

# INTERCULTURAL CITIES INDEX ANALYSIS 2025

*Building bridges, breaking walls*



**Diversity, Equality, Interaction, Participation**

**OULU**

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## 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.

While this report is being written (March 2025) 162 cities embraced the ICC programme and approach, and 139 (including Oulu) have analysed their intercultural policies using the Intercultural Cities Index. The respective reports can be found [here](#).

Among these cities, 35 cities (including Oulu) have between 200,000 – 500,000 inhabitants and 42 (including Oulu) have less than 10% of foreign-born residents.

This document presents the results of the Intercultural Cities Index analysis for the Oulu, Finland, in 2025, and provides related intercultural policy conclusions and recommendations.

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## 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.

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## 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 two new indicators in bold):

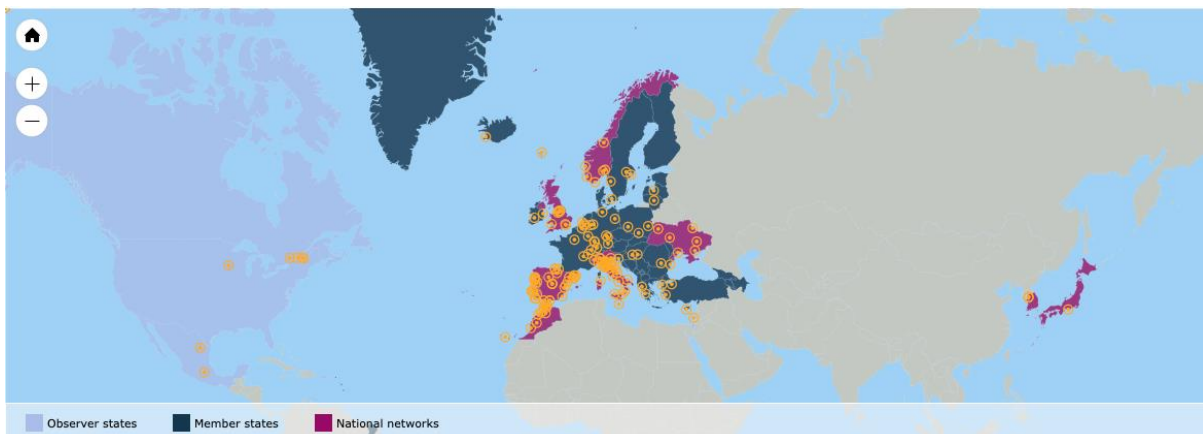
1. Commitment	
2. Intercultural lens	Education
3. Mediation and conflict resolution	Neighbourhoods
4. Language	Public services
5. Media and communication	Business and the labour market
6. International outlook	Cultural and social life
7. Intercultural intelligence and competence	Public space
8. Welcoming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

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 so far: 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, 58 cities have used the Intercultural Cities Index containing the new indicators in their evaluations, including Oulu. 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, **Oulu** has an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index result of 46 (out of 100 possible points). The details of this result will be explained below.<sup>1</sup>



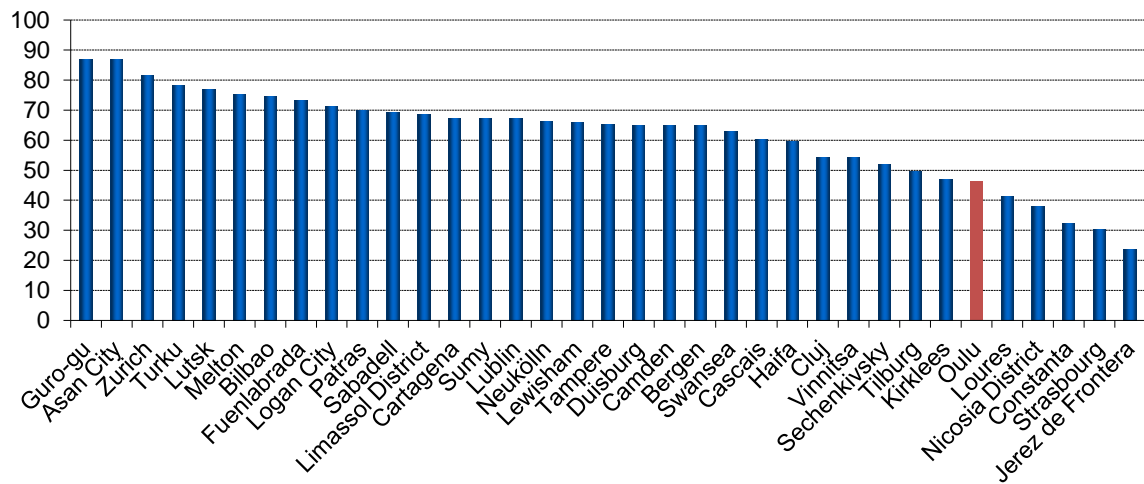
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<sup>1</sup> The original Intercultural Cities Index contained 69 questions. The Intercultural Cities Index was updated in 2019, when additional questions were added, some questions were removed and completely new indicators were added (anti-discrimination, 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.

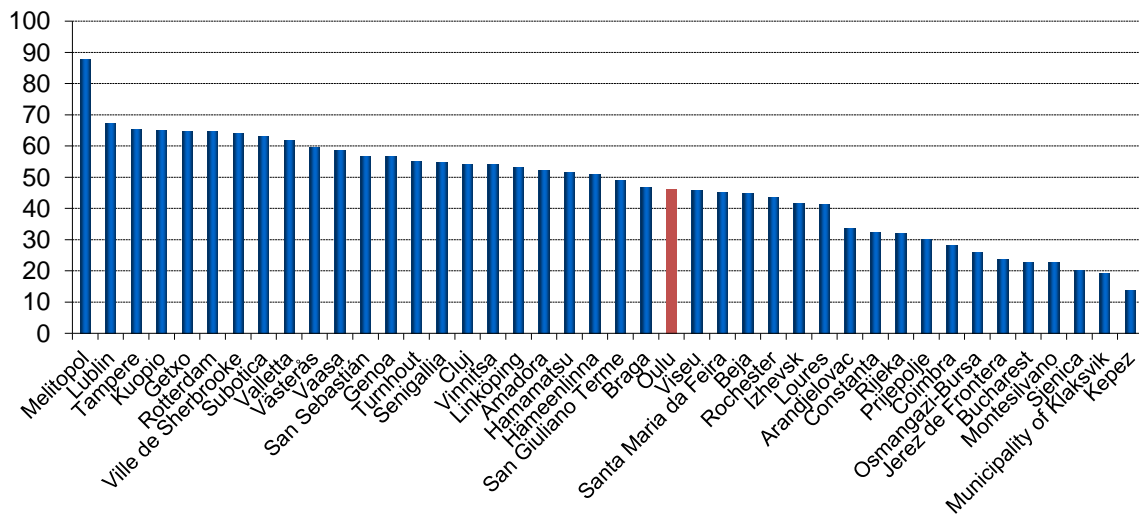
Per inhabitants

**Intercultural City Index (ICC)**  
City sample (inhabitants 200'000 - 500'000)

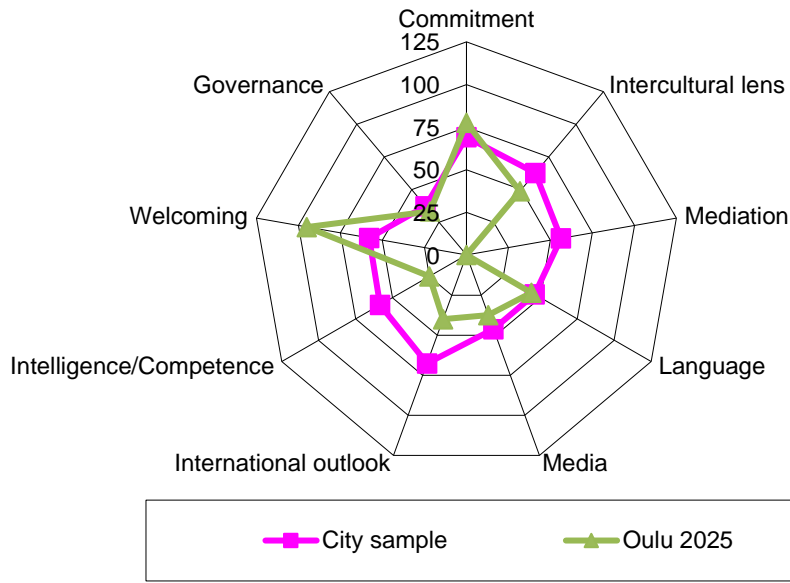


Per diversity

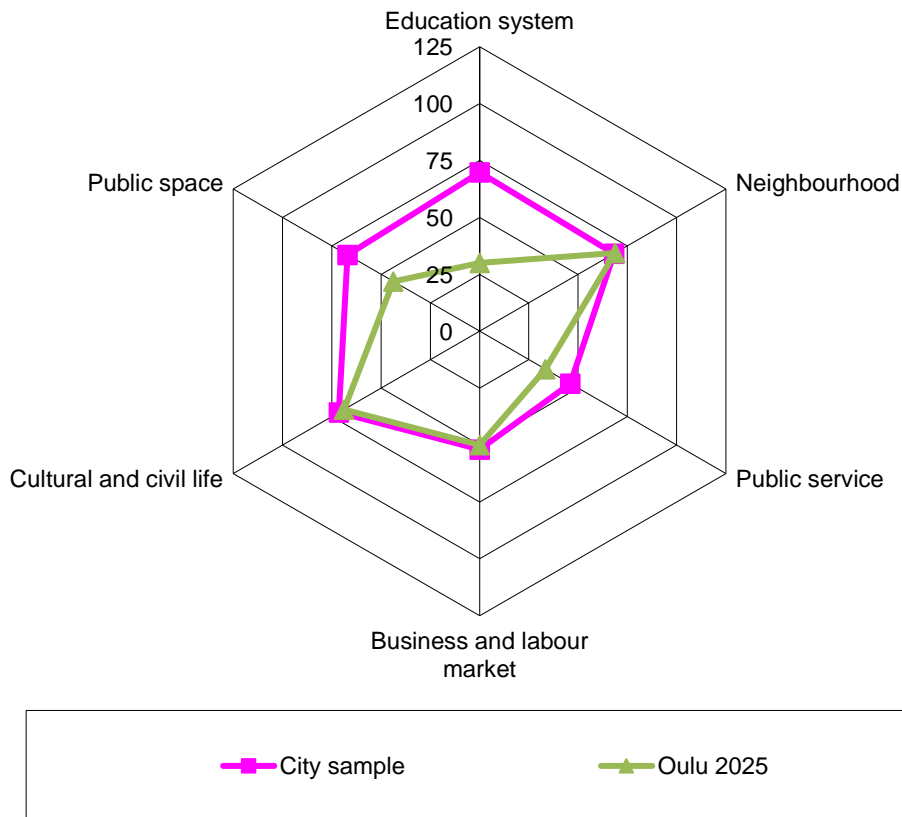
**Intercultural City Index (ICC)**  
City sample (non-nationals/foreign borns < 10%)



### Core Index

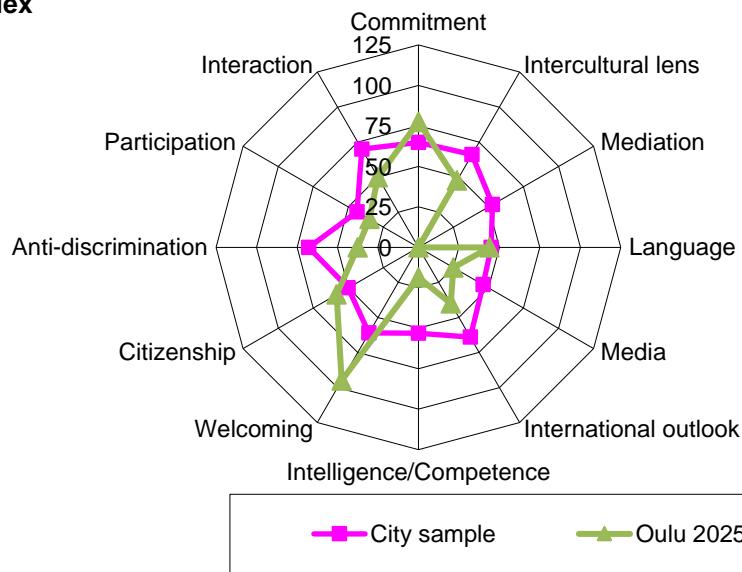


### Intercultural Lens with Core Index

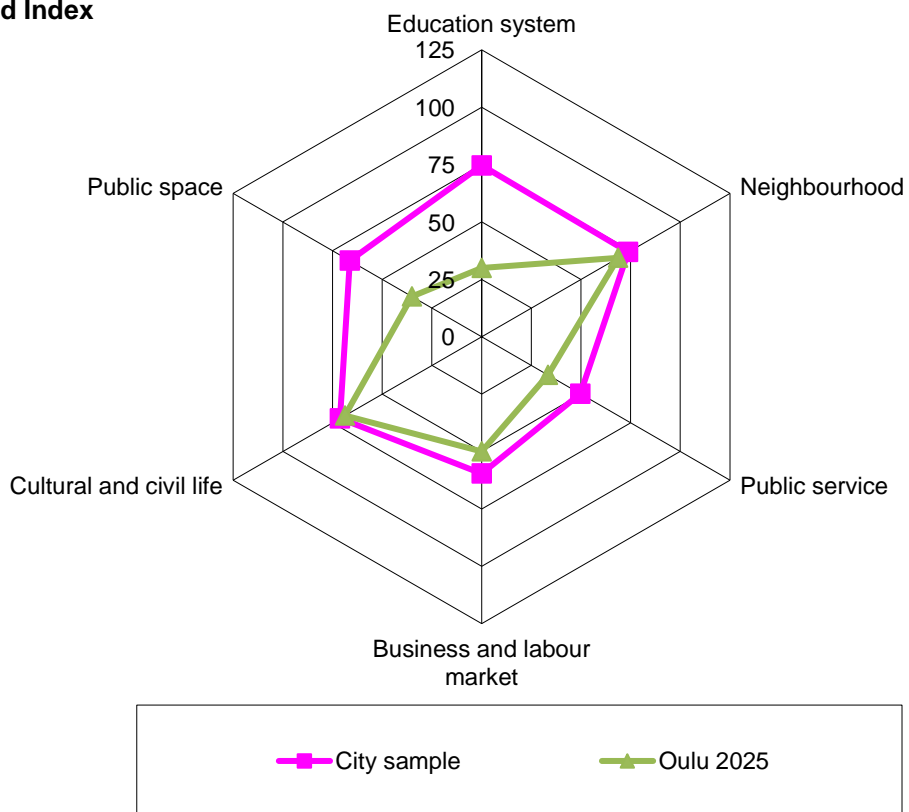




**Extended Index**



**Intercultural Lens with Extended Index**





## OULU: AN OVERVIEW

Oulu, located in northern Finland, is a city with a deep historical and economic significance. Established in 1605 by King Charles IX of Sweden, it was originally an important trade centre, particularly for tar exports, which played a crucial role in Finland's economic history. Over the centuries, Oulu developed as a key regional hub, benefitting from its strategic position on the Gulf of Bothnia. Industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries further shaped the city's economy, transitioning from traditional industries like timber and shipbuilding to a modern, technology-driven economy. Today, Oulu is recognized as a leading centre for innovation, research, and technology, particularly in the fields of information and communications technology and health sciences.

Oulu has a strong economic foundation, driven by its reputation as Finland's 'Silicon Valley', with a GDP per capita of €42,767, driven by sectors such as technology, education, and research. The city hosts numerous technology companies, research institutions, and start-ups, many of which have emerged from its prestigious University of Oulu and its internationally renowned research ecosystem. Additionally, Oulu's diversified economy includes manufacturing, biotechnology, and creative industries, which contribute to its resilience and competitiveness. The city is also a key logistics hub, with well-developed infrastructure connecting it to other major Finnish and international markets.

The city is administratively divided into 105 districts and neighbourhoods, which serve as units for planning and governance, ensuring a localized approach to urban management and service delivery. As of recent estimates, Oulu has a population of approximately 216,150, making it the largest city in northern Finland and the fifth largest in the country. Its demographic structure reflects the broader trends in Finland, with an aging population balanced by an influx of students and professionals attracted to its universities and research opportunities. Oulu has a dynamic and youthful atmosphere, largely due to its strong educational institutions, which attract thousands of students annually. The city also has a growing international community, with expatriates and professionals contributing to its diverse character.

