a structured and sustainable way. **Sjenica could consider establishing a similar intercultural centre**, offering spaces for **learning, cultural activities, and social dialogue** to deepen long-term intercultural connections in the city.

By expanding its **successful interaction policies** with these innovative approaches, Sjenica can **further strengthen its position as an intercultural city**, ensuring that **diversity remains a core part of its social and cultural fabric**.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Sjenica achieved an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index rate of 20, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 53. This result indicates that while the city has taken important steps toward fostering intercultural inclusion, there is significant room for growth in formalizing and expanding its policies.

COMMITMENT	✓	The city has participated in intercultural initiatives and promotes diversity through public speeches and community engagement.
	✗	The city does not have an official webpage to communicate intercultural initiatives, and it has not adopted a formal diversity and inclusion strategy.
EDUCATION	✓	Schools integrate intercultural topics through cultural events and collaborations with organizations that promote diversity.
	✗	There are no targeted educational programs supporting vulnerable groups, such as Roma students, to ensure equal educational opportunities.
NEIGHBOURHOODS	✓	The city promotes social cohesion through cultural events that bring different communities together.
	✗	There are no structured housing policies to prevent discrimination or ensure equal access to neighbourhood services.
PUBLIC SERVICES	✓	Public services take into account some aspects of diversity, such as accessibility and social support initiatives.
	✗	There is no structured adaptation of public services to the needs of diverse cultural groups, and no formal intercultural training for municipal staff.
BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET	✓	The local economy benefits from cross-border partnerships and regional cooperation in agriculture and tourism.
	✗	There are no structured initiatives promoting workforce diversity, equal job opportunities, or entrepreneurship support for minorities.
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE	✓	Cultural events celebrate local traditions and engage different communities through heritage-based initiatives.
	✗	There is no structured cultural strategy to ensure that intercultural activities are sustained beyond occasional events.
PUBLIC SPACE	✓	Public spaces are designed with some inclusivity considerations, such as accessibility improvements.
	✗	There are no specific initiatives leveraging public spaces for intercultural interaction or shared community engagement.
MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	✓	Some informal mediation efforts take place within communities to address local tensions.
	✗	There are no structured mediation mechanisms or training programs for professionals in conflict resolution.
LANGUAGE	✓	Many residents speak multiple languages, which facilitates daily intercultural communication.
	✗	There are no formal language support programs to assist minority communities and newcomers with language learning and integration.
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION	✓	Local media occasionally highlight cultural events, giving some visibility to diversity-related topics.
	✗	There is no structured media strategy to promote intercultural dialogue, and anti-rumour campaigns are lacking.
INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK	✓	The city has strong international cooperation through cross-border economic and cultural projects.
	✗	There are no targeted initiatives aimed at attracting international students, professionals, or knowledge exchange programs.
INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE	✓	The city has conducted some informal consultations with minority groups when drafting local policies.
	✗	There is no structured system for collecting intercultural data to monitor diversity and inform policy decisions.
	✓	Local organizations provide some guidance for newcomers, particularly in housing and cultural orientation.

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS		There is no structured municipal framework for welcoming newcomers or ensuring their long-term integration.
LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP		Representatives from minority groups are sometimes engaged in local policy discussions.
		There are no structured initiatives to promote diverse leadership or increase civic participation among underrepresented groups.
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION		The city follows national anti-discrimination laws and supports civil society efforts promoting equality.
		There is no dedicated local mechanism to monitor and respond to discrimination cases systematically.
PARTICIPATION		The city consults community groups on some decisions, contributing to a degree of participatory governance.
		There are no formal mechanisms such as participatory budgeting or advisory councils to ensure ongoing community engagement.
INTERACTION		The city excels in fostering intercultural interaction through public events and cultural initiatives, strengthening community ties.
		Expanding structured long-term initiatives such as mentorship programs or intercultural centers could further sustain interaction efforts.

In view of the above, we wish to congratulate Sjenica for the efforts taken and we are confident that if the city follows our guidelines and other Intercultural Cities' practices the results will rapidly be visible and tangible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to the intercultural efforts, with reference to the survey, Sjenica could enhance the sectors below by introducing different initiatives:

Commitment: We recommend developing a structured **intercultural action plan** to formalize diversity and inclusion policies. City may consider creating an **intercultural council** to coordinate initiatives and engage community representatives. City may wish to establish an official **online platform** to communicate and promote intercultural activities.

Education: City may consider introducing **targeted educational programs** to support vulnerable groups, such as Roma students, ensuring equal educational access. City may wish to develop **teacher training programs** that foster intercultural learning and anti-discrimination awareness. We recommend implementing **school mentorship programs** to connect students from different cultural backgrounds.

Neighbourhoods: We recommend adopting a **structured policy on inclusive housing and neighbourhood development** to ensure equal access to housing and services. City may want to look into establishing **neighbourhood councils** to encourage intercultural engagement at the community level. City may consider co-designing public spaces with residents to foster inclusive local environments.

