

INTERCULTURAL CITIES PROGRAMME

Building bridges, breaking walls



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



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Introduction

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme is a capacity-building and networking initiative to help cities, regions and other local authorities assess and adapt their policies from an intercultural perspective. The aim is to develop comprehensive intercultural strategies at local and regional levels that harness diversity for the benefit of society as a whole.

Based on thorough research, a range of international instruments, the experience and the collective insights of the ICC community, the programme has developed a distinctive approach to intercultural inclusion. This includes a range of analytical and practical tools to support local actors at different stages of creating truly inclusive societies.

The ICC Programme is based on four key principles that work together to create inclusive, diverse, and vibrant communities:

1. **Real equality** promotes equal rights, and non-discrimination, including positive action to address inequalities. It requires the adaptation of cities' legal and policy frameworks, governance, institutions, and services to meet the needs of a diverse population.
2. **Valuing diversity** recognises diversity as a resource and a fundamental aspect of human communities and harnesses its benefits through specific policies and strategies. This approach enables diverse contributions to shape the cultural, economic and social fabric of the city. It builds a pluralistic city identity around a shared vision and common values.
3. **Meaningful interaction** emphasises the importance of creating occasions and spaces which encourage contact, dialogue and positive interaction between citizens from different backgrounds. This fosters the trust and sense of belonging that are essential for a thriving society.
4. **Active citizenship and participation** ensure that no-one is left behind and that also people without formal citizenship have a voice in shaping their local society. This commitment seeks to involve everyone in the process of community development.

The ICC Programme contributes towards the achievement of the following three [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#): Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Through its work, the programme fosters reduced inequalities, sustainable urban development, and inclusive, peaceful societies.

This annual report provides an account of the implementation of the ICC Programme and related activities in the year 2025.

In 2025, the annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe “Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe” highlights significant contemporary challenges to democracy, including geopolitical shifts, rising authoritarianism, erosion of democratic norms, declining institutional trust, digital disruptions, and increased external interference.

The New Democratic Pact for Europe represents a strategic political process aimed at renewing and reinforcing democracy by restoring public trust and updating democratic institutions to meet current and future challenges. Its initial phase, extending to 2026, encompasses wide consultations with member states, Council of Europe bodies, networks, and partners, aiming to mobilize collective commitment and identify new collaborations. Notably, all Council of Europe steering committees are revising their mandates to formally contribute to the development of this Pact.

In this context, the objectives and methodologies of the ICC Programme strongly resonate with the aims of the Pact. By fostering democratic participation, intercultural inclusion, and innovative local governance, the ICC Programme supports many of the Pact’s priorities - especially strengthening trust, enhancing social cohesion, and empowering communities at the local level. The Programme’s extensive practical experience and tools for building inclusive, trust-based governance are therefore important assets in the Council of Europe’s overarching democracy renewal efforts.



NEW DEMOCRATIC PACT

Membership



In 2025, the ICC Programme welcomed four new members, bringing its total membership to 173. One of these new members joined an established national network: **Vila Nova de Gaia** in Portugal. The programme also expanded beyond Europe to include **Gimpo** in the Republic of Korea, the **Shizuoka Prefecture** in Japan, and **Iztapalapa** in Mexico.

The **positive impact of membership** in the ICC Programme has increased, particularly for national network structures, and has been further strengthened through an EU-funded project in Finland based on the intercultural inclusion approach. As in previous years, the continued growth in membership is indeed a positive sign, as it demonstrates the relevance of the ICC Programme to local and regional authorities worldwide and enriches the ICC knowledge base with more diversity, more good practices to share and more opportunities for peer learning.

ICC services and tools

1. Diagnostic and profiling

As an increasing number of members embrace the approach of intercultural diversity management, it is essential for them to reflect on their achievements and challenges. This reflection serves as a starting point for developing effective intercultural strategies. To maintain motivation and adapt their efforts, cities also need to evaluate their progress over time and learn from others with practical experience in specific areas.

The ICC Programme provides a comprehensive methodology for leaders and officials, as well as a range of analytical and assessment tools, the most important of which is the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Index. Members are expected to complete the ICC Index questionnaire upon joining the ICC network and to repeat this process periodically - approximately every four years or when a new intercultural strategy is planned.

The ICC Programme encourages all members to consider completing the questionnaire, so that they can improve their intercultural initiatives and share valuable lessons with each other.¹

a. The ICC Index



The ICC Index, which has been completed at least once by **129 cities in 36 countries** since 2009, with the support of the ICC Programme or dedicated projects. It assesses where a city stands in the various governance/policy areas that promote intercultural inclusion. The Index questionnaire serves to collect information on **policy inputs**, i.e. the actions, measures and vision implemented by a city to fulfil the core

principles of the intercultural policy model.