### Statistics of Oulu



#### Population by age 31.12.2022

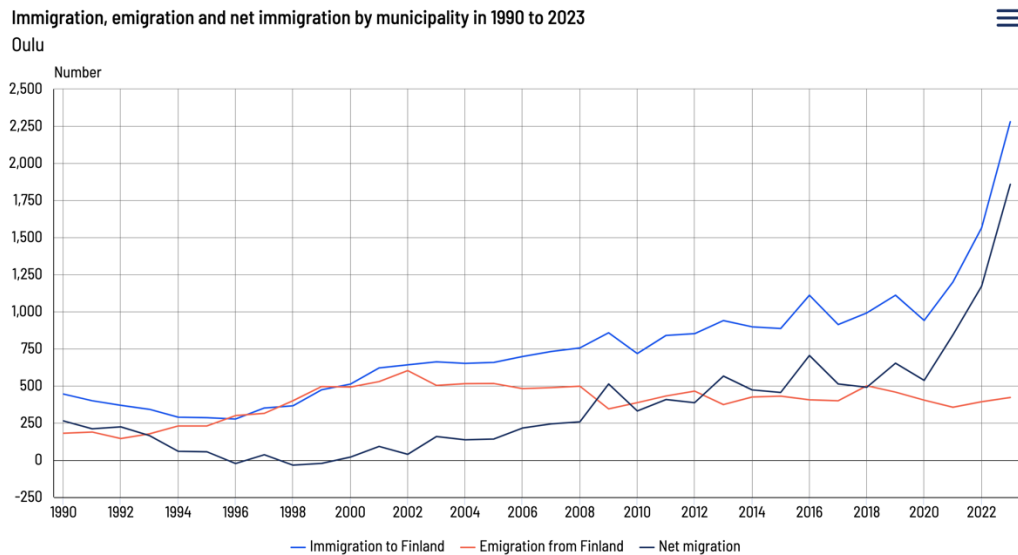


Population by background	Total	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>214633</b>	
<b>Finland</b>	<b>201593</b>	<b>94 %</b>
<b>FOREIGN COUNTRIES, TOTAL</b>	<b>13040</b>	<b>6 %</b>
<b>EUROPE</b>	<b>4160</b>	<b>2 %</b>
<b>AFRICA</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1 %</b>
<b>AMERICA</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>0 %</b>
<b>ASIA</b>	<b>6151</b>	<b>3 %</b>
<b>OCEANIA</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0 %</b>
<b>OTHER OR UNKNOWN</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>0 %</b>

Source: <https://www.ouka.fi/en/information-and-statistics/statistics-oulu>

Source: Oulu Municipality

The demographic composition of Oulu is predominantly Finnish (94%), with foreign residents making up 6% of the population. Among the foreign-born residents, 3% come from Asia, 2% from Europe, and 1% from Africa. The percentage of non-nationals residing in the city is 4.4%, while foreign-born nationals make up 6.5% of the total population. Oulu's international community is also reflected in its largest foreign-language groups: while most of the population is Finnish speaking, there is a notable presence of Swedish speakers, and speakers of English, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, and Persian. While Finland does not have a specific classification system for identifying people of migrant or minority backgrounds in statistical data, the country does officially recognize native-born minority groups, such as the Roma community. Various services and initiatives are in place to support them, including health and social services, cultural projects, educational assistance, and community support programs.



Many of these residents come for work, study, or research opportunities, contributing to the city's global outlook. In addition, Oulu has welcomed refugees and asylum seekers as part of Finland's broader commitment to humanitarian programs. The city's population composition includes both long-term residents who have obtained Finnish citizenship and more recent arrivals who contribute to Oulu's economic and social life. As a university city, it also has a transient population of international students and researchers. Oulu has become an increasingly diverse city, with a significant number of international residents drawn by its educational institutions, technology sector, and quality of life, as well as growing communities from other European, Asian, and African countries.

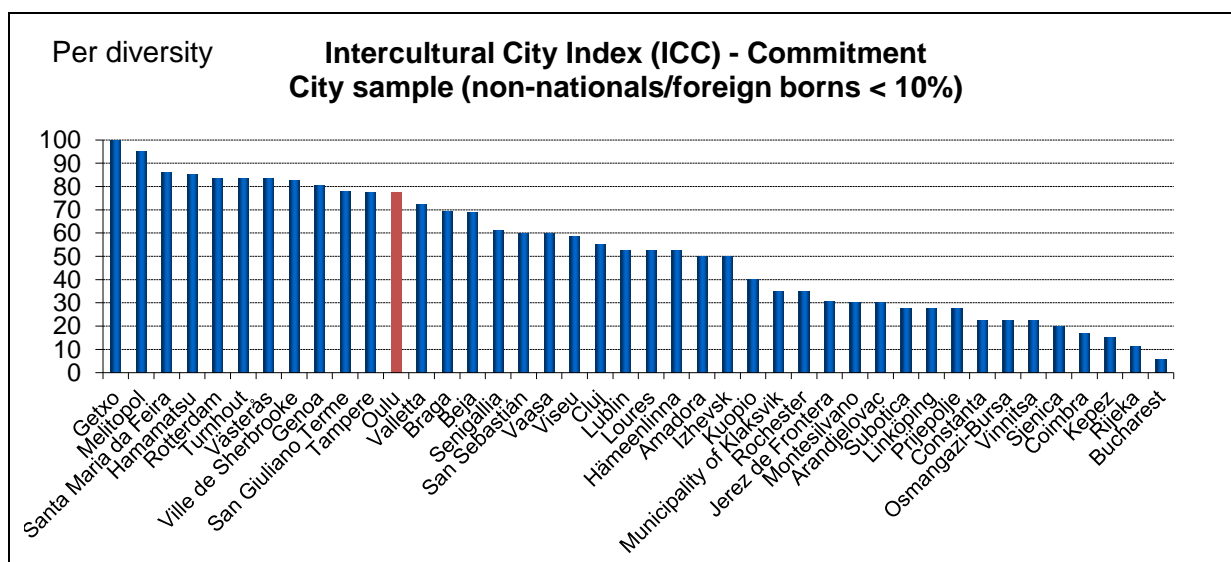
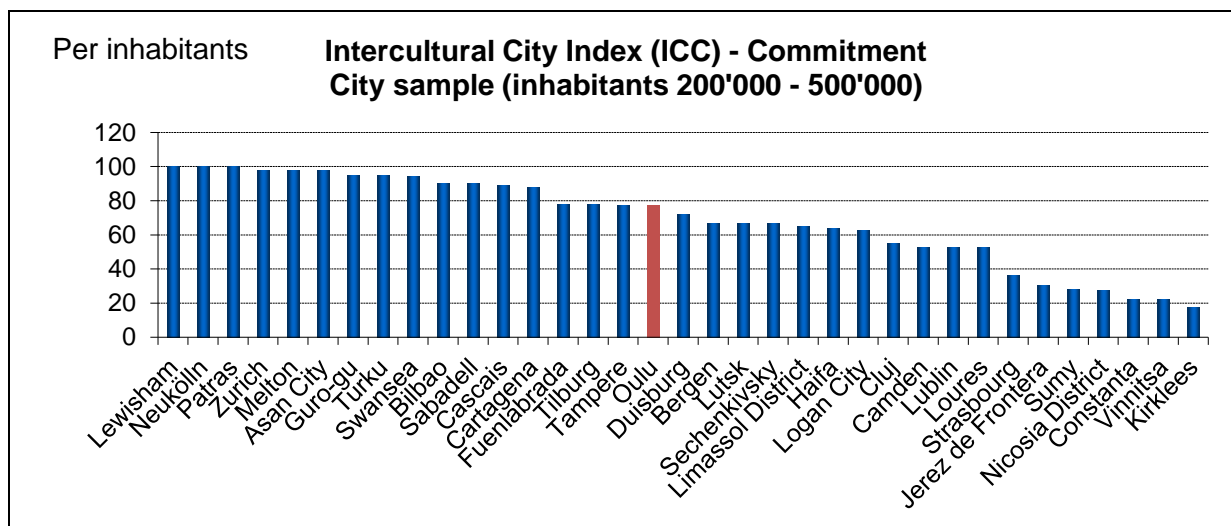


Source: <https://www.ouka.fi/en/information-and-statistics>

## 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 78%, which is clearly higher the city sample's average achievement rate of 69%.



Oulu has made significant strides in fostering intercultural integration and has formally adopted a public statement declaring itself an Intercultural City, endorsed by the local council. The city has also developed a comprehensive intercultural integration strategy, the [City of Oulu Integration Plan 2025](#) (in Finnish). Additionally, an anti-racism action plan has been approved by the city council, serving as the city's intercultural action plan.

The implementation of intercultural policies in Oulu is supported by a dedicated budget, including an allocation of 1.2 million euros from the European Social Fund (ESF) for executing the anti-racism action plan. The city actively

engages in co-design processes, involving people of diverse backgrounds in policy formulation. Notably, as part of the Eurocities project UNITES, Oulu collaborated with Ukrainian refugees to co-design its integration strategy.

While the city has established an evaluation process for its intercultural strategy and action plan, there is no formal updating mechanism currently in place. Official city communications rarely reference its intercultural commitment, and there is no dedicated webpage to communicate its intercultural statement, strategy, or action plan.

Oulu has taken steps to improve governance in this area by developing a blueprint for a cross-sectoral management and coordination structure, which is currently pending approval. However, the city does not yet have an established practice of publicly acknowledging or honoring individuals or organizations that contribute to interculturalism in the local community.

### Suggestions

The Oulu could look to several successful examples from the Intercultural Cities (ICC) network for inspiration. In Turku (Finland) there is a cross-sectional and cross-sectoral effort for reinforcing its intercultural commitment, with the city allocating funds across various services to promote intercultural initiatives. Initiatives like [International House Turku](#) and [spearhead projects](#) are part of Turku's commitment to interculturalism. There is an annual report to the City Council prepared by the Migration Work Steering Group and the Steering Groups of International House Turku, comparing the results of national and regional level questionnaires on the wellbeing of the Turku population and the wellbeing of non-native Finnish/Swedish speaking population. New methods are currently being developed to reach immigrant communities, including utilizing organizations as a means of outreach.

In Reggio Emilia (Italy), the city has officially adopted a public statement acknowledging Reggio Emilia as an intercultural city, a declaration that has been thoroughly deliberated upon and endorsed by the local council. The strategic document for intercultural policies in the city, known as [DiTutti](#), underwent a comprehensive process of consultation and approval. Furthermore, the city has a comprehensive intercultural strategy and has adopted an intercultural action plan. The [Single Programming Document](#) has adopted the references and areas of intervention linked to *DiTutti*, both as regards the programming of the municipality and of the *Mondinsieme* Foundation, linking the areas of intervention with the planning of activities and related investments.

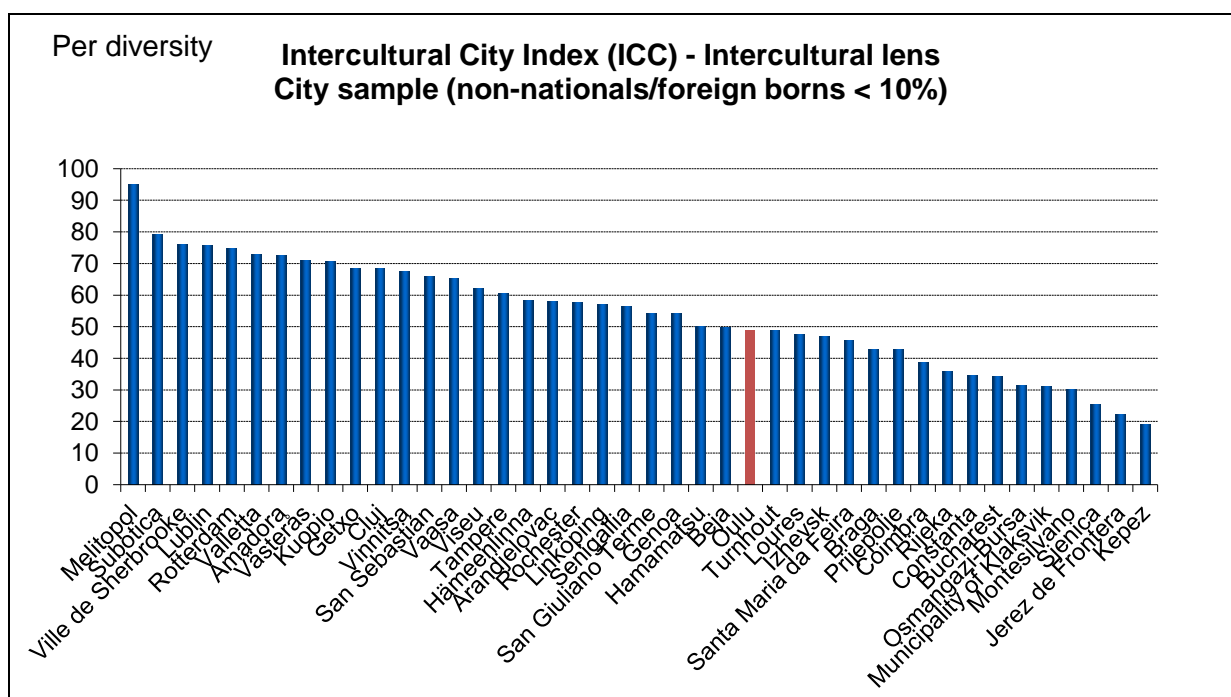
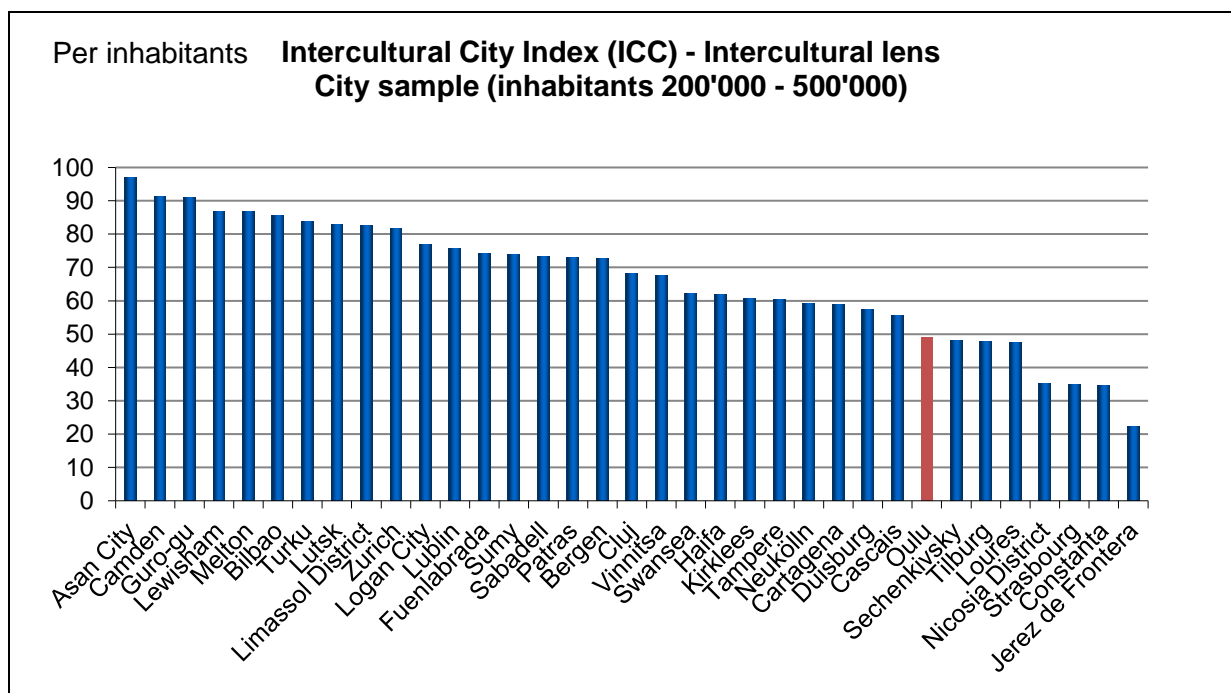
The district of Neukölln (Berlin, Germany) published "Normalising Integration - Living together in an intercultural metropolis", a comprehensive policy document that also is a set of principles of good governance. The concept was developed in a participative process including the local migration advisory board as well as the integration committee. The full version also contains the complete list of the measures and projects being implemented by the Neukölln District Office. They were developed with an intercultural lens, having in mind the district's vision of integration as the empowerment for equal participation in our society. As a matter of principle, the focus is on the people of the district as a whole. The five guiding principles of the intercultural work of the district are also detailed in the policy document and are the following: Promoting equity in education; empowering people instead of just providing for them; taking a holistic approach; acting pragmatically and transparently; and enforcing democratic values and rules.

In Dublin (Ireland), the focus is on developing an intercultural and integration strategy for the five-year period 2021-2025. Led by the Dublin City Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), this strategy is a key priority supported by former Mayor Hazel Chu. It builds upon previous initiatives and aims to be a dynamic document, incorporating input from various municipal departments and external stakeholders, including migrant and foreign community representatives. The strategy addresses a wide range of issues, with a particular focus on Dublin commuters, nomadic cultures, and the Roma population. Moving forward, the draft strategy will undergo a public consultation process to gather input from the city's residents and stakeholders. The final version, expected in 2022, will outline concrete actions across different municipal departments, demonstrating the city's commitment to anti-discrimination and social inclusion. Additionally, Dublin is establishing two stakeholder networks to support the implementation of the strategy, one internal and one external, comprising organizations and associations collaborating with the municipality.