Public Services: City may wish to integrate **intercultural training** for municipal staff to improve service delivery for diverse communities. City may consider ensuring **equal access to healthcare, education, and social services** by implementing policies tailored to different cultural groups. We recommend setting up **intercultural help desks** to assist newcomers in navigating public services.

Business and the Labour Market: We recommend creating **incentive programs** for businesses that promote diversity and inclusive hiring. City may wish to offer **entrepreneurship support** for minority and migrant communities to encourage economic participation. City may want to look into **public-private partnerships** to support a more inclusive labour market.

Cultural and Social Life: City may consider developing a **long-term cultural strategy** to ensure the sustainability of intercultural initiatives. We recommend organizing **collaborative cultural events** that involve multiple ethnic

communities and foster intercultural dialogue. City may wish to expand **community-led arts and cultural programs** to strengthen social cohesion.

Public Space: We recommend leveraging public spaces as **hubs for intercultural interaction**, ensuring that urban design promotes diversity and inclusion. City may wish to implement **participatory urban planning** where residents contribute to shaping shared spaces. City may want to look into developing **multifunctional community spaces** that support intercultural exchange and social interaction.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution: City may consider introducing **structured mediation services** to address social tensions and promote peaceful cohabitation. We recommend offering **intercultural conflict resolution training** for mediators, educators, and municipal staff. City may wish to establish **community dialogue initiatives** to facilitate open discussions on diversity-related issues.

Language: We recommend creating **language learning programs** to support integration and social inclusion for minority groups and newcomers. City may wish to offer **multilingual information services** in key public areas to improve accessibility. City may want to look into implementing **language exchange programs** to encourage mutual learning among residents.

Media and Communication: City may consider developing a **media strategy** to promote positive narratives on diversity and intercultural dialogue. We recommend launching **anti-rumour campaigns** to combat misinformation and stereotypes. City may wish to collaborate with **local media outlets** to highlight intercultural initiatives and foster community engagement.

International Outlook: We recommend expanding **international cooperation efforts** through formal partnerships with cities that have successful intercultural policies. City may want to look into developing **programs to attract international students, professionals, and cultural exchanges**. City may consider promoting **diaspora engagement initiatives** to leverage global networks for local development.

Intercultural Intelligence and Competence: City may consider implementing a **data collection system** to track diversity and assess the impact of intercultural policies. City may wish to introduce **intercultural competence training** for municipal employees to enhance their understanding of diversity management. We recommend monitoring and evaluating intercultural strategies to improve future policymaking.

Welcoming Newcomers: We recommend creating a **structured municipal framework** for welcoming newcomers and facilitating their integration. City may consider setting up a **one-stop integration centre** to provide information, housing support, and language assistance. City may wish to implement **mentorship programs** that connect newcomers with local residents.

Leadership and Citizenship: City may consider promoting **diverse leadership programs** to encourage the participation of underrepresented communities in governance. We recommend establishing **youth engagement initiatives** to foster civic participation from an early stage. City may want to look into implementing **leadership training programs** that equip minority representatives with the skills to engage in policymaking.

Anti-Discrimination: We recommend introducing a **local monitoring mechanism** to track and address discrimination cases effectively. City may wish to implement **public awareness campaigns** that promote equal rights and social inclusion. City may want to look into collaborating with **civil society organizations** to strengthen anti-discrimination efforts.

Participation: City may consider establishing **formal participatory mechanisms**, such as advisory councils or participatory budgeting, to encourage civic engagement. We recommend developing **community grant programs** to support initiatives that promote inclusion and social cohesion. City may wish to implement **public forums and consultation processes** to involve residents in decision-making.

Interaction: We recommend expanding **long-term initiatives** in intercultural interaction, such as mentorship and social integration programs, to sustain community engagement. City may consider introducing **intercultural networking events** that bring different communities together. City may wish to develop **intercultural community centers** that serve as permanent spaces for dialogue and collaboration.

Sjenica may wish to consider further examples implemented by other Intercultural Cities as a source of learning and inspiration to guide future initiatives. Such examples are provided above for each sector as well as in the Intercultural cities [database](#).

Diversity has become a key feature of societies today and is particularly tangible in urban centres. While people of diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith backgrounds have immensely contributed to post-war prosperity, inequalities related to origin, culture and skin colour persist, and anxiety about pluralism, identity and shared values is often politically instrumentalised. The challenge of fostering equity and cohesion in culturally diverse societies has become more acute. Cities are uniquely placed to imagine and test responses to this challenge.

The Council of Europe and its partner cities have developed and validated an intercultural approach to integration and inclusion which enables cities to reap the benefits and minimise the risks related to human mobility and cultural diversity. Almost two decades after the start of this work, there is growing evidence that diversity, when recognised and managed as a resource, produces positive outcomes in terms of creativity, wellbeing and economic development.

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme invites cities in Europe and beyond to explore and apply policies that harness diversity for personal and societal development.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