The questionnaire contains **86 questions grouped into 12 indicators with three different types of data**. To complete the questionnaire, members need to initiate a discussion within the local government on what intercultural integration means in practice, which helps to raise awareness of the need to work horizontally with all city departments and services to fulfil the intercultural agenda.

The analysis of the responses is carried out by the Council of Europe and delivered in the form of an “**ICC Index Report**”. This helps to identify strengths and weaknesses and to determine which governance/policy areas should be focused on in the future; it also contains - for each policy area - tailor-made recommendations and inspiring practices from other members.

In 2025, the ICC Programme produced Index reports for the cities of **Asan** (Republic of Korea), **Arandjelovac** (Serbia), **Krakow** (Poland), **Manlleu** (Spain), **Montesilvano** (Italy), **Pontedera** (Italy), **Prijepolje** (Serbia), **Seine-Saint-Denis** (France), **Sjenica** (Serbia), and **Tenerife** (Spain), and as well as for the five district of Cyprus, namely **Famagusta**, **Larnaca**, **Limassol**, **Nicosia** and **Paphos** as part of the former European Union/Council of Europe joint project in **Cyprus**. Additionally, the index report for **Oulu** was published under the European Union/Council of Europe joint initiative “**Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland**”. In 2025, **Oeiras** (Portugal) also completed the ICC Index questionnaire, with the resulting report scheduled for publication in 2026.

The ICC Programme further conducted six ICC expert visits in 2025: **Reggio Emilia** (Italy) in April, **Manlleu** (Spain) in July, **Pontedera** (Italy) and **Asan** (Republic of Korea) in September, **Krakow** (Poland) in October and **Oeiras** (Portugal) in December. ICC Expert Visits follow the publication of a city’s ICC Index Report and provide an opportunity for an in-depth “diagnosis” of the city’s strengths and needs in relation to intercultural policy and governance. This is made possible through a series of meetings with a wide range of local public and private actors active in different fields related to intercultural integration. At the end of the visit, an analytical report entitled “Intercultural Profile” is published, providing targeted recommendations as a basis for subsequent intercultural work in the city.

¹ For more information on the Intercultural Cities Index and the indexing process visit the dedicated webpage: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about-the-index>

Thematic Toolkit

- How to fill in the Index?
 - [A methodological guide](#) (+ [Italian version](#) + [Spanish version](#))
 - [Video Tutorial](#)
- [Index results per city](#)
- [Intercultural profiles](#)

b. The ICC Charts and the “Facts and Figures”

The ICC Index represents a critical benchmarking instrument for member cities, providing an insightful and comprehensive assessment of their intercultural integration strategies and performance.

In this context, the ICC [Index Charts](#) provide a graphical representation of all Index scores of the city, including level of performance, progress over time and comparison with other cities through filtered searches by size, demographic diversity, population, country and policy area. In addition, the ICC Charts compare a city's scores on the ‘Extended Intercultural Index’, which includes scores on the original (core) Index as well as the new questions added in 2019.

In addition, the [Facts and Figures](#) page offers a more accessible, visual snapshot of the ICC membership and their main achievements in implementing the intercultural integration policy model. The page shows graphs based on a few indicators of the Intercultural Cities Index, chosen because they are more suitable for wider communication and understanding.

2. Policy advice, capacity building, and innovation

a. Intercultural competence and intercultural strategies

Intercultural competence, as defined by the Council of Europe, encompasses a broad “*set of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes which enable both individuals and organisations to act in an interculturally competent manner. Therefore, intercultural competence is not a single concept, but a wide range of competences which, when put together, allow for proactive action to secure a healthy intercultural environment*”². Rooted in the Council of Europe's intercultural integration model, this definition underscores the importance of developing these competences to support dialogue, equality, and cultural diversity within societies.

1. Intercultural Cities Symposium 2025 of Ansan City (Republic of Korea)

Based on the fundamental concept of intercultural competence, the 2025 [Intercultural Cities Symposium in Ansan](#) vividly demonstrated these principles in action at an urban level. Held from 17 to 19 September 2025 to celebrate the 5th anniversary of Ansan joining the ICC Programme, the event

² Council of Europe, Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence – [Part 1 – The core principles of the Council of Europe intercultural integration model](#), 2021.

brought together representatives from Korean municipalities, international organisations, and other Asian cities under the theme “*A New Vision for Intercultural Cities: Innovation, Inclusion, and Building Communities Together*”.