## 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.

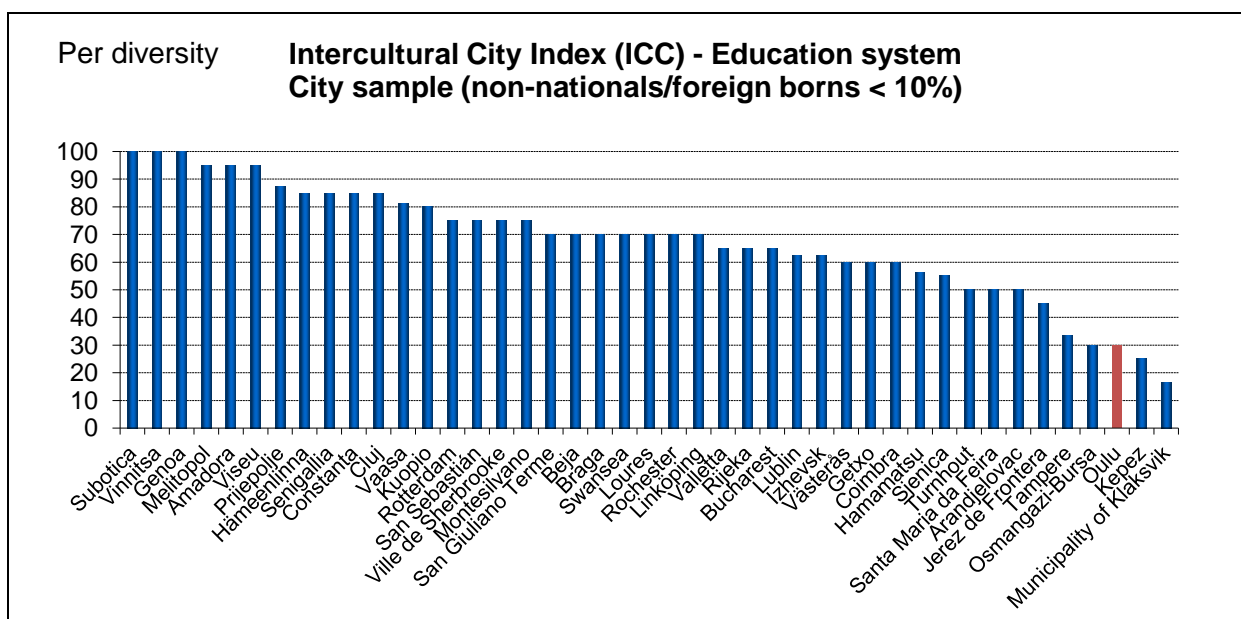
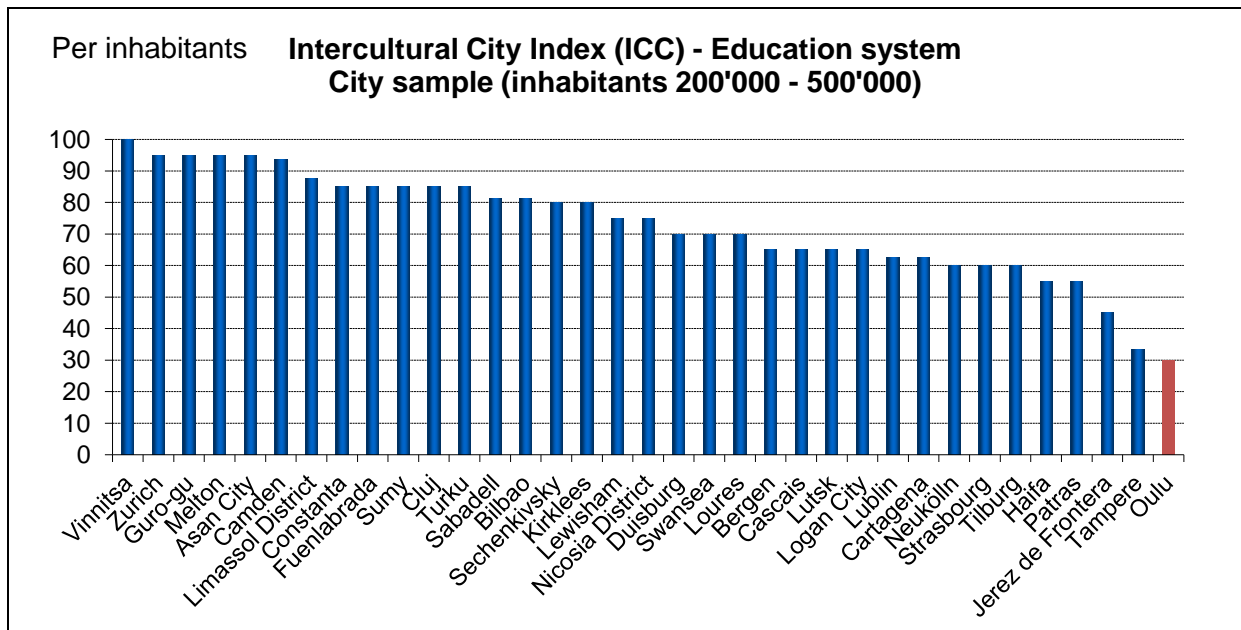
The overall achievement rate of urban policies in Oulu, evaluated through an "intercultural lens," stands at 49%, far from the model city's achievement rate of 63%.



## 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 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 30%, which is lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 70%.





In Oulu, the ethnic composition of teachers does not fully reflect the city's demographic diversity, as recruitment processes result in a low representation of minority backgrounds.

In most primary schools, almost all children share the same ethnic background, reflecting limited diversity in school populations.

While some schools make efforts to involve parents with migrant or minority backgrounds beyond parent-teacher meetings, these efforts are limited and occur only in very few schools. Similarly, intercultural projects, such as exchanges with schools of different ethnic or cultural compositions, are conducted rarely rather than systematically.

Additionally, Oulu does not have a specific policy to promote ethnic or cultural mixing in schools, meaning no city-level initiative exists to counter segregation or "white flight".

### Suggestions

Oulu has opportunities to combat segregation and foster an intercultural educational environment for students.

In Hamburg (Germany), over 20 teachers from various schools participated in the pilot project "Qualification for intercultural coordinators" to become intercultural change agents within their schools. These teachers actively engage in intercultural school projects. Additionally, around 200 teachers from different schools regularly participate in the "Intercultural Fair" hosted by the department of intercultural education and are involved in the intercultural "exchange forum" at the teacher training institute to gain new ideas for intercultural projects in their schools.

In Camden (United Kingdom), schools make efforts to frequently involve parents, including with migrant/minority backgrounds in school life, both to support parents and to encourage the sharing of culture. In addition, "Camden Learning" and the "Safer Camden Network" have worked with the local community and the Council's communications team to develop a guide to 'Life in Secondary School' that aims to support parents and their children with the move to secondary school. Translated booklets and a range of video resources, tailored for the Camden Somali community, have been produced as part of the work that the Safer Camden Network has undertaken with the local community to support children's transition from Year 6 to Year 7.

In Sabadell (Spain), most of the schools actively implement intercultural projects and engage migrant families in parent associations to promote diversity and inclusion. These projects encompass various activities such as gastronomic days, intercultural festivities, and country-specific projects. The Youth and Cooperation project involves young people in intercultural activities and cooperation efforts. The City, in collaboration with the Department of Education, provides schools with educational initiatives that complement the curriculum and foster common values. These initiatives include learning and volunteering services, solidarity campaigns, community kitchens, and multilingualism projects. Additionally, the Council offers 20 educational proposals on diversity and coexistence for schools and high schools. These activities address various topics such as storytelling around the gypsy population, rap performances promoting coexistence, games to break prejudices around poverty, and initiatives to combat bullying by fostering empathy.

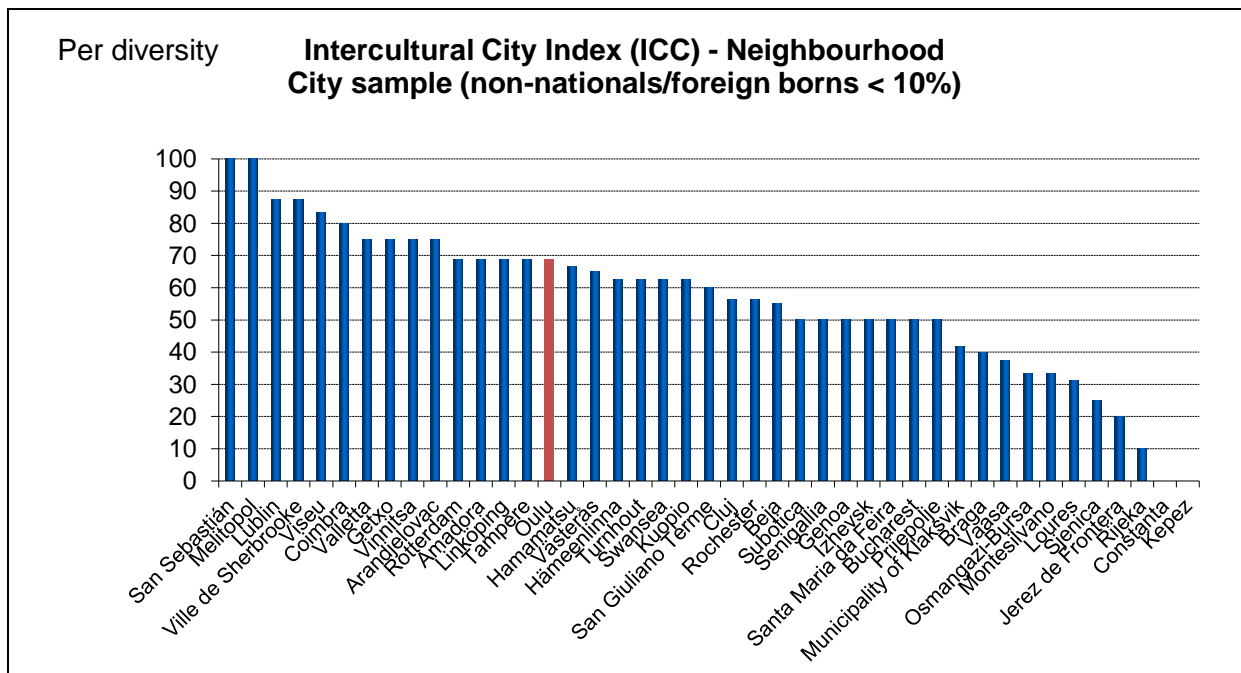
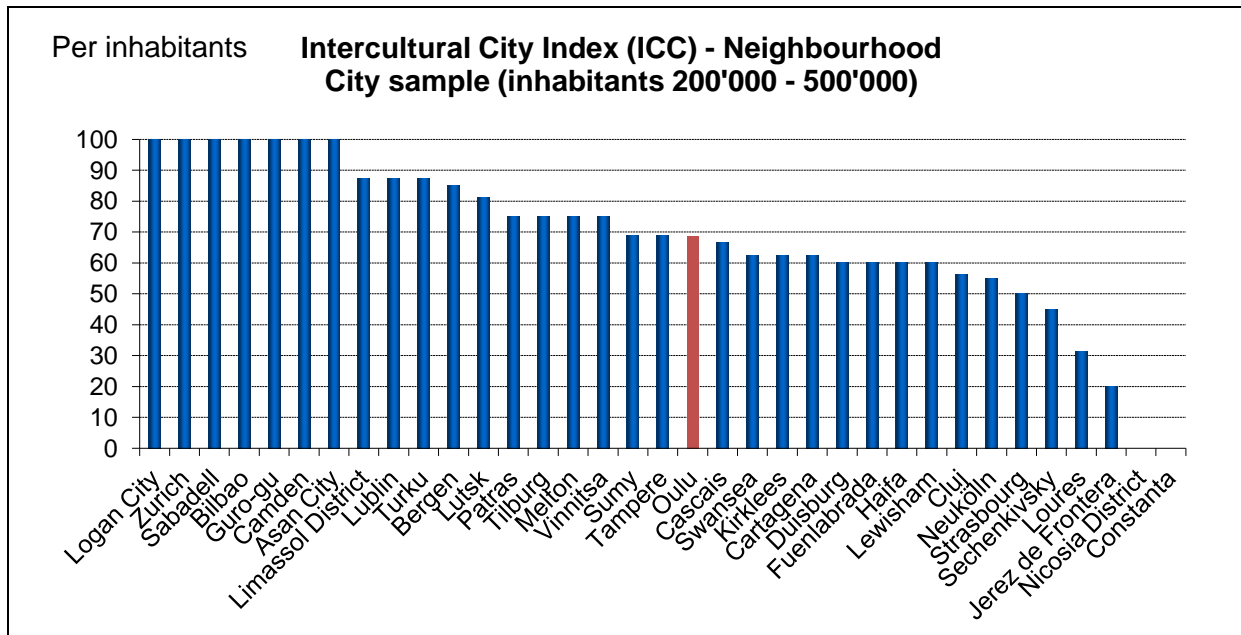
Lastly, ICC programme resources on education are also available [here](#).

## **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.*



Oulu achieved a rate of 69%, which is similar to the 68% achievement rate of the city sample.



Oulu has a relatively diverse population in most of its districts and has adopted a policy to promote diversity in residential areas and prevent ethnic concentration.

However, the city does not actively encourage initiatives that foster interaction between residents of different backgrounds across neighbourhoods. While there is no specific policy to promote interaction among residents within the same neighbourhood, some efforts are underway to develop such initiatives.

#### Suggestions

Oulu could get inspired by other municipalities' actions. In Reykjavik (Iceland) the city has introduced the "My Neighbourhood" initiative to engage citizens in online discussions about micro-level budget allocations. This initiative also promotes interaction between neighbourhoods, with the Reykjavik City Library playing a pivotal role in the process. Public libraries, often overlooked as resources, can build meaningful connections both in-person and online. [The Reykjavik City Library](#) exemplifies this by its dedication to interculturalism and its support of arts

and creativity. The library frequently hosts events across the city, catering to people from all backgrounds. Additionally, the city's cultural institutions strive to welcome a diverse range of guests, serving as spaces for community, creativity, and interactive cultural dialogue, as outlined in the “Roots and Wings” policy by the Reykjavik Department of Culture and Tourism for 2017–2020.

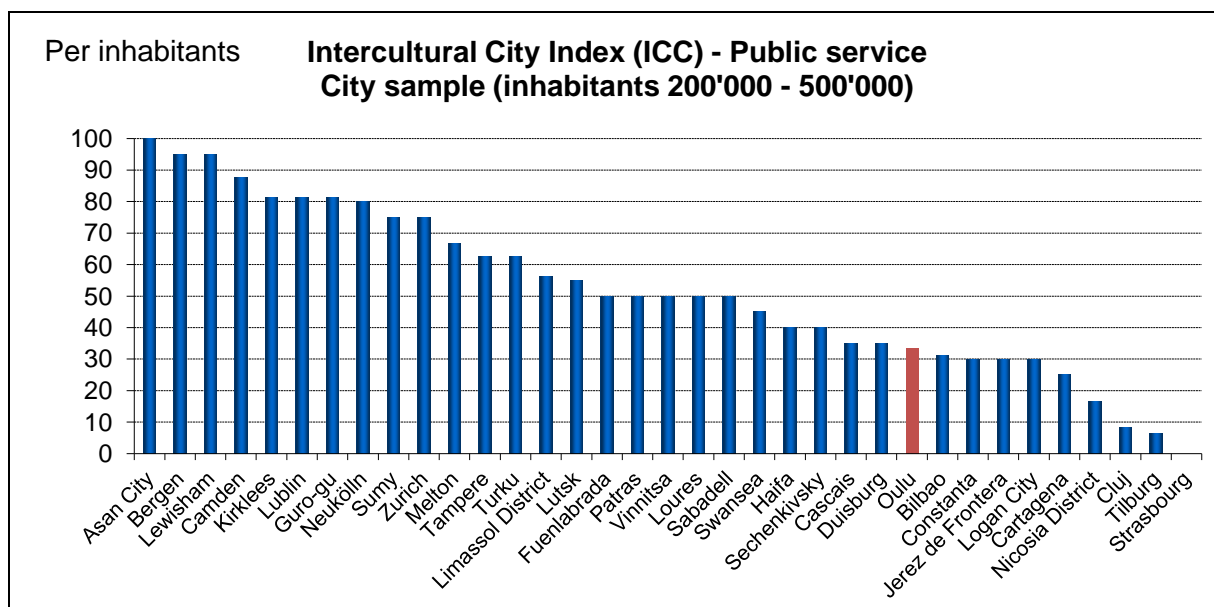
In Braga (Portugal), the city promoted the “(Re)Writing our Neighbourhood”, aimed to enhance three municipal housing neighbourhoods over three years. Through partnerships and funding, it integrated eight measures to promote community engagement and public participation. Initiatives included raising awareness through intercultural interaction, promoting Roma culture in schools, establishing community centres, and creating music programs for social integration. The project also focused on local leadership development, children's literature, employability, and empowering young Roma individuals. By involving residents in shaping their communities' narratives, the project aimed to break down stigma and promote diversity as an asset. Its success led to recognition in the European Network Urban Regeneration Mix in 2020.

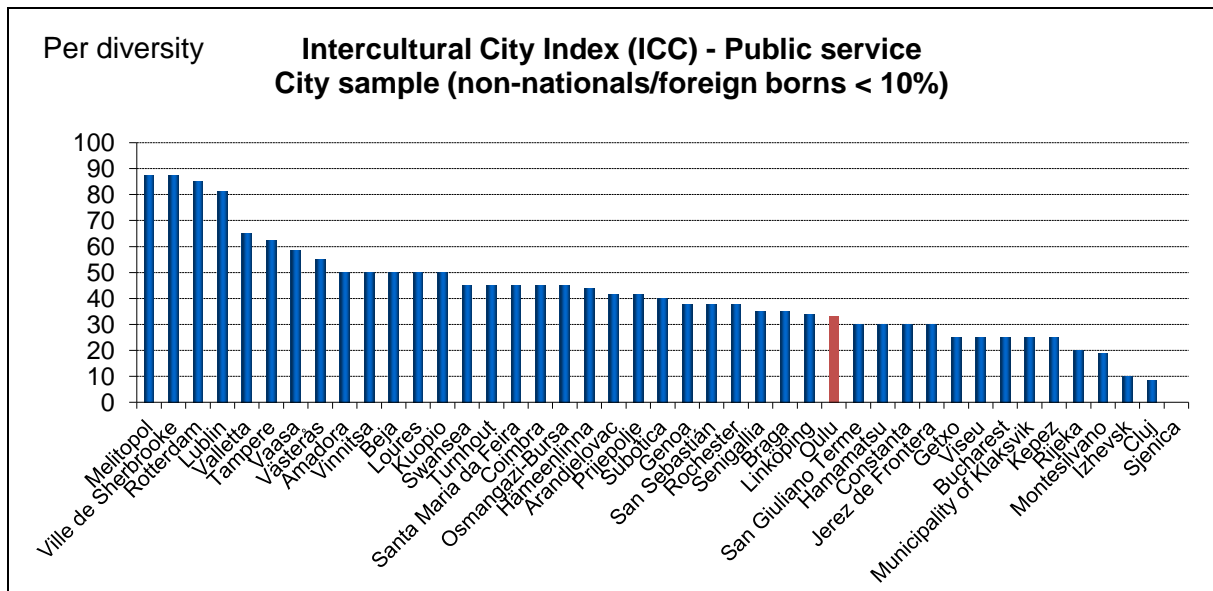
The [ICC study on managing gentrification](#) provides various strategies and examples for creating inclusive public spaces, promoting positive socio-cultural interaction, fostering a sense of belonging, and supporting the growth of diverse businesses.

## 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.*

Oulu achieved a rate of 33%, which is lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 46%.





Oulu does not have data on whether the minority or ethnic background of public employees reflects the city's population. While the city does not have full competence over recruitment policies, it is involved in advocating for more inclusive hiring practices.

However, there are no specific initiatives to promote diversity, intercultural competence, or workforce inclusion in the private sector.

Some consideration is given to migrant and minority backgrounds in public services, particularly in school meals and designated spaces for women in sports facilities.

### Suggestions

Montreal (Canada) offers excellent examples of inclusive public service policies. Its strategic programme, Public Service Policies for an Intercultural Montreal, emphasizes diversifying public sector staffing by recruiting migrants with appropriate skills. For instance, the Human Resources Department runs a work sponsorship programme, enabling candidates who face employment barriers to gain meaningful, paid work experience aligned with their training within the city. To enhance intercultural competencies among public employees, Montreal provides managers with training to promote respect for cultural differences and improve their ability to handle challenging situations. Recruitment staff at the staff assignment centre are also trained to dispel misconceptions about cultural differences, helping to prevent misunderstandings during the hiring process. Additionally, the Montreal Fire Department reviewed its recruitment practices and introduced a preferential appointment system for ethnic and visible minorities. Changes were also made to selection tests to eliminate systemic discrimination and support the integration of these groups into the firefighting workforce.

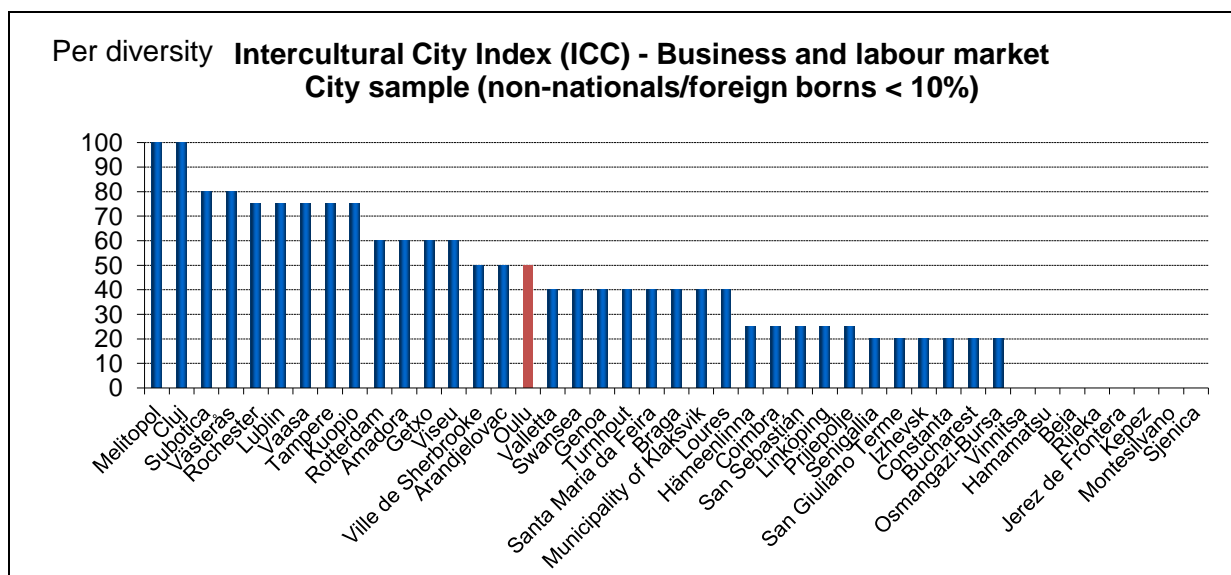
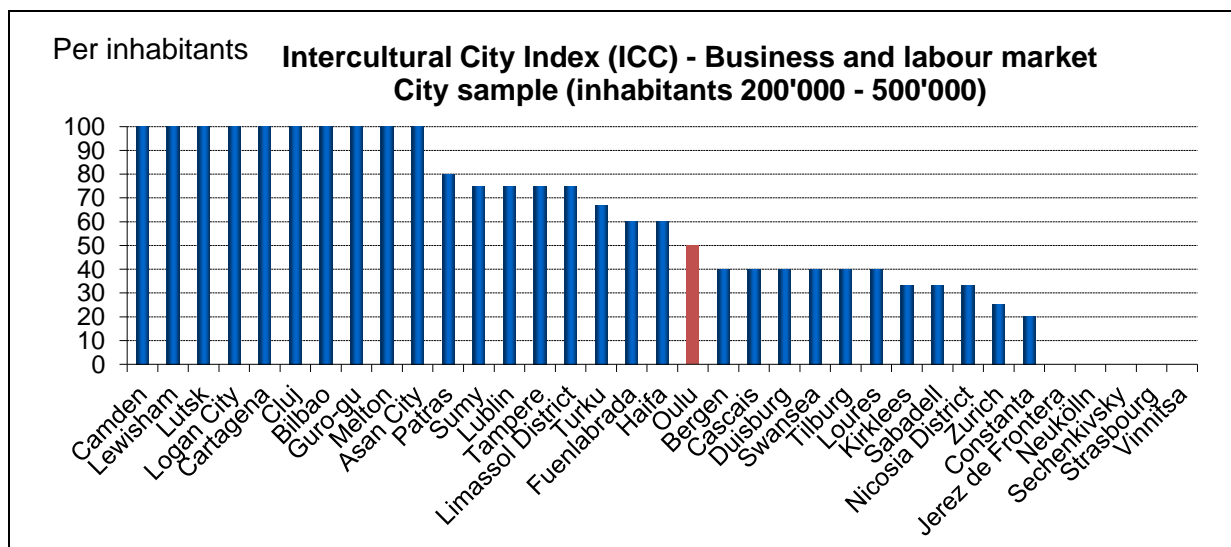
In Bergen (Norway) Inclusive Housing is a municipal initiative aimed at providing residences for migrants and refugees by ensuring access to both social housing and private sector housing. The municipality actively works to prevent urban segregation and ensures that housing for refugees is integrated into the community. According to recent data, 70% of people granted a residence permit find their housing without assistance from the municipality. However, even in these cases, the municipality plays a role in facilitating the process. For migrants and refugees facing difficulties in accessing housing, the municipality assists them in finding suitable accommodation and guides them through the rental agreement process. The municipality also checks the rental agreements in advance to ensure compliance and fairness.

Other ICC programme resources on public and community services are available [here](#).

## 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 50%, which is like the 59% achievement rate of the city sample.



There is no local, regional or national business umbrella organisation to promote diversity and non-discrimination in the labour market in Oulu. Nevertheless, the city takes actions to encourage businesses from ethnic minorities to move beyond the ethnic economy and enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors through the Oulu's [International House](#).

However, when it comes to municipal procurement, Oulu does not currently favour companies with an intercultural inclusion or diversity strategy, as such measures are not foreseen in national or regional regulations.

## Suggestions

Oulu should explore ways to encourage diversity in municipal procurement processes by learning from other ICC cities, which could also offer inspiration in related areas.

In Tampere (Finland), the city supports entrepreneurship through various initiatives, including providing entrepreneurship training, dedicated advice, and supporting start-up hubs like Platform 6 and [Tribe Tampere](#). These hubs and its collaboration with Ensimetri, serve as platforms for fostering entrepreneurship and innovation in the community. Furthermore, [Platform6](#) serves as the one-stop destination for all start-up-related activities in Tampere. Additionally, it offers advisory services in the field of [International House Tampere](#) (IHT), providing comprehensive support and guidance to start-ups and entrepreneurs in the region.

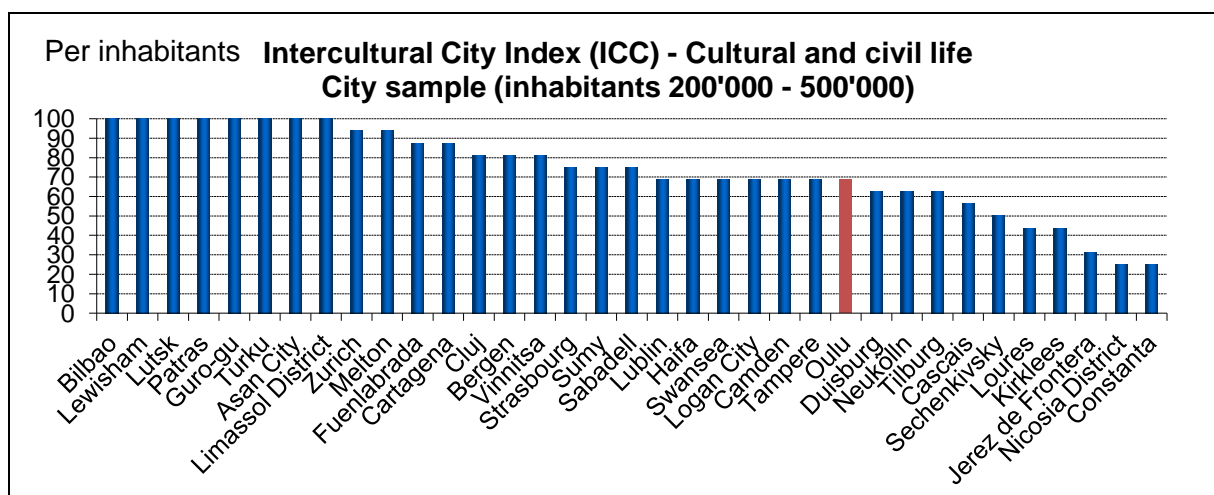
In the London-Lewisham (United Kingdom), the Birdsong company committed to produce garments using 100% natural or reclaimed fibres. By manufacturing ethically, locally and with sustainable fabrics like bamboo, Tencel, organic cotton, hand-woven fairly traded Khadi (from women's co-operatives in India) and reclaimed fabrics from charities, Birdsong is making a blueprint for a better fashion industry. Whilst most garment workers are paid poverty wages, and even in the United Kingdom often are exploited, Birdsong is committed to pay a London Living Wage of at least £10.75 per hour to lift women and their families out of poverty. All packaging and postage are done ethically by Mail Out. Mail Out offers people with learning disabilities support with their health and wellbeing and apprenticeships in warehousing. This contrasts with the way that many e-commerce businesses operate, with warehouse staff frequently laid off for poor health, and facing poor pay and working conditions across the world as well as in the United Kingdom. Birdsong also uses recycled packaging materials for each and every order and is looking into switching to a provider who also offsets their carbon usage.

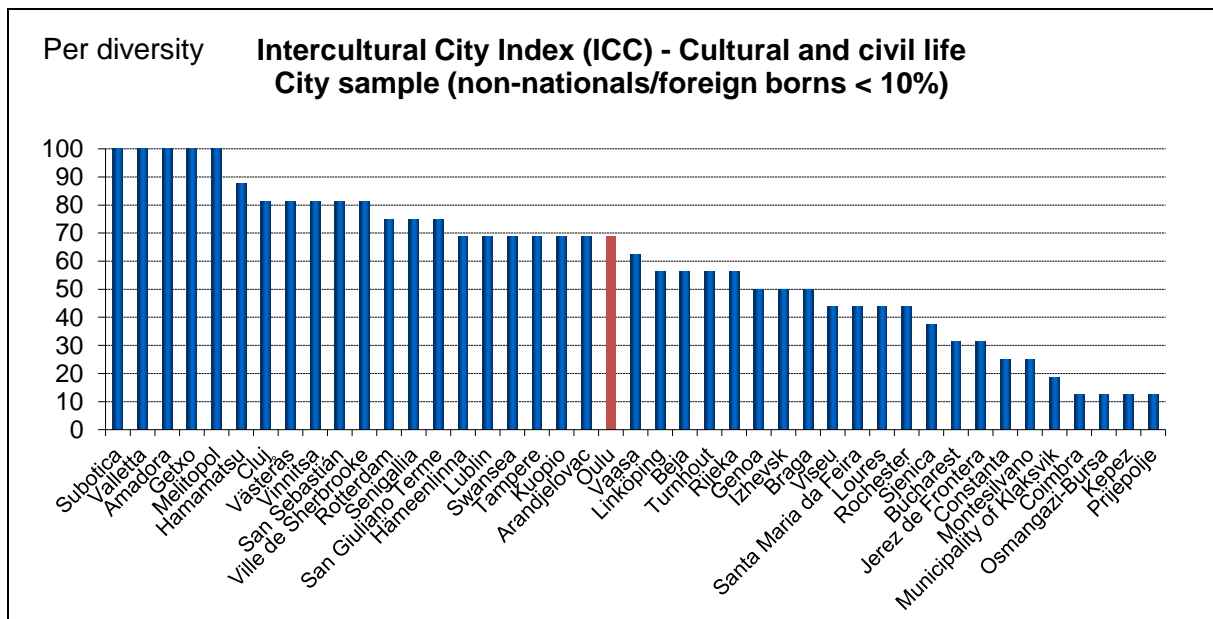
ICC programme resources on business and employment are available [here](#).

## 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 69% in cultural and civil life, which is lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 71%.





The city regularly organizes events and activities in arts, culture, and sports that encourage interaction between people of different ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, cultural organizations are actively encouraged to address diversity and intercultural relations in their productions through grants or regulations.

The city encourages cultural organisations to deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions. As [European Capital of Culture 2026](#), the city is involved in various actions and projects to promote diversity in cultural events.

Occasionally, the city organises public debates or campaigns about cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Oulu does not use interculturalism as a criterion when allocating funds to associations and initiatives.

### Suggestions

A valuable example to draw inspiration from is the [Festival delle Culture](#) in Ravenna, Italy. This initiative actively engages immigrant associations, volunteers, and local residents in organizing festival activities, guided by facilitators from Ravenna’s Municipality. The festival promotes social participation, encourages the involvement of immigrant associations in shaping public narratives, and addresses themes such as global citizenship, combating stereotypes, human rights, and cultural identity through debates, seminars, exhibitions, and cultural performances.