The symposium provided a platform to reaffirm the four core principles of intercultural inclusion - *diversity, equality, interaction, and participation* - as the basis for inclusive urban development. Rita Marascalchi, Head of the Intercultural Inclusion Unit, illustrated how these principles are translated into practical local initiatives and policies across the global network of intercultural cities. As recognised pioneers of intercultural inclusion in Asia, Lee Min-geun, the mayor of Ansan, and Yusuke Nakano, the mayor of Hamamatsu, shared their cities’ experiences and achievements. They demonstrated how incorporating interculturalism into local governance can encourage innovation, reinforce social cohesion and facilitate the constructive management of diversity at the community



and national levels.

In addition to the discussions, participants visited the Ansan Foreign Residents Support Centre, and the Ansan Multicultural Families Support Centre. This gave them the opportunity to gain first-hand insights into the ways in which the municipality promotes intercultural inclusion. These visits emphasised the important role of inclusive policies in fostering community well-being and prosperity, and the importance of facilitating meaningful interactions and ensuring equal opportunities for newcomers.

The symposium concluded with a shared commitment to advance “*innovation, inclusion, and mutual development*” as guiding principles for the next generation of intercultural cities.

2. Inter-agency academies on the integration of migrants and refugees

The ICC Programme, together with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has joined forces since 2023 to offer a series of training courses for staff from a range of local authorities in Poland (2023-2024) and in the Baltic countries (2025-2026) to address numerous aspects of migrant and refugee integration in cities.

The Academy is seen as a model for similar programmes and underscores the potential of international cooperation to enhance local responses to global migration challenges with the aim of promoting intercultural competencies at local level.

3. Strengthening inclusion through intercultural mediation: seminar in Porto (Portugal)

The City of Porto hosted a major seminar on 19 November 2025, highlighting the crucial role of intercultural mediation and conflict prevention in building inclusive and resilient societies. With over 180 participants in attendance, the event featured a presentation by the ICC Programme which emphasised the importance of intercultural mediation as a tool for fostering social cohesion and democratic vitality.

Panellists discussed mediation's importance across various sectors, including healthcare, education, and communication, illustrating through Porto's experience the need to enhance dialogue using intercultural competences and intelligence. The ICC Programme presented a practical framework encouraging cities to view diversity not as a challenge to manage but as a resource for innovation and community strength. The seminar also showcased examples of intercultural mediation practices from ICC member cities, including Bradford. Following a presentation by Professor Carlos Giménez Romero, Professor of social anthropology at the University of Madrid, on the evolution of mediation in the 21st century, participants concluded that intercultural mediation could help cities become more welcoming and connected, and better equipped to manage tensions constructively, thereby strengthening local communities. Porto, which joined the ICC network in 2024, pursues these goals through active policy development and international exchange.



Thematic Toolkit

- [Intercultural citizenship test](#) – For residents and public officials alike
- Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence: [Part 1 - The core principles of the Council of Europe intercultural integration model \(Polish version\)](#) | [Part 2 – Concepts related to the Council of Europe intercultural integration model \(Polish version\)](#)
- [Guide on Intercultural Competences \(Spanish version\)](#)
- [A practical guide – Recommendations and resources for Intercultural Ecosystems + Portuguese version \(2023\)](#)
- [Rethinking welcoming policies from an intercultural perspective - Policy Brief \(2022\)](#)

- Intercultural competencies applied to the development of public administration projects: [Guide \(Spanish version\)](#), and [video tutorial](#) (multilingual subtitles)

b. Communications, narratives and mediation

The ICC Programme recognises the importance of communication, narrative and mediation in advancing intercultural policies, countering toxic discourse and building social cohesion. Narratives — collection or system of related stories that are articulated and refined over time to represent a central idea or belief³ — can shift perceptions and foster inclusive environments. ICC Members implement these through proactive strategies in policies, the media, and community initiatives. In 2025, the programme prioritised active participation in relevant events to amplify this work. Mediation complements these efforts by facilitating consensus among diverse groups and translating narratives into practical, trust-building actions within strategic communication frameworks that include diagnosis, objectives and evaluation.

In 2025, the ICC Programme worked on developing tools to tackle disinformation at local level. Research was conducted and a working group comprising of several ICC members will be set up at the beginning of 2026 to shape a future policy brief.

1. Workshop on intercultural communication strategies in Krakow (Poland)

On 1 October 2025, the ICC Programme organised a workshop for experts on intercultural communication strategies at the Multicultural Centre in Kraków. The session brought together city staff from various departments, including Social Communication, Social Policy, Equality and Health, Dialogue, Consultation and Civic Engagement. Representatives from the Municipal and Voivodeship Police Prevention Units, the Municipal Social Welfare Centre and the City Guard also attended.



The workshop focused on understanding how narratives influence public perceptions and social tensions. It examined the success of toxic and populist narratives and explored how to build effective counter-narratives within an intercultural framework. Participants took part in theoretical discussions and practical exercises designed to develop intercultural communication campaigns tailored to the specific needs of Kraków. The aim was to provide municipal staff with the skills to design narrative-driven communication strategies that would foster inclusion and resilience while promoting collaboration between the public administration, security forces, social services and civil society.

Thematic Toolkit

- [Online training](#) on Alternative narratives and inclusive communication

³ Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities Programme, [Migration and integration: Which alternative narratives work and why? - Policy Brief \(Polish version and Spanish version\)](#), 2021.

- [Guide to designing a communication strategy in intercultural cities](#) (2023) (+ [Spanish version](#)) / [Summary of communications guide](#) (+ [Spanish version](#))
- [Inclusive communication – Policy brief](#), 2021.
- [Migration and integration: Which alternative narratives work and why? - Policy Brief](#) ([Polish version](#) and [Spanish version](#)), 2021.
- [Claiming the power of dialogue: Toolkit for antirumours dialogue - Policy Brief](#) ([Spanish version](#)), 2021.
- [10 criteria for the creation of effective alternative narratives on diversity](#), 2019.

c. Urban spaces and community-building initiatives

In diverse cities, urban spaces play a vital role in fostering social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and community engagement. The thoughtful design and management of public spaces can create environments that encourage meaningful interaction, cultural exchange and inclusive participation. Supporting initiatives that cultivate vibrant, welcoming neighbourhoods is important for advancing integration and building resilient communities. The ICC Programme supports these efforts by providing capacity building, facilitating peer learning and delivering practical projects focused on placemaking and community empowerment.

In 2025, the ICC Programme worked on bridging placemaking and the principles of intercultural inclusion for cities. This experts-lead work will lead to the drafting of a policy brief in 2026 based on initiatives of four ICC members.

1. Placemaking Week Europe 2025 in Reggio Emilia (Italy)

Placemaking is a practical approach to creating healthy and inclusive communities in cities around the world. It inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community and facilitates creative patterns of use with particular attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

Placemaking Week Europe is an annual festival that brings together around **500 placemakers**, urban planners, city officials, and community leaders from across Europe and beyond. In September 2025, the ICC Programme took part in the edition hosted in Reggio Emilia (Italy). The Programme contributed to a workshop addressing the challenge of building inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods for all. The session highlighted the Council of Europe's approach to intercultural inclusion as a key dimension of urban planning, focusing on the importance of consultation processes that actively engage residents from diverse backgrounds. Particular attention was paid to the responsibility of local authorities to reach out to community members who may not speak the official language(s) or usually participate in public consultations. The workshop also showcased the achievements of the ICC Italian network in this field, along with the outcomes of an inter-city grant supported by the Council of Europe and implemented by Reggio Emilia and Modena.



2. *Wrocław Study Visit (Poland): Advancing Intercultural Inclusion in Urban Spaces*

In March 2025, 23 member cities of the ICC Programme gathered in Wrocław, Poland, for a study visit focused on advancing intercultural inclusion policies, organised jointly with the municipality of Wrocław and the Wrocław Centre for Social Development. The visit provided participants with the chance to observe practical methods of promoting social cohesion through inclusive urban planning and community engagement.

During the visit, the delegation explored Wrocław's innovative strategy centred on the pillars of beauty, wisdom, and security. Key intercultural sites visited included the Four Denominations district, which promotes dialogue and tolerance among religious communities, and the Passage of Dialogue, a vibrant urban space supporting social activities and services for migrants and refugees. These experiences emphasised Wrocław's dedication to fostering welcoming environments that encourage interaction and integration, especially for newcomers, including Ukrainian refugees.



The study visit built upon previous initiatives in Poland, such as the Academy for the Integration of Migrants and Refugees and anti-rumour training. This highlights the region's ongoing collaborative efforts to manage the social impact of the crisis. Municipal leaders emphasised that participation in the ICC network provides valuable inspiration and

practical guidance for strengthening community ties and promoting inclusive urban development across member cities.

Thematic Toolkit

- [Green urban planning for the Intercultural City - Policy brief \(2022\)](#)
- [Intercultural Cities in Placemaking - Intercultural Cities Programme](#)

d. *Inter-faith dialogue*

In today's multicultural and multi-religious Europe, the ICC Programme sees interreligious dialogue and engaging faith-based actors as important elements of building positive interaction and inclusive cities, which has become essential for building cohesive, resilient and environmentally sustainable societies. By engaging religious and faith communities as key partners, ICC members can better understand and address the social and environmental issues that affect their residents' daily lives.