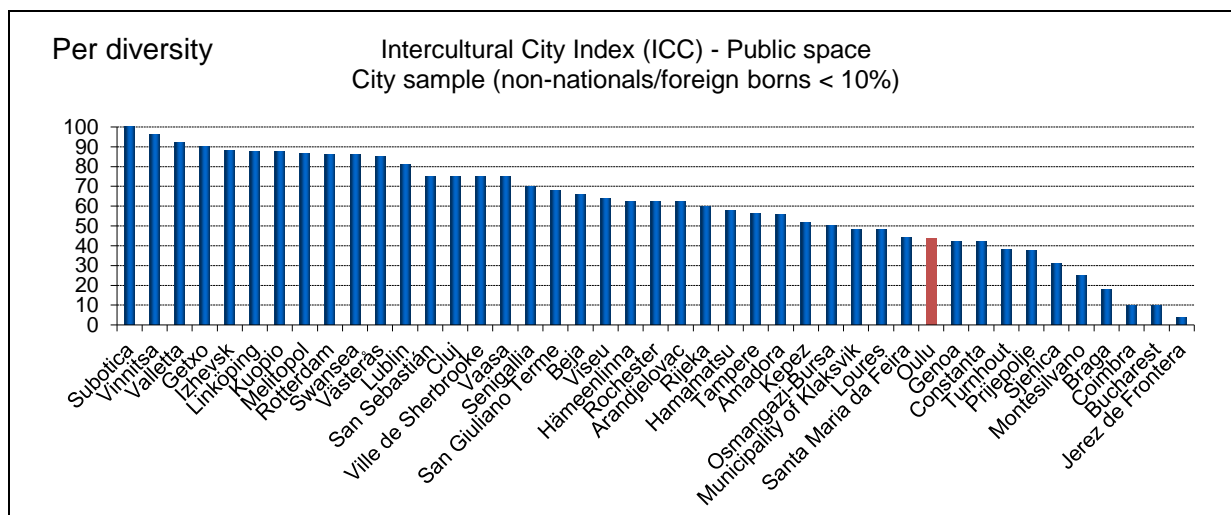
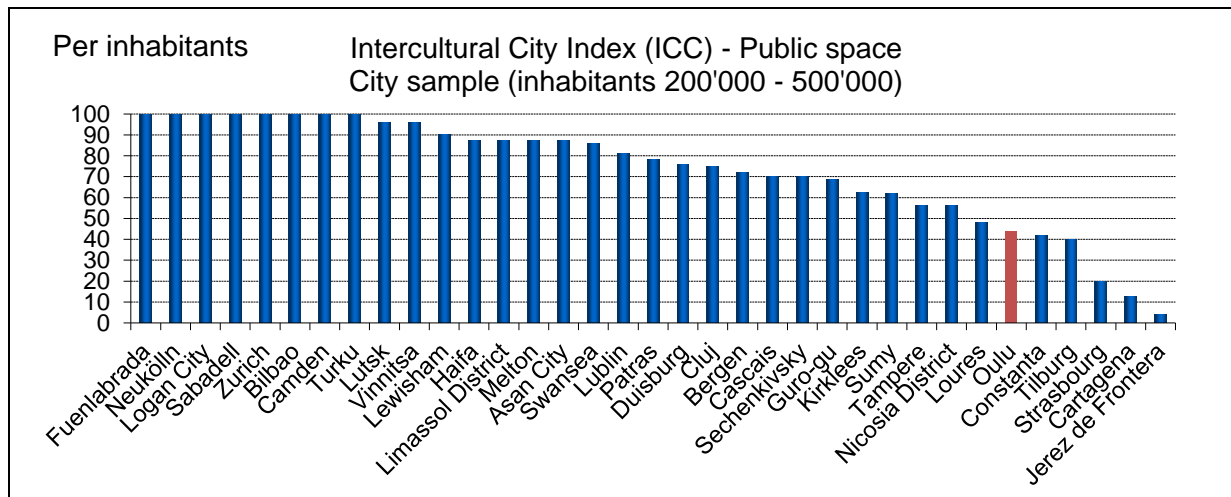
Limassol District (Cyprus) regularly organizes events that encourage interaction among people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Activities such as “*Musical Footprints 2024*” and “*Bus 30*” are part of the Limassol’s action plan, while Ypsonas organized the *Intercultural Street Festival* in 2023. Under the initiative “*Out There Together*”, the Lemesos 2030 bid team, in collaboration with the Intercultural Council/Network, has mapped and co-organized numerous inclusive cultural events. Programs like [Multicoloured Music](#) focuses on social music inclusion for children from deprived areas, many of whom are of migrant origin.

Furthermore, in Sherbrooke (Canada), the municipality aims to make its plural reality visible, valued and recognised by collaborating with the “The thousand faces of Sherbrooke” ([Sherbrooke aux mille visages](#) – French only) with the aim to open up to differences and to get to know each other better as a community, without judgment. The city wishes to offer its residents the possibility of affirming their belonging to a community that shares the same living space: whatever their origins, nationalities, religions, or languages spoken, the city’s residents have that in common: they belong to Sherbrooke.

## 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 44% rate, which is lower than the city sample’s achievement of 67%.



Oulu does not have areas dominated by a single ethnic group where others feel unwelcome or unsafe. For this reason, the city does not have a defined policy to address these issues.

Oulu takes some steps to promote intercultural interaction in public spaces, with initiatives in libraries, museums, and parks. However, no specific efforts have been made in playgrounds, squares, or other public spaces to encourage meaningful intercultural mixing.

The city does not systematically consider population diversity in the design, renovation, and management of public buildings or spaces. Additionally, there is no structured consultation process to ensure the involvement of migrant and minority communities in urban redevelopment projects.



## Suggestions

Cities are encouraged to strengthen policies and actions to support a public space for all. In this context, the Oulu can implement small steps to start implementing significant measures in this area and encouraging the use of public space.

In Leeds (United Kingdom), the city launched an initiative to transform a common public space through cooperation. The city demonstrates a commitment to inclusive public spaces through its 'Our Spaces' Strategy, which aims to cater to all ages, abilities, and diverse communities. Several projects have been implemented, including the creation and improvement of spaces like Playhouse Gardens, Woodhouse Gardens, and Queen Square, with more planned for areas like Cookridge Street and Meadow Lane. The city employs stakeholder mapping exercises to engage relevant groups early in the project development process, ensuring their feedback is considered in project outcomes. Additionally, initiatives like the communications campaign in Harehills address community cohesion by involving multiple sectors and partners to promote positive behaviour and facilitate local resident engagement through various activities.

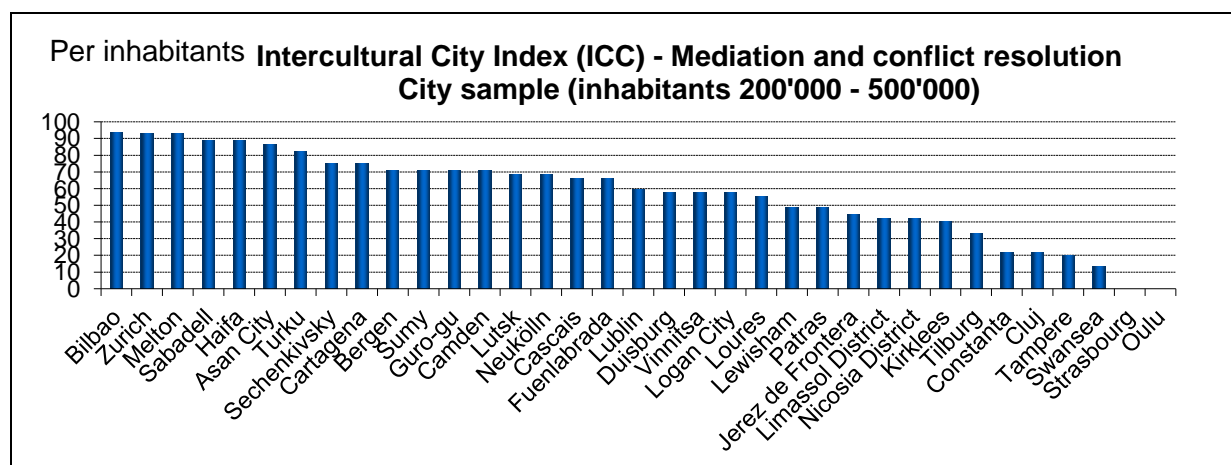
The ICC has launched the [Intercultural Cities in Placemaking](#), a pilot capacity-building project designed by Placemaking Europe. The aim of the pilot project is to build awareness and practical knowledge of placemaking in a way that allows it to foster important long-term change. It is a continuous learning programme designed for municipal public administrations, during which new standards for elevating communities through better public space are set. The final goal is to create a next generation of placemaking experts in governance that can contribute to shaping more human-centered cities for increased well-being and inclusion. Bergen (Norway), Reggio Emilia (Italy), Vila Nova de Famalicão (Portugal), Vinnytsia (Ukraine), and Wroclaw (Poland) are the ICC cities involved in the project.

ICC programme resources on housing, public spaces and urban planning are available [here](#).

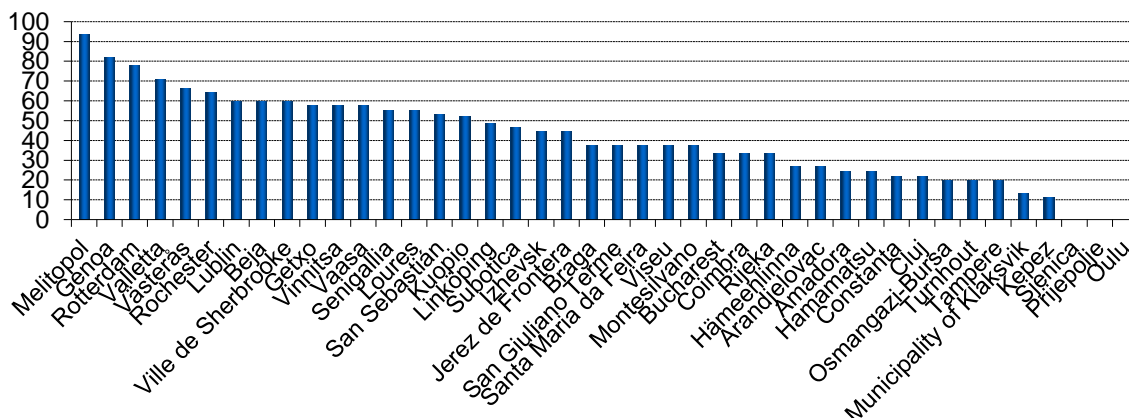
## MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

*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.*

Oulu achieved a rate of 0%, which is lower than the city sample's achievement of 56%.



Per diversity **Intercultural City Index (ICC) - Mediation and conflict resolution**  
**City sample (non-nationals/foreign borns < 10%)**



Oulu does not currently provide professional mediation services for intercultural communication or conflict resolution, either through municipal or civil society initiatives.

There are no intercultural mediation services available in institutions such as hospitals, police, or neighbourhood outreach programs.

Additionally, the city does not have an organization specifically dedicated to inter-religious relations, whether municipal, civil society-led, or state-run.

Suggestions

Establishing a specialized body for intercultural mediation and conflict prevention could offer significant benefits to the municipalities within the Oulu. This body could be developed through collaboration between municipalities or in partnership with other public or political organizations.

For example, in Barcelona (Spain), various [mediation services](#) are designed to support municipal service professionals in enhancing intercultural communication and addressing potential conflicts among individuals and groups from diverse cultural backgrounds. These services aim to act as a bridge between different perspectives and worldviews, fostering dialogue, constructive relationships, and harmonious coexistence among citizens. Additionally, they strive to improve access to municipal services, promoting understanding, acceptance, and the right to information.

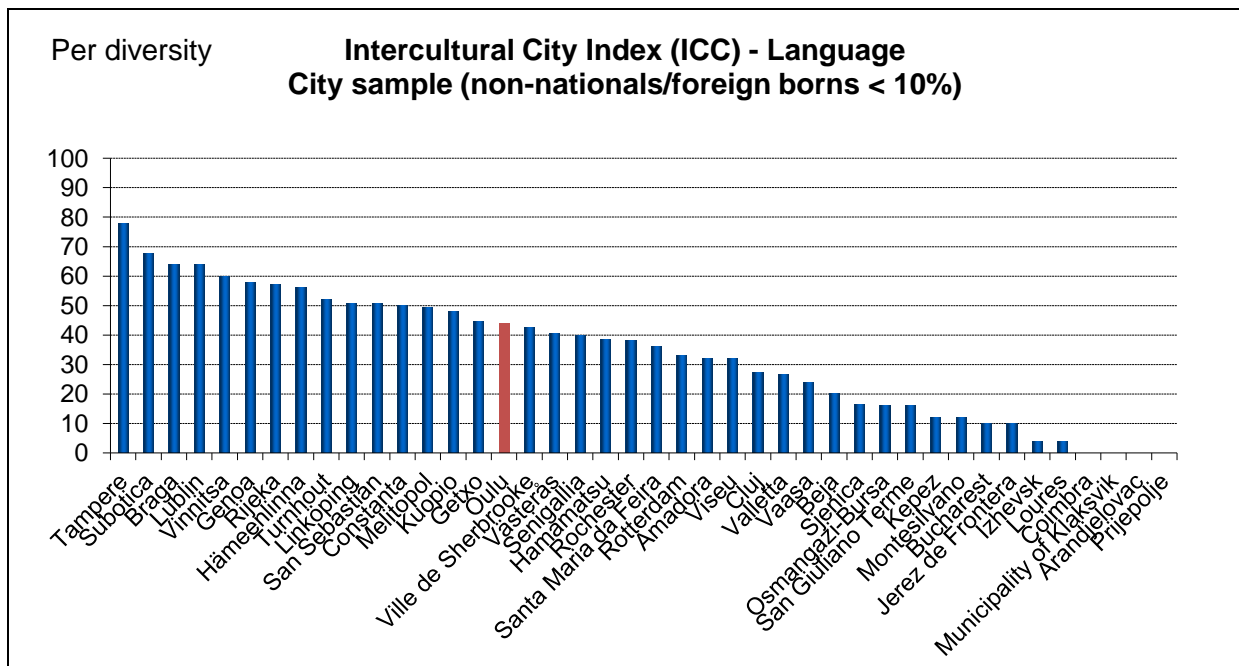
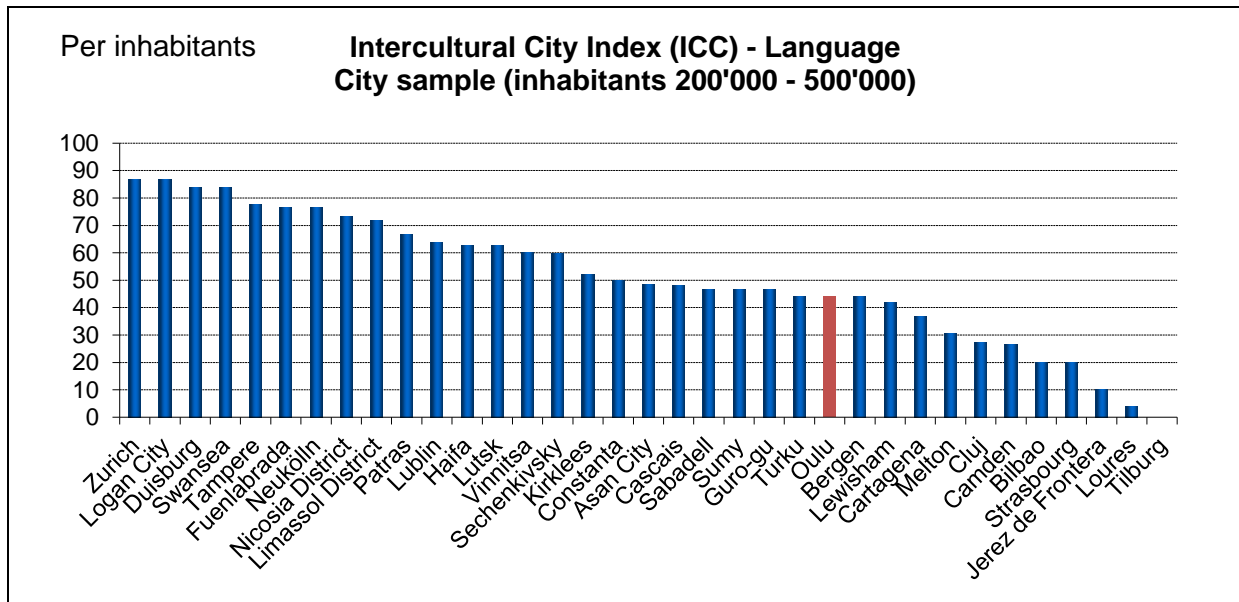
In Modena (Italy), the [Punto d'accordo - Centro di mediazione dei conflitti](#) is the social mediation centre of the Municipality of Modena, which deals with the peaceful resolution of small conflicts such as disputes with neighbours, among relatives, disagreements between young people and adults, and misunderstandings between teachers, parents, and students. The social mediation service offered by the center is free of charge. The centre provides information and guidance to citizens experiencing conflict situations, listens to the parties involved, mediates between them, and designs and manages negotiation interventions. Mediation, conducted by a third party, allows the parties to tell their conflict, facilitating a reopening of dialogue. "Punto d'Accordo" was initiated by the Centro Servizi per il Volontariato di Modena, the Municipality of Modena, and Acer Modena. The structure also collaborates with Social Services, the Municipal Departments of Environment, Education, Youth Policies, and Sports, the Family Centre, schools, municipal police, sports clubs, the Foreigners Centre, district offices, and volunteer associations.

Moreover, ICC programme resources on intercultural competence and mediation are available [here](#).

## 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.

Oulu achieved a rate of 44%, significantly similar than the sample's achievement rate of 46%.



Oulu provides some services to support language competences, including specific language training in the official language(s) for hard-to-reach groups, although these efforts are not fully comprehensive.

The city also incorporates migrant and minority languages into the regular school curriculum and offers mother tongue courses for migrant and minority children, though these are not widely available to the general population. Most of these [services](#) are provided in the Oulu's International House.

However, there are no structured programmes to teach migrant languages as a regular language option for all students, nor does the city provide support for private or civil sector organisations offering language training.

Oulu does not provide logistical or financial support to raise awareness of migrant and minority languages through local media, such as newspapers, radio, or TV programmes. Additionally, the city does not actively support projects aimed at promoting a positive image of migrant and minority languages.

### Suggestions

Oulu could explore the possibility of raising awareness of migrant and minority languages through local media, and encouraging initiatives to teach migrant languages.