1. Engaging religious institutions for social cohesion and civic participation

The ICC Programme participated in the roundtable titled “The Role of Religious Institutions in Belonging and Civic Engagement in Europe,” held on 2 July 2025 in Luxembourg. Co-organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation Luxembourg Network, Formation et Sensibilisation de Luxembourg, and the Network for Dialogue (KAICIID), the event convened local authorities, faith-based actors, and civil society representatives to examine the vital role of religious institutions in strengthening social cohesion within diverse communities.



During the roundtable, the ICC Programme presented its intercultural inclusion model, highlighting practical examples from member cities that demonstrate how engaging religious institutions as long-term partners in local governance can foster mutual understanding, trust and active civic participation. The discussions emphasised the necessity of structured, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and reaffirmed the significant contribution of faith-based organisations as co-creators of inclusion and democratic resilience in contemporary societies.

The ICC Programme was also invited to speak at the 6th European Policy Dialogue Forum organised by KAICIID International Dialogue Centre on “Social Cohesion in Changing Climates – Fostering Inclusive Paths to Equity in Europe” in November 2025 in Geneva (Switzerland). The event focused on ways in which interreligious and intercultural dialogue can contribute to social cohesion and climate justice – looking also at the role of local authorities, business, youth, environmental and social justice activism.

Thematic Toolkit

- [Handbook “Valuing religious communities as key actors of social cohesion” \(2020\) \[+ Arabic version / Italian version\]](#)
- [Organising intercultural and interreligious activities - a toolkit for local authorities \(2016\)](#)
- [Engaging with faith and convictional communities in the Intercultural city – Policy Brief \(2015\)](#)

e. Disinformation

As highlighted by the [2025 Report of the Secretary General](#) of the Council of Europe calling for a New Democratic Pact for Europe, disinformation poses a significant threat to the foundations of democratic societies, challenging public trust, electoral integrity, pluralism, and fundamental rights. The growing sophistication and scale of information manipulation, often driven by hostile actors and amplified by digital platforms, undermines the ability of citizens to receive diverse and reliable information and make informed decisions. In this context, the ICC Programme is committed to contributing to efforts to counter disinformation through dedicated workshops and awareness-raising activities.

1. No Hate Speech Week 2025

In June 2025, the ICC Programme convened a delegation of city representatives at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, for the No Hate Speech Week 2025. The event featured two training sessions focused on disinformation at the local level. These sessions aimed to equip participants with practical tools and theoretical knowledge, including the anti-rumours methodology, to help counter hate speech and tackle the challenges posed by the spread of false information in diverse communities.



No Hate Speech Week, held from 17 to 20 June 2025, marks the International Day for Countering Hate Speech on 18 June and seeks to raise awareness about the impact of rumours, stereotypes, and prejudices that can fuel hate speech and hate crimes. Through a series of workshops and discussions under the theme “Enhance legal and non-legal measures against hate speech through a multi-stakeholder approach” the initiative encouraged peer-to-peer exchange and collaboration among local actors striving to create more inclusive and resilient societies.

2. The ICC Programme supports Polish cities in countering disinformation

As part of the ongoing efforts of the ICC Programme to strengthen local democracy through inclusion, dialogue and informed citizenship, a new capacity-building initiative was launched under the Academy on the Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Polish Cities. Building on earlier successful sessions held in the intercultural cities of [Lublin](#) and [Wrocław](#), this series supported Polish municipalities in addressing key democratic and social challenges.



Within this framework, on 30 September 2025, the ICC Programme, in partnership with the Union of Polish Municipalities and the intercultural city of Kraków, organised a one-day course on tackling disinformation at Kraków’s Multicultural Centre. The event brought together municipal directors, communication and public relations staff from Białystok, Katowice, Kraków, Lublin, Poznań, Rzeszów and Warsaw to explore the role of

intercultural approaches in building urban resilience to misleading narratives.

Disinformation – false or manipulated information intentionally spread to deceive, harm, or provoke – increasingly threatens local governance and community trust, often targeting marginalised groups. In response, the training combined conceptual input, interactive group work, and practical exercises enabling participants to identify local effects of disinformation, design prevention and rapid-response measures, and strengthen collaboration among cities.

Prior to the event, participants completed a needs-assessment survey so that the training could be tailored to the realities of Polish municipalities. The workshop thus served as both a learning and cooperation platform, equipping cities with concrete communication strategies and reinforcing their ability to safeguard democratic processes and social cohesion.

Thematic Toolkit

- [The Escape Roomours: an online game for young people](#)
- [Antirumours diagnosis in educational centres \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [Anti-rumours handbook \(+ Arabic version + Finnish version + Italian version + Japanese version + Portuguese version + Polish version + Spanish version + Ukrainian version\)](#)
- [Online antirumours training](#)
- [Claiming the power of dialogue: Toolkit for antirumours dialogue \(+ Polish version + Spanish version\)](#)
- [Step-by-step guide to conduct an Anti-rumours diagnosis \(+ Greek version\)](#)
- [Guide “Anti-rumour youth: keys to work anti-rumours content with young people” \(+ Spanish version\)](#)

f. Active citizenship and participation

According to the intercultural approach of the Council of Europe, active citizenship and participation are enabling factors to successfully build cities where real equality is actively sought, diversity is regarded positively and meaningful interaction between diverse individuals and groups is engineered. Active citizenship and participation help to ensure that no-one is left aside, that even those who do not enjoy formal citizenship have a voice into shaping their local society.

1. Dialogue on minority inclusion

In February 2025, the European Centre for Minority Issues ([ECMI](#)) hosted a significant dialogue as part of its “[Conversations with Experts](#)” series. The series comprises video interviews between leading minority rights experts and ECMI researchers, focusing on recent projects or events and offering valuable insights into minority rights, inclusion, and diversity. In the 18th episode, ICC expert Robin Wilson emphasised the crucial roles that education, public spaces, and local governance play in fostering interethnic understanding. The discussion highlighted the achievements of the ICC Programme and reinforced the ongoing relevance of its intercultural inclusion approach for Europe’s minority communities.

Ms Wilson reiterated the ICC framework’s fundamental principles of equality, diversity, interaction, and participation, and examined how local initiatives inspired by this approach can help prevent and mediate inter-ethnic conflicts, as well as promote desegregation. This dialogue serves as a compelling example of the close relationship between intercultural policies and minority rights frameworks in building inclusive European societies that are grounded in mutual respect and active civic participation.

2. The Multitude Festival in La Courneuve – Department of Seine-Saint-Denis (France)

The Multitude Festival, held annually in Seine-Saint-Denis, France, is a dynamic cultural and civic event celebrating the rich diversity and intercultural life of the territory. The 2025 edition took place from 4 to 6 July in the Parc Georges-Valbon, La Courneuve, transforming the park into a vibrant hub of concerts, art exhibitions, workshops, and public discussions. The festival goes beyond entertainment; it aims to showcase initiatives that embody interculturality in action, highlighting the cultural richness of Seine-Saint-Denis and fostering social cohesion through cultural exchange and community participation.

At the heart of the 2025 festival was the Europe Pavilion, which brought together more than 30 European partners, including the ICC Programme. ICC members, alongside other European initiatives such as the CERV-funded “Sound of Diversity” project and WELDI (Welcome and Empowerment for Local Dignified Integration), engaged actively in debates and workshops. A key discussion on 5 July focused on leveraging cultural diversity to support local development by fostering intercultural dialogue, building a shared local identity, and countering prejudice and disinformation. ICC’s participation emphasized how intercultural interaction, and inclusive local governance can strengthen social bonds and enhance community resilience. The Multitude Festival thus provided an important platform for ICC to highlight its role in promoting intercultural inclusion and exchanging best practices within a European context.

Thematic Toolkit

- Policy Brief “[Building meaningful public participation in Intercultural cities – A guide to the appreciative inquiry approach](#)”
- [Citizenship and participation in the intercultural city – Background paper](#)

- [Step-By-Step guide: new edition](#)
- Policy Brief “[Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Strategies for the Intercultural City](#)”

3. [Peer learning and support](#)

Peer learning is one of the pillars for the development of the ICC Programme. This is intended as both occasions for cities to learn from each other, and for the ICC Programme to pilot new methodologies at the local level, testing and developing small initiatives into a full policy approach.

a. [Study visits and international exchanges](#)

1. [Shizuoka Prefecture \(Japan\) officials’ study visits to Australian ICC cities](#)

In March 2025, officials from the Multicultural Affairs Division of Shizuoka Prefectural Government in Japan undertook a [study visit](#) to the Australian cities of Melton and Salisbury, both active members of the ICC Australian network. The visit aimed to explore practical intercultural policies and initiatives implemented at the local level, supporting Shizuoka’s interest in joining the ICC.

The delegation also engaged with representatives from the state governments of Victoria and South Australia, gaining insights into legislative frameworks such as South Australia’s Multicultural Act of 2021, which uniquely embeds interculturalism within its provisions. These encounters broadened understanding of how interculturalism is operationalised within different tiers of government in Australia.