One inspiring example could be the [Johannes Learning Centre](#) in Stavanger (Norway), a primary institution for building language competence, which has evolved from focusing exclusively on teaching Norwegian to promoting bilingualism and multilingualism with a diverse staff. Originally staffed solely by Norwegians, 40% of the current staff now come from minority backgrounds. The centre's main aim is to provide newcomers, both children and adults, with the Norwegian language skills and education needed for equal access to the labour market.

In Lisbon (Portugal), the city, alongside the Portuguese Ministry of Health, has collaborated with local NGOs and hospitals to produce [multilingual health manuals](#). These leaflets were created in partnership with migrant community groups, who identified key topics such as pregnancy, childbirth, STD prevention, and diabetes. The manuals also included illustrations to explain each topic. Community mediators were hired to facilitate discussions with local groups, assist in writing and translating the content, making the development process participatory.

In Reykjavik (Iceland), the city's Department of Education and Youth runs the "Centre of language and literacy" project with the cooperation with the Mother Tongue association. Due to the consistently rising number of immigrant families in the capital of Iceland and the difficulties that students, parents and teachers experience with this increase, the Department of Education and Youth initiated the project "Centre of language and literacy". The centre covers that policy's emphasis concerning the teaching of Icelandic as a second language, active bilingualism and co-operation between parents and schools.

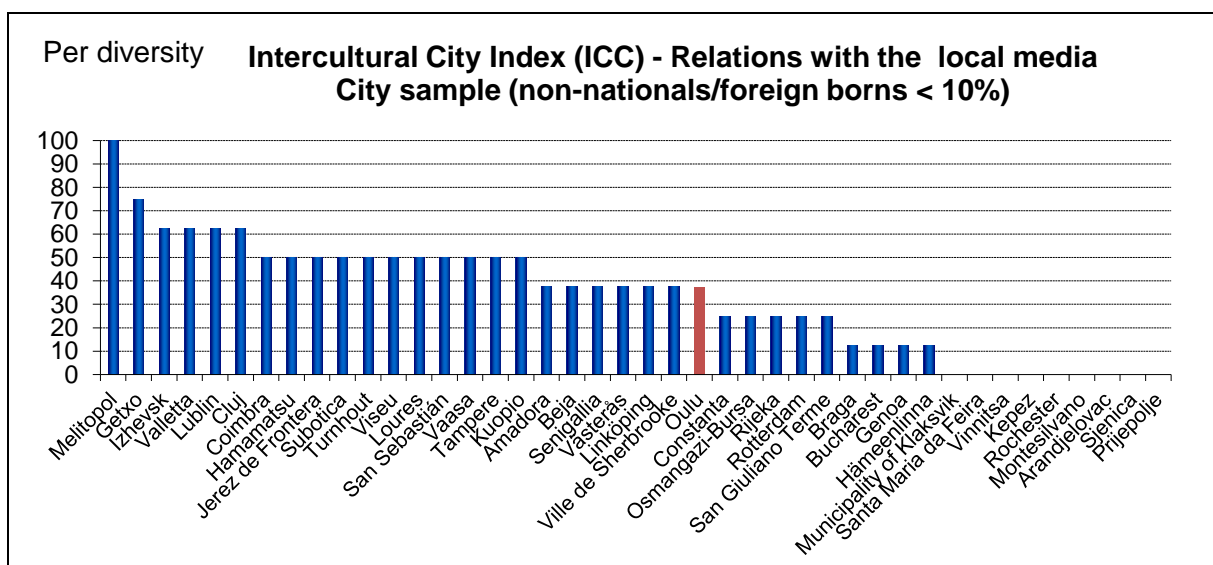
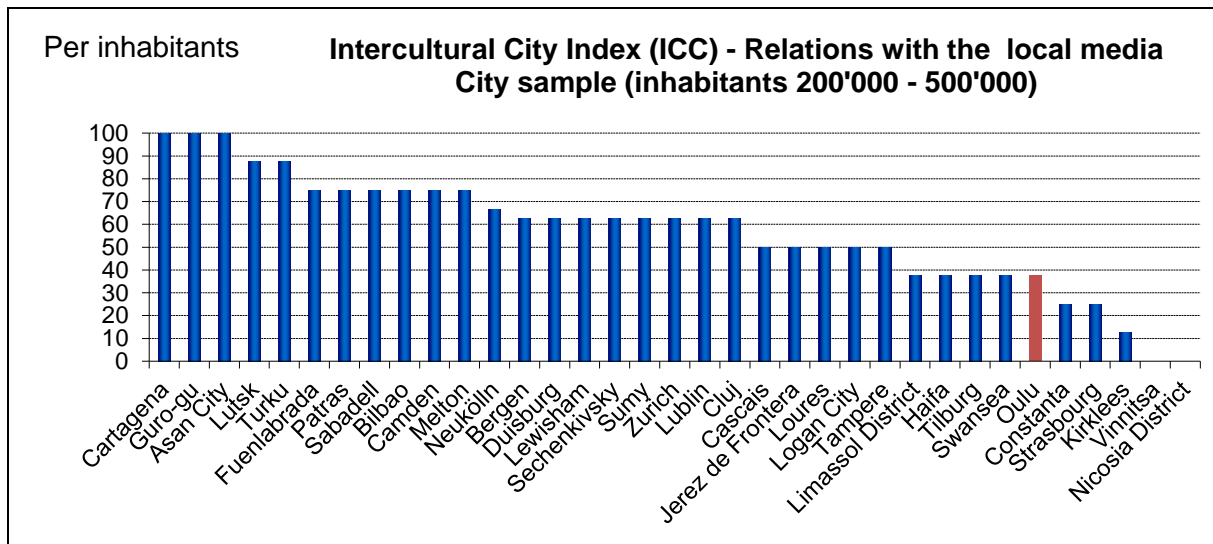
ICC programme resources on multilingualism are available [here](#).

## **MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION**

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*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 convey a similar message and cover events occurring in the city in an objective and unbiased way.*

Oulu achieved a rate of 38%, lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 46%.



Oulu has taken some steps to improve the visibility of people with migrant and minority backgrounds in the local media, although these efforts remain occasional rather than systematic.

The city's communication department is instructed to highlight diversity as an advantage in its public messaging.

However, Oulu does not provide support for advocacy, media training, or mentorship for journalists with migrant or minority backgrounds, limiting opportunities for diverse representation in the media landscape.

The city does not actively monitor how traditional or social media portray people with migrant or minority backgrounds, nor does it engage with local media when negative stereotypes are used.

### Suggestions

Oulu may be interested in developing a more comprehensive media strategy address to raise awareness on interculturalism and diversity, including at monitoring how social and traditional media portray those with a migrant or minority background.

In the Basque city of Bilbao (Spain), the municipal communication office develops the communication strategy of the Municipal Citizenship and Diversity Plan, organising communication of the strategic milestones of Bilbao City Council's intercultural action. Communication is made through press conferences and releases, as well as through social networks with specific intercultural content, where publications related to this content are made. Bilbao City Council provides support to different media projects, promoted by journalists with a migrant background through

grants such is the TV channel from the ‘Emigrados sin Fronteras’ association and Candela Radio. The city also has an [antirumours initiative](#) that has been providing training and developing actions to fight against prejudices and to improve social cohesion for the last 10 years.

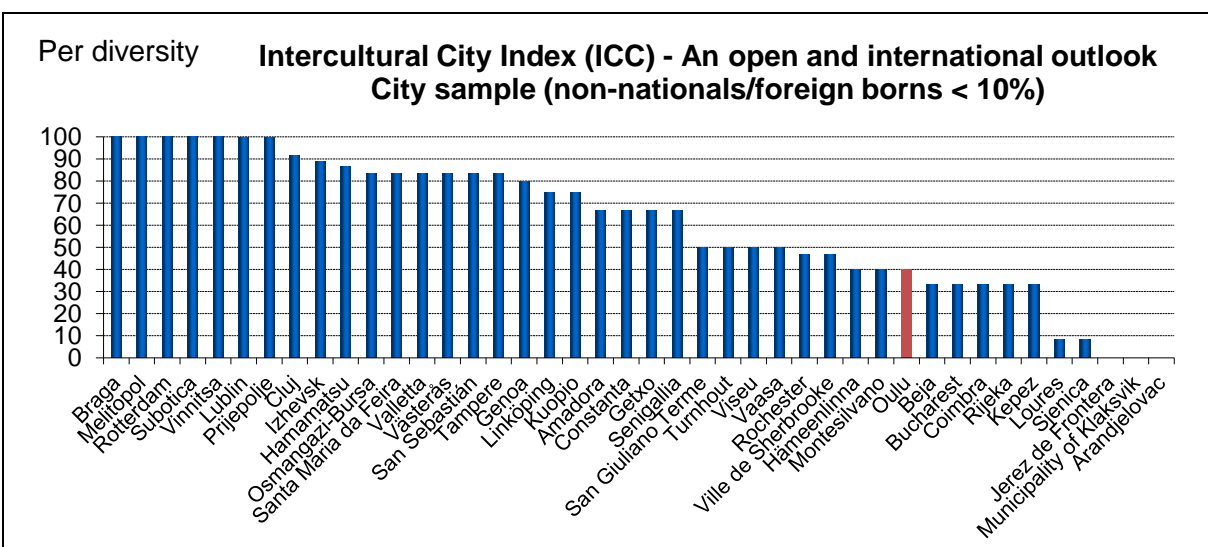
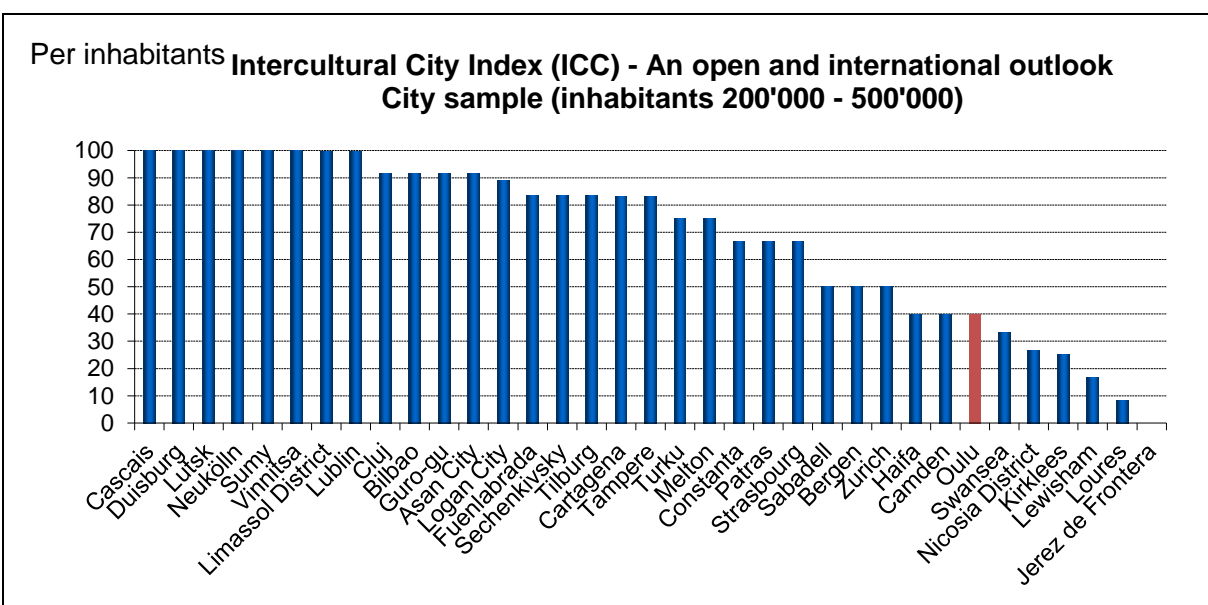
An example of city’s support in creating an online safe space for journalists of migrant origin is the “*Maison des journalistes* (Foreign Journalists’ House)” - an initiative implemented in Paris (France) which supports refugee journalists. The organisation helps them through all the stages of their asylum process and gives them the means to continue to produce written and audio-visual information materials freely on its [website](#).

ICC programme resources on communication and public awareness are available [here](#).

## 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.*

Oulu obtained a score of 40%, which is lower than the city sample’s average rate of 68%.





The city actively takes steps to develop international connections, engaging in collaborations and exchanges despite the absence of a formal strategy.

However, Oulu does not have an explicit or sustainable policy for international cooperation in economic, scientific, or cultural areas, nor does it allocate specific funding for such initiatives.

Oulu reaches out to foreign students and youth groups arriving through exchange programmes by organising welcoming events and providing information services.

The city does not seek to develop business relations with the countries or cities of origin of its diaspora groups, missing opportunities to strengthen economic and cultural ties through partnerships or entrepreneurial initiatives.

### Suggestions

Although its excellent work in this area, it could be always inspiring to discover what other cities are doing in this area.

In Cascais (Portugal), the city encourages social and cultural harmonization through twinning, agreements and cooperation protocols which promote local development based on the sharing of knowledge and experiences. The activities carried out teach respect for diversities and stress the importance of unity. The municipality of Cascais created bridges between the various economic, cultural and social realities, with a view to revitalizing a new model of international relations in this century. Moreover, Cascais, through events and programmes, strengthened the connection between Portugal and Morocco, through a cooperation agreement. The purpose of this agreement is to use existing structures in the Cascais Municipal Council to support, whenever possible, the AALM (Associação de Amizade Luso-Marroquina) initiatives organized in the municipality of Cascais. E

In Logan (Australia), the City Council approved its international strategy for the period 2019-2021. Logan City Council's Global Connection Strategy 2016-2021 aims to enhance the city's international economic and cultural relationships through specific outcomes, including increased exports, local company output, and employment growth, ultimately leading to a stronger local economy. Implemented by the Council's Economic Development and Strategy branch in 2012, the strategy envisions Logan as a regionally and globally connected city. It focuses on five main themes: export development, investment attraction, cultural identity, education, and communication. The strategy includes a dedicated financial provision to support activities such as international trade missions, participation in trade and investment events, cultural engagements, membership in international Chambers of Commerce, development of an international education strategy, and marketing initiatives. Through these efforts, Logan aims to strengthen its global connections and position itself as a vibrant and internationally engaged city.

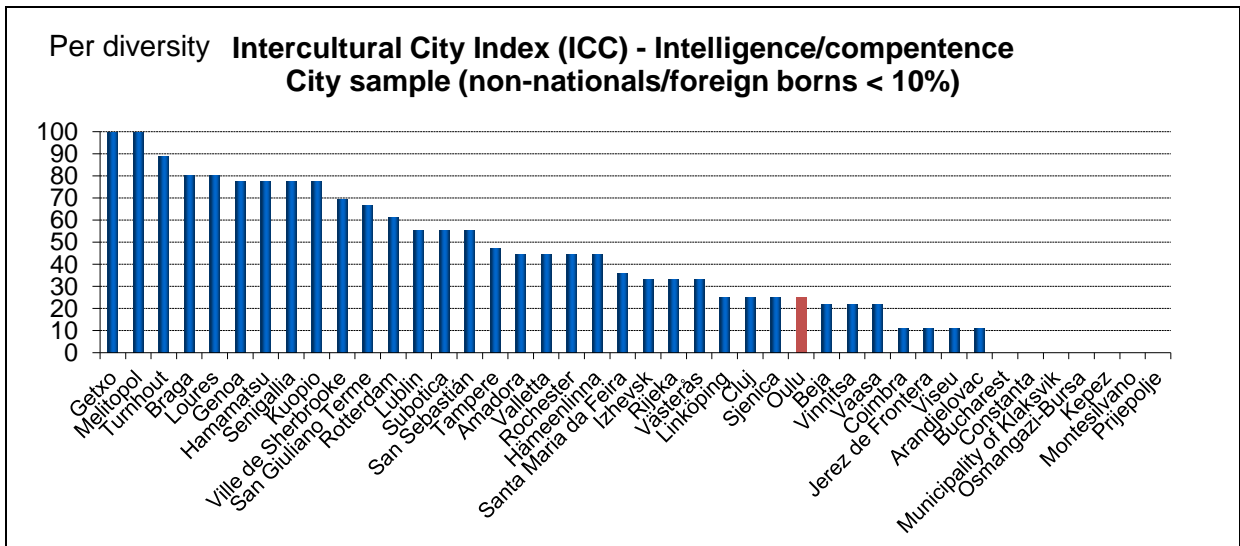
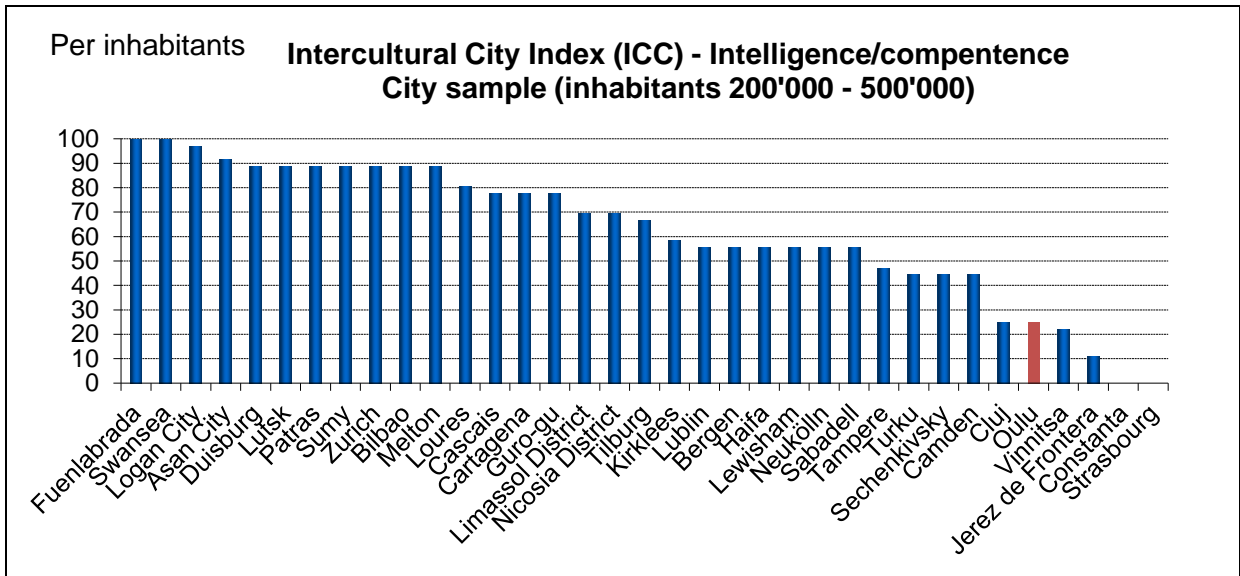
## **INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE**

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*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 are 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.*

Oulu achieved a rate of 25%, clearly lower than the city sample's average score of 59%.