Key meetings with leading experts, including Dr. Glenda Ballantyne, coordinator of the ICC Australian National Network, and academics from Melbourne and South Australia universities, furnished valuable perspectives on multiculturalism and intercultural inclusion. The visit was coordinated by the ICC expert Professor Keizo Yamawaki, specialist of migration studies at the School of Global Japanese Studies, Meiji University (Tokyo, Japan), whose expertise in migrant inclusion contributed to the study tour’s strategic focus.

The experience underscored the importance of cross-national learning and collaboration in enriching intercultural competence and advancing inclusive governance. Shizuoka’s exposure to Australia’s innovative approaches offers promising inspiration for enhancing migrant inclusion policies at home.

b. [Inter-city grants](#)

This year, the intercity grants' scheme was renewed to encourage member cities to kick-off innovative projects and methodologies to promote equality, the diversity advantage, participation and meaningful intercultural interactions in diverse societies. The scheme consisted in grants, awarded upon a call issued at the beginning of the year. An important aspect of the call was the need for the cities to join forces and present proposals that would involve several local authorities, from the same country or internationally, with the view to enable peer learning, cross-border or national cooperation across local authorities. In 2025, seven cities received intercity grants within three different projects.

1. The “Cities of Reciprocity” Project by Lutsk (Ukraine), Lublin (Poland) and Pavlohrad (Ukraine)

The “Cities of Reciprocity” project, implemented by the **Department for Culture of Lutsk City Council** (Ukraine) in partnership with the intercultural cities of **Lublin** (Poland) and **Pavlohrad** (Ukraine), aimed to strengthen social cohesion and inclusion in Ukrainian communities hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, and social groups. The project supported local initiatives focused on intercultural dialogue, inclusive education, and the cultural engagement of new residents to foster resilient and inclusive communities amidst ongoing social transformations.



Launched on 30 June 2025 in Lutsk, the project's opening conference brought together diverse stakeholders, including representatives from Pavlohrad and Lublin, other Ukrainian ICC members, and civil society organisations, particularly national minority groups.

Since its inception, the project has organised educational events, roundtables, training sessions, and an Intercultural Forum to develop intercultural policies and to establish cross-sectoral dialogue platforms at the community level. Intercultural integration roadmaps have been created for the participating cities, with Lutsk serving as a model for sustainable intercultural development. Planned activities included training civil servants in psychological support, emotional care, and mediation skills, alongside a study visit to Lublin to enhance knowledge exchange and cross-border cooperation.

On 12 September 2025, Lutsk hosted the Intercultural Forum “Cities of Reciprocity: Intercultural Dialogue as a Path to Unity,” gathering political representatives from Ukrainian cities, members of the Verkhovna Rada, regional authorities, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Consul General of Poland in Lutsk, and representatives of Lublin.



The Forum recalled President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's official Strasbourg visit earlier in 2025 and affirmed ongoing Organisation-level support for Ukraine. The ICC Programme

reiterated the solidarity of its members with Ukrainian cities and highlighted the critical role of inclusivity and dialogue for durable recovery and reconstruction.

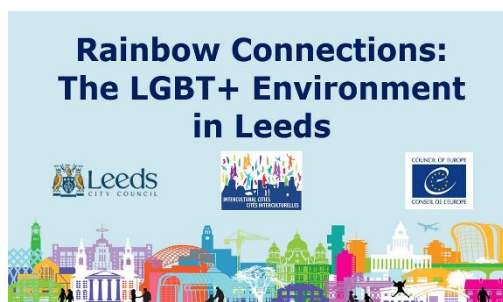
Throughout the implementation of the project systematic and constructive cooperation was ensured with local self-government bodies as well as with representatives of regional authorities in the project's participating cities. The project activities reached approximately 1 045 individuals (745 participants involved in project and ~300 attendees of the outdoor "Palette of Cultures" festival, representing diverse ages and backgrounds.

Thanks to the involvement of cities from the Ukrainian ICC network, the project served as a platform for intermunicipal dialogue, which was perceived by public authorities as a useful tool for experience exchange and coordination of actions in the field of intercultural policy. Authorities highlighted the Forum and the project as a whole as new opportunities for advancing intercultural policy in Ukraine and for integrating Ukrainian cities into the global ICC network. All developed tools, educational materials, and partnership mechanisms have been integrated into the ongoing work of relevant structures and will be used to further advance project objectives.

2. *Rainbow Connections project by Leeds (UK) and Oeiras (Portugal)*

The "Rainbow Connections – a project using LGBT+ Staff Networks as a Resource for Enhancing Intercultural Conversations on LGBT+ Issues in Municipalities" project involved the municipalities of **Oeiras** (Portugal) and **Leeds** (United-Kingdom).