Oulu occasionally integrates statistical and qualitative information about diversity and intercultural relations into its policy-making processes, but this is not done systematically.

The city does not conduct surveys on public perceptions of migrants and minorities or on security concerns related to diversity, limiting its ability to assess public attitudes and address potential challenges effectively.

There are no structured initiatives to promote the intercultural competence of public officials and staff in administration and public services, as no training courses, interdisciplinary seminars, or networks are in place.

### Suggestions

Regarding intercultural intelligence, one of the examples that might be useful not only for Nicosia District, but also for the entire island, is the Intercultural acceptance survey to build intercultural competence skills, reported by the city of Ansan (Korea). The Republic of Korea conducts a triannual survey of locals on their intercultural acceptance. The findings from the survey serve as reference data for policy development. To ensure even more precise information analysis, intercultural city of Ansan plans to conduct its own intercultural acceptance survey once a year. Ansan was the first local government in South Korea to publish statistics on multicultural and international households, which consist of 98 types of standard statistical data for policy development. The city also publishes

annual social survey reports that include a survey on people’s awareness of non-nationals, conducts annual fact-finding surveys of Koryo-saram in Ansan and regular surveys on non-nationals’ human rights.

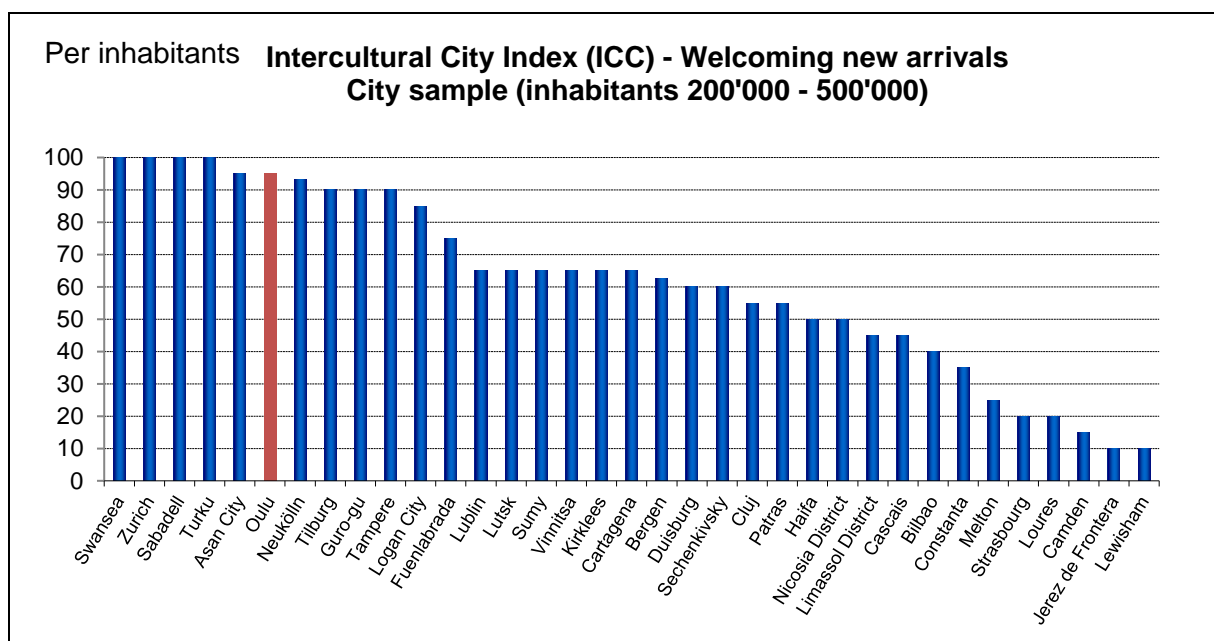
Regarding intercultural training, it could be interesting to check different experiences. [Montreal](#) (Canada) has developed and provided an interesting training initiative on intercultural communication in the workplace. This explores obstacles to efficient intercultural communication in the workplace; how people perceive others and themselves in an intercultural setting; cultural diversity in the workplace and the factors behind certain behaviours; and develops skills and attitudes which foster co-operation. A reference document on intercultural skills is also being developed. Likewise, the [Inclusive Auckland Framework](#) developed in the Australian city of Auckland includes a focus on promoting intercultural competence to create inclusive workplaces and to enable leadership for inclusion. This includes anti-racism workshops and eLearning resources on unconscious bias. Finally, [Reykjavik](#) (Iceland) has designed a specific training course for city employees to prevent misunderstandings in a diverse workplace and to open up a dialogue about discrimination, equality, prejudice, and stereotypes. All city departments are targeted. It is specifically workplace oriented in its focus.

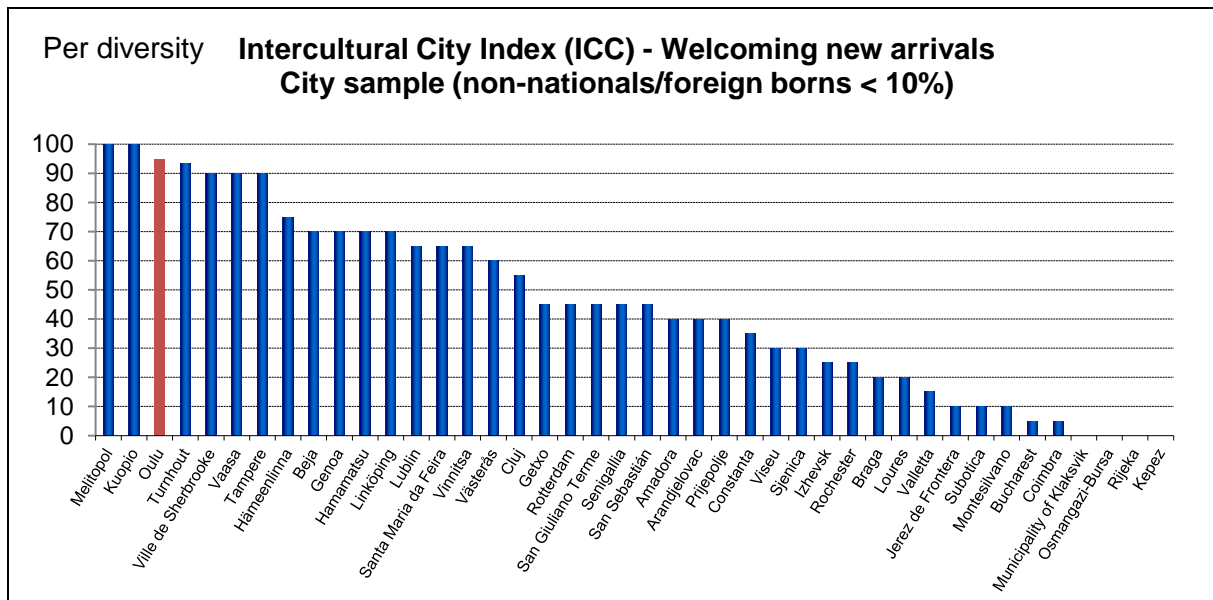
ICC programme resources on intercultural competence are also available [here](#).

## 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.*

Oulu achieved a rate of 95%, clearly higher than the city sample’s achievement rate of 58%.





Oulu has [a designated unit to welcome newcomers](#) and provides a comprehensive city-specific information and support package to facilitate their integration. Most of the welcome initiatives are related to the Oulu’s International House, although especial information is provided for [people with refugee background](#) and for [foreign-languages speakers](#).

The city also organises an official public ceremony to greet all new residents, regardless of origin or nationality, reinforcing a welcoming environment.

Different city services and agencies offer welcome support for specific groups, including family members, students, unaccompanied minors, and refugees or asylum-seekers. However, there is no structured support for migrant workers or other newcomer groups, which may leave some residents without targeted assistance.

### Suggestions

There are some actions that Oulu can take to boost social cohesion and sense of belonging for the newly arrived population.

In Amadora (Portugal), with the Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities (RPCI), has developed an app called Portugal Incoming. The app launched in 2019 is a major practical contribution to the integration of migrants in Portugal, bringing all relevant information on how to navigate the Portuguese services and bureaucracy, as well as access to information about cultural and social events into one place. The app is constantly updated and is available in several languages. The information has also been gathered into a guide. In addition, a guide for practitioners on how to conduct welcoming sessions has been developed, together with a matrix for the creation of municipal integration plans and strategies.

Neumarkt (Germany) offers an annual reception, and all newcomers are invited four times per year. Welcome packs and the reception address all aspects of city life including sustainability, fair trade and integration. Surveys are conducted for feedback as to why people move to Neumarkt and the city enjoys hearing the stories of new arrivals. Information materials are also provided to newcomers including flyers on the community centre; free time offers; the city newsletter with all the programmes at the community centre; school and education information; and the sustainability strategy. There is also information on support for older newcomers from the Genial/genius club who help older people live for longer in their own house. After the reception there is a 1.5-hour tour of the town and a small meeting in the Bürgerhaus with snacks.

ICC programme resources on welcoming policies are also available [here](#).



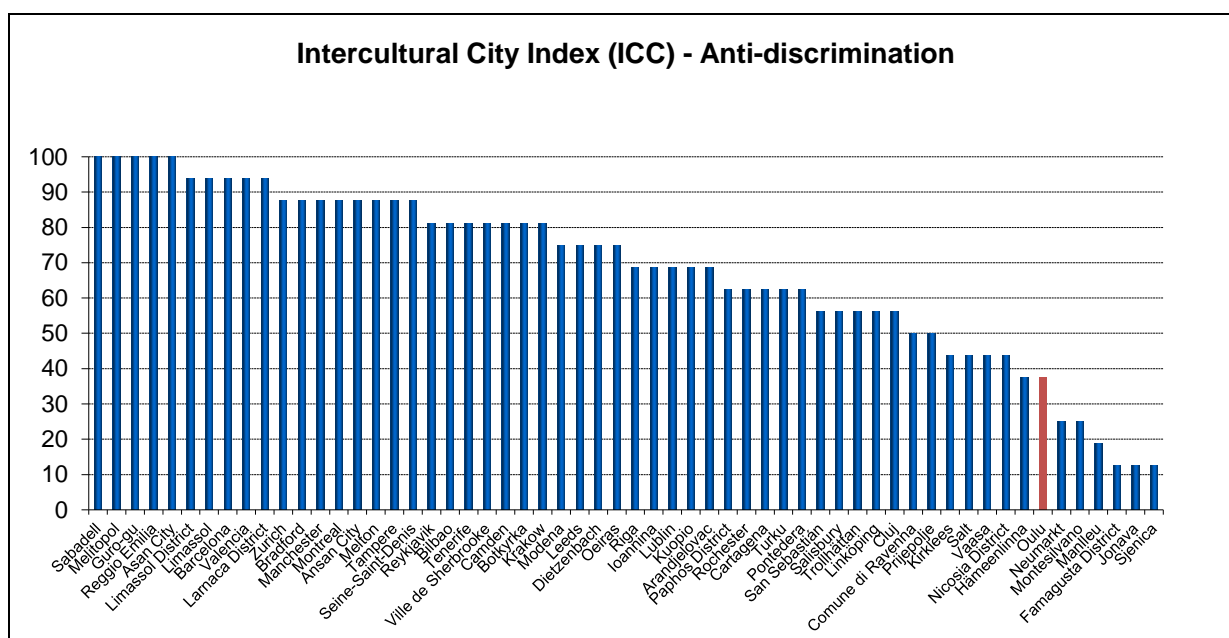
and religious entities, which provided insights and strategies to integrate these groups into the city’s policies and participation mechanisms.

ICC programme resources on political and public participation are also available [here](#).

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

*Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, intolerance against certain religious groups, gender discrimination, prejudice and ethnocentrism, are all conducive to discriminatory attitudes and practices. They often subsist in people’s minds despite laws proscribing discrimination against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation. An intercultural city assures every effort is made to ensure non-discrimination in all of its policies, programmes and activities. The city works in partnership with civil society organisations and other institutions that combat discrimination and offer support and reparation to victims. It also communicates widely on the risks discrimination presents for social cohesion, quality of life and the local economy.*

Indicators on anti-discrimination have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index in 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 58 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Oulu’s rate of achievement in the field of anti-discrimination is 38%.



Oulu has a [charter or binding document](#) that prohibits discrimination on various grounds in municipal administration and services. The city promotes equality and non-discrimination in all its services and activities. It signed the European Charter for Equality in 2009, committing to advancing these principles. Finnish legislation requires municipalities to promote non-discrimination and gender equality in a goal-oriented way. Schools in Oulu have individual equality plans, and all administrative branches follow the Operational Plan for Equality and Non-Discrimination. The city also actively participates in regional and national organisations that address discrimination.

Additionally, it has taken initial steps toward reviewing municipal regulations to identify potential discriminatory mechanisms, though this process is not yet complete.

Oulu occasionally runs anti-discrimination campaigns to raise awareness, such as [Oulu loves me](#) or equality promotion during the [Oulu’s Pride Week](#). Similarly, the city is participating in the [Government’s anti-racism campaign](#) from 2024 to 2027.

However, the city does not have a dedicated service to advise and support victims of discrimination, nor does it provide financial or logistical support to civil society organisations working in this area. It also does not conduct regular monitoring or research on discrimination within the city.

Furthermore, Oulu does not implement anti-rumours strategies based on the official Council of Europe methodology, limiting its capacity to counter misinformation and prejudice.

### Suggestions

In Swansea (United Kingdom), the city runs the Think Project. This is an educational programme aimed at individuals with a higher risk of far-right extremism, implemented in the framework of three-day courses, participants were encouraged to discuss and reflect on diversity issues and their own attitudes and views, engaging in open dialogue as well as experiential learning. The Think Project employed a non-criminalising approach, listening to their concerns and exploring the experience and information underlying their negative attitudes. After the course, participants were encouraged to engage in intercultural interaction. The project has proven to be able to transform young peoples' worldviews and thinking about diversity and societal change.

In Geneva (Switzerland) exists the "Complaints of Discrimination" initiative. The city funds and works with the Centre – Écoute contre le Racisme (C-ECR), which defends, advises, and assists people affected by racism. It can provide support to those who might experience discrimination from the services of the city. It can provide anonymised statistical information on the issues of racism and discrimination for the city. The C-ECR can, with the permission of the person involved, contact the City of Geneva, through the Project Manager for Diversity, to seek to resolve issues of discrimination that might arise in the operations of the city. The City of Geneva, again through the Project Manager for Diversity, can refer citizens who have experienced racism to the C-ECR.

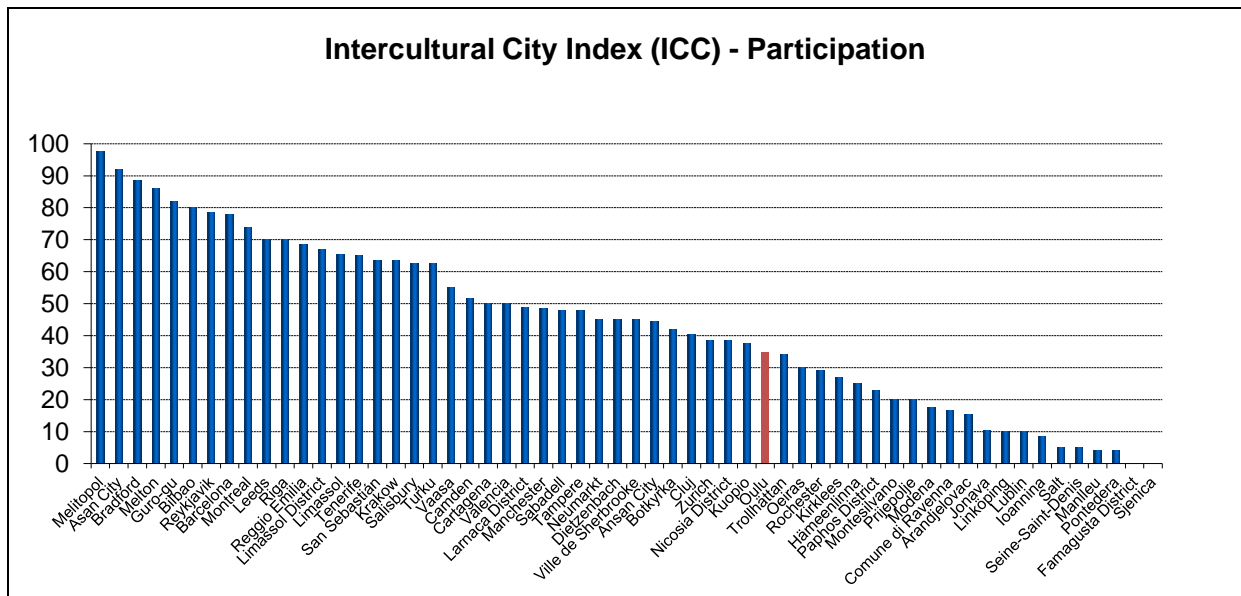
ICC programme resources on systemic discrimination are also available [here](#) and resources on anti-rumours are available [here](#).

## **PARTICIPATION**

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*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, 58 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Oulu's rate of achievement in the field of participation is 35%



Oulu has not involved people with migrant or minority backgrounds in the consultation process for developing an intercultural integration strategy or an intercultural action plan.

The city has introduced some participatory mechanisms, including public participation networks, [participatory budgeting](#), and intercultural dialogue platforms, allowing residents to engage in decision-making beyond voting rights and consultative bodies.

However, there is no monitoring system in place to track the participation of migrants and minorities in governance structures.

The city does not take specific actions to ensure the representation of migrant and minority residents in key institutions, such as public service organisations, trade unions, school boards, or work councils. In any case, Oulu follows the Finnish law stipulating that in any political body the representation men/women need to be at least 40% to 60%.

### Suggestions

Some inspiring examples to kickstart actions in the field of participation could be found in other ICC cities and initiatives.

In Vienna (Austria), the Vienna Diversity Monitor is a comprehensive report issued tri-annually to assess the city's integration processes and diversity policies. It encompasses eight areas, sixty indicators, and eleven benchmarks aimed at identifying structural and systemic factors contributing to inequality related to migration status and/or ethnic origin. Drawing from existing statistical sources, the monitor includes all residents registered in Vienna for over three months in its statistics. The findings from the monitor inform policy decisions, particularly in addressing obstacles to integration highlighted in the report, such as restricted work permits, access to public housing, and voting rights. Notably, the monitor revealed that 27% of eligible Viennese residents above 16 are excluded from voting due to legal restrictions on third-country nationals' voting rights and a restrictive naturalization regime.

Oulu might also consider the development of [Anti-rumours strategy](#). Understood as a public policy, the Anti-Rumours strategy, is composed of a number of elements: identifying major rumours existing in a city; collecting objective data and also emotional arguments to dismantle false rumours; creating an anti-rumour network of local actors from civil society; empowering and training “anti-rumour agents”; and designing and implementing anti-rumour campaigns to raise awareness, including by creating and disseminating new tools and resources, both creative and rigorous.

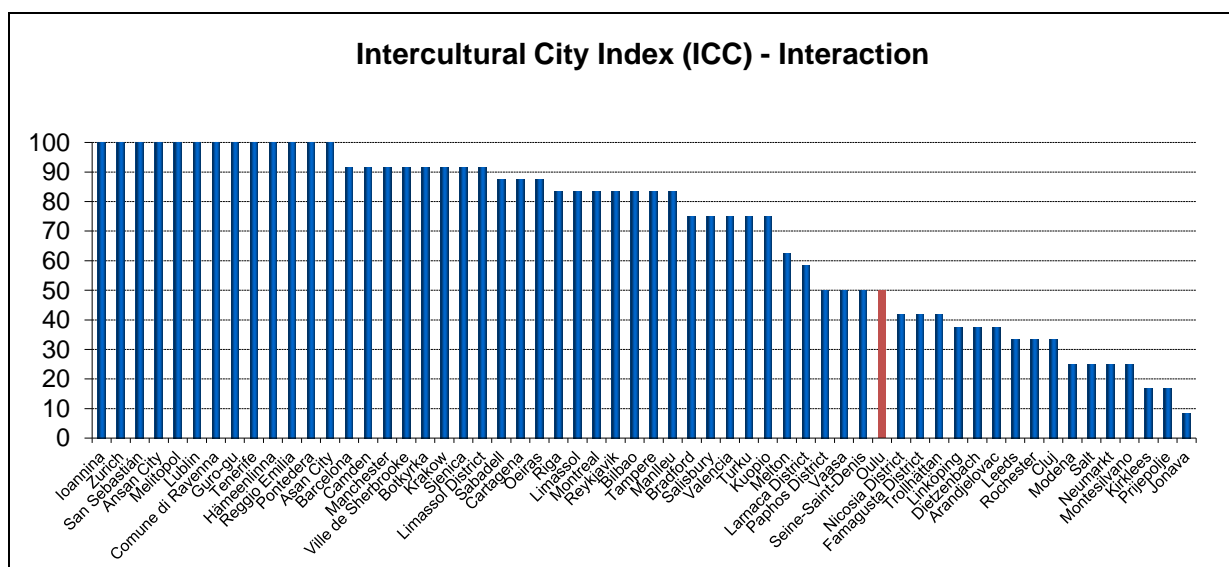
ICC programme resources on political and public participation are also available [here](#).



## 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, 58 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Oulu's rate of achievement in the field of interaction is 50%.



In Oulu, teachers in elementary and primary schools receive training in intercultural communication and pedagogy, ensuring that education professionals are equipped with the skills necessary to foster inclusive learning environments.

The city has a list of civil society and grassroots organisations active in intercultural inclusion but is incomplete and not regularly updated, limiting the ability to systematically engage with relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the city does not have a structured process for interacting with these organisations, meaning collaboration occurs on an ad hoc basis, if at all.

### Suggestions

Examples from other cities can still serve as inspiration. In Hämeenlinna (Finland) the database of civil society and grassroots organisations that work in intercultural inclusion topics is permanently updated and public. The list is an appendix of the [integration programme](#) of the city.















In Botkyrka (Sweden), anti-rumour cafés have been established in libraries as a public platform to address and challenge rumours and prejudices. Libraries were selected due to their popularity among young people aged 18-25 years old. The primary goal of each café was to encourage discussions about rumours that people often feel uncomfortable addressing.

ICC programme resources on anti-rumours are also available [here](#) and resources on intercultural competence and mediation are available [here](#).

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Oulu has an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index result of 46 (out of 100 possible points). This is an initial step of Oulu on its intercultural journey. The city achieved particularly good scores in welcoming, language and neighbourhoods, but there is room for improvement from the intercultural perspective in others. The following table gives more information on what Oulu does well and areas it could learn more from the experience of other cities.

<b>COMMITMENT</b>	✓	Oulu integrates intercultural elements into its integration strategy and engages diverse communities in co-design processes, ensuring inclusive decision-making. The city has formally adopted a public statement as an Intercultural City, developed an intercultural strategy, and approved an anti-racism action plan, supported by a budget.
	✗	The city lacks a formal updating mechanism, a dedicated webpage, and systematic references to interculturalism in official communications. The cross-sectoral coordination structure is still pending approval, and there is no system to recognize contributions to interculturalism.
<b>EDUCATION</b>	✓	In Oulu, some schools make efforts to involve parents with migrant or minority backgrounds. Some schools carry out intercultural projects.
	✗	In the city, most primary schools have little diversity in their student composition. The ethnic background of teachers does not reflect the city's diversity. There is no city policy to promote ethnic or cultural mixing in schools.
<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS</b>	✓	Oulu has a policy to promote residential diversity and prevent ethnic concentration. Most districts and neighbourhoods in Oulu are culturally and ethnically diverse.
	✗	The city does not actively promote interactions between residents of different neighbourhoods. There is no fully developed policy to encourage interaction within the same neighbourhood, but steps are being taken in this direction.
<b>PUBLIC SERVICES</b>	✓	The city is partially engaged in lobbying for more inclusive recruitment and considers migrant/minority backgrounds in some tailored public services.
	✗	In Oulu, there is no available data on diversity in public employment. There is no active recruitment plan for migrants/minorities, and the city does not have initiatives to promote workforce diversity in the private sector.
<b>BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET</b>	✓	Oulu takes actions to encourage businesses from ethnic minorities to move beyond the ethnic economy and enter the mainstream economy through the city's International House.
	✗	In the city, there is no business umbrella organization promoting diversity and no intercultural criteria in public procurement decisions.
<b>CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE</b>	✓	The city regularly organizes intercultural events in arts, culture, and sports, and encourages cultural organizations to address diversity. Occasionally, the city organises public debates or campaigns about cultural diversity and social cohesion.
	✗	Oulu does not use interculturalism as a criterion when allocating funds to associations and initiatives.

<b>PUBLIC SPACE</b>	  	<p>Oulu promotes intercultural interaction in libraries, museums, and parks. There are no areas where people feel unwelcome or unsafe due to ethnic dominance.</p> <p>There are no efforts to promote intercultural mixing in other public spaces. There is no structured consultation process for redevelopment projects, and no systematic consideration of diversity in urban planning.</p>
<b>MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b>	  	<p>Oulu achieved a 0% score in this area.</p> <p>There are no professional intercultural mediation services, no structured mediation efforts in public institutions or neighbourhoods. The city does not have a dedicated organization for inter-religious relations.</p>
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	  	<p>Oulu provides specific language training for hard-to-reach groups, includes migrant/minority languages in the school curriculum, and offers mother tongue courses for migrant children.</p> <p>The city does not support private organisations offering language training. There aren't awareness-raising initiatives through local media, and no city-backed projects to promote a positive image of migrant/minority languages.</p>
<b>MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION</b>	  	<p>Oulu occasionally takes action to improve the visibility of migrant and minority communities in the media, and its communication department is instructed to highlight diversity.</p> <p>In the city, there is no structured support for migrant/minority journalists, no monitoring of media portrayals in traditional or social media. Oulu does not monitor traditional or social media for the portrayal of migrants and minority groups and does not engage with media when negative stereotypes arise.</p>
<b>INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK</b>	  	<p>The city takes actions to develop international connections and welcomes foreign students and youth groups.</p> <p>There is no explicit policy or financial provision for international cooperation, and the city does not engage in business relations with diaspora communities' countries or cities of origin.</p>
<b>INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE</b>	  	<p>The city occasionally uses diversity-related data to inform policymaking.</p> <p>Oulu does not launch surveys on public perceptions of migrants or safety concerns. The city does not provide structured intercultural training courses for its officials and staff.</p>
<b>WELCOMING NEWCOMERS</b>	  	<p>The city has a designated body for welcoming newcomers, provides a comprehensive information package, supports specific groups such as students and refugees, and organises an official public ceremony for new residents.</p> <p>There is no dedicated welcome support for migrant workers or other newcomer groups beyond the specified categories.</p>

<p><b>LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP</b></p>	<p>✓  ✗</p>	<p>Oulu has elected council members who are foreign-born or dual nationals. There is also a consultative body representing migrants and minority organisations.</p> <p>In Oulu, there is no standard for migrant/minority representation in supervisory boards, and no initiatives to encourage political engagement. There is no standard for the representation of migrants/minorities on supervisory boards of schools or public services.</p>
<p><b>ANTI-DISCRIMINATION</b></p>	<p>✓  ✗</p>	<p>The city has a charter against discrimination, takes part in regional and national organisations on discrimination issues, and occasionally runs awareness campaigns and participates in governmental campaigns against racism and discrimination.</p> <p>Oulu has not yet conducted a systematic review of municipal rules to identify discriminatory mechanisms and does not directly finance civil society organizations supporting victims of discrimination. There is no dedicated support service for victims in the city.</p>
<p><b>PARTICIPATION</b></p>	<p>✓  ✗</p>	<p>Oulu has introduced some participatory mechanisms such as public participation networks, participatory budgeting, and intercultural dialogue platforms.</p> <p>There was no consultation with migrant/minority groups in developing the city's intercultural strategy or action plan. The city does not monitor migrant/minority participation in decision-making, does not ensure their representation in key institutions, and has no mechanisms to guarantee gender equality in decision-making related to inclusion.</p>
<p><b>INTERACTION</b></p>	<p>✓  ✗</p>	<p>In Oulu, teachers in public elementary schools receive mandatory intercultural communication training at the national level.</p> <p>The city does not maintain an updated list of organisations working on intercultural inclusion and does not systematically engage with civil society and grassroots organisations.</p>

In view of the above, we wish to encourage Oulu for the efforts taken and are confident that the city will continue working on its different areas of work and building on its existing initiatives. By following our guidelines and drawing inspiration from other Intercultural Cities' practices, the results will rapidly become visible and tangible.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Commitment:** To strengthen its intercultural commitment, Oulu should improve visibility through official communication channels and a dedicated webpage would enhance public engagement. It should also establish a cross-departmental coordination body, and recognize local intercultural efforts to promote inclusion.

**Education:** Oulu should increase efforts to recruit teachers from diverse backgrounds would help reflect the city's population more accurately. Schools should strengthen initiatives to involve parents from migrant and minority backgrounds and expand intercultural projects to create more inclusive learning environments.

**Neighbourhoods:** Oulu should strengthen policies that encourage social interaction between residents of different neighbourhoods and implement structured programs to promote intercultural engagement within local communities.

**Public Services:** Oulu may wish to adopt a recruitment plan that reflects the diverse population in public administration. Initiatives to integrate intercultural competence training into public services and design inclusive facilities catering to all communities could also be beneficial.

**Business and the Labour Market:** Oulu could promote diversity in the local labour market by promoting an umbrella organization. The city could use diversity and inclusion criteria into procurement processes would encourage businesses to adopt intercultural practices.

**Cultural and Social Life:** Oulu could integrate interculturalism into its funding criteria to support associations and initiatives that promote inclusion. Additionally, introducing regular public debates or awareness campaigns on cultural diversity and social cohesion would enhance intercultural dialogue and strengthen community engagement.

**Public Space:** Oulu should expand initiatives to promote intercultural interaction in a wider range of public spaces, including playgrounds and squares. Integrating diversity considerations into urban planning and renovation projects would help ensure inclusivity in public infrastructure. The city may wish to establish consultation processes for redevelopment projects.

**Mediation and Conflict Resolution:** Oulu could establish a dedicated intercultural mediation service at the municipal level. Additionally, the city could create a platform for inter-religious dialogue.

**Language:** Oulu could expand its language support initiatives by offering migrant and minority languages as a general language option available to all students. Additionally, the city could introduce media initiatives to raise awareness of linguistic diversity and actively support projects that promote a positive perception of migrant and minority languages in the community.

**Media and Communication:** Oulu could develop a comprehensive communication strategy to consistently promote positive representations of diversity in the media. Establishing monitoring mechanisms for traditional and social media would help identify and address biases, while supporting media training and mentorship programmes for journalists from migrant and minority backgrounds could foster inclusivity in public narratives.

**International Outlook:** Oulu could establish a structured international cooperation policy with dedicated funding to enhance its global engagement. Strengthening ties with diaspora communities through business and cultural partnerships could foster economic growth and international collaboration while reinforcing the city's intercultural connections.

**Intercultural Intelligence and Competence:** Oulu could introduce regular surveys to assess residents' perceptions of safety and security regarding migrants and minority groups. Additionally, the city could offer structured intercultural training courses for all municipal staff, including high-level personnel.

**Welcoming Newcomers:** Oulu could expand its welcome support services to include migrant workers and other groups not currently covered.

**Leadership and Citizenship:** Oulu could establish initiatives to encourage engagement among migrant and minority communities beyond elections. The city may incentive representation standards for migrant/minority groups on supervisory boards.

**Anti-Discrimination:** Oulu could establish a dedicated service for victims of discrimination and provide financial and logistical support to civil society organisations working in this area. The city could carry out regular monitoring and research on discrimination. The city could explore implementing an anti-rumours strategy.

**Participation:** Oulu could establish consultation processes that actively involve people with migrant and minority backgrounds in the development of its intercultural strategies. The city could also explore introducing monitoring systems to track participation and initiatives to strengthen inclusive governance.

**Interaction:** Oulu could consider developing a comprehensive, regularly updated database of civil society and grassroots organisations involved in intercultural inclusion. Establishing structured engagement mechanisms, such as regular meetings and information-sharing, would strengthen collaboration with these organisations, and facilitate the engagement of new stakeholders in intercultural initiatives.

Oulu 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. A decade 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.

*This report was written within the framework of the Joint Project “Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland”, co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and the Council of Europe, and implemented by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the European Commission and the Ministry of Justice of Finland. The project aims to provide technical support to the implementation of inclusive integration policies in Finland, based on the Finnish Good Relations concept and the Council of Europe’s Intercultural Integration model. The project is working with the municipalities of Hämeenlinna, Kuopio, Oulu, Tampere, Turku, Vaasa and Vantaa in Finland to promote the implementation of local integration strategies.*



[www.coe.int/interculturalcities](http://www.coe.int/interculturalcities)

The member states of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

<http://europa.eu>

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.

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