Learning from the lessons of existing ICC good practice, the project partners aimed to foster a comprehensive understanding of LGBT+ issues within the municipal workforces of Leeds and Oeiras, ultimately cultivating inclusive, aware, and engaging environments that reflect the diverse communities we serve.



Participants from both cities recognised the value of incorporating interactive elements into the training sessions and the importance of including the voice of lived experience. Discussions also emphasised the gap between progressive legislation and everyday lived experience, recognising that legal protections do not always translate into safety, acceptance, or dignity for LGBT+ individuals.

The comparative view of Portugal and the United Kingdom confirmed that, regardless of how advanced legal rights may be, they do not, in themselves, guarantee equality in practice. Social, cultural and institutional challenges remain fundamental barriers that prevent legal norms from becoming practices of inclusion and protection.

Normative knowledge allows for the correct understanding and application of legislation and international recommendations, ensuring that rights are recognised. Critical awareness is necessary to identify institutional biases and structural barriers that compromise the effectiveness of those rights. Relational competences are essential for creating safe, inclusive and affirming environments, fostering active listening, empathetic communication and acceptance. Transforming legal rights into

concrete experiences of belonging, safety, and equity requires integrating these competences across all institutional levels, combined with inclusive public policies, continuous training, and effective monitoring of discriminatory practices. Only through this approach can LGBT+ rights move beyond formal norms and become lived equality.

Key results of the project were:

- qualitative and insightful discussions between LGBT+ municipal employees, wider municipal employees and allies in each city, giving an in depth understanding of LGBT+ issues and life experiences in different national contexts.
- An opportunity to explore how the ICC intercultural methodology can be applied to LGBT+ awareness, in both formal training contexts and less formal sessions, using staff networks and lived experience.
- An opportunity to engage LGBT+ staff network members in international work.
- A study visit from Leeds to Oeiras that has provided valuable insights to both partners, and will be used to propel further work to improve intercultural activity in each municipality.
- The Intercultural LGBTI Competences Training Manual, a bilingual resource that can be used by public and private organisations. The manual brings together a range of models, pedagogical tools and methodologies that can be implemented separately or combined, according to the needs and level of maturity of each organisation. By focusing on intercultural competences, rather than on information alone, the manual enables users to promote inclusion in diverse institutional environments, across different social, political, legal and cultural settings. This ensures that the manual has lasting added value for ICC members, and beyond, as a practical, adaptable and transferable tool.

3. *The “Mapping cultural diversity” project by Reggio Emilia and Modena (Italy)*

The “Mapping cultural diversity” project involved the municipalities of **Reggio Emilia and Modena** (Italy). It aimed at identifying the co-called “places of diversity” (physical and social spaces capable of promoting the co-presence, interaction and valorisation of people with different cultural backgrounds) through the creation of digital and interactive maps in both territories.

The actions put in place by the project were:

1. Drafting of a research plan and how to implement it (functional to the data collection process);
2. Production of the maps;
3. Organisation of public dissemination events, especially within the Placemaking Week festival in Reggio Emilia;
4. Production and publication of a digital handbook aiming to support all territories interested in developing similar maps as a support in facing internal diversities and seeking to harness them to transform differences into educational, economic, social and cultural opportunities.

Produced using the ArcGIS Geographic Information System (GIS) software – a platform for the analysis and visualisation of spatial data – the maps focused on specific components of the urban landscape considered meaningful in expressing the cultural diversity of the two cities. While Reggio Emilia decided to focus on the identification of the various places of worship, as well as shops owned by citizens with an international background, Modena decided to give visibility to the various language courses teaching main diaspora languages.

From the outcome of this pilot project, it came that places of diversity are in fact very dynamic places, animated by the active participation of people with different cultural backgrounds. The mapping was then conceived to understand the “sense of each place” through the narratives and experiences that people develop with, and within, the urban space. By enabling the visibility not only of material resources but also of the symbolic, relational, and narrative resources that shape the life of a community, the mapping was used as a tool to understand how cultural diversity manifests, tales share, and evolves within contemporary cities, also allowing the explore the so called “diversity advantage” produced by each place not only within itself but also in their interaction with other places from the same neighbourhood.

4. Cooperation with other international organisations

Collaborative efforts among international organisations and city networks are essential to advancing effective and sustainable intercultural inclusion policies. Cooperation enables sharing of expertise, peer learning, and innovation across borders, helping local authorities to develop more comprehensive, context-sensitive strategies. By pooling resources and knowledge, diverse stakeholders can better address challenges such as migration, discrimination, social cohesion, and resilience to misinformation. International partnerships thus play a pivotal role in supporting cities to build inclusive societies that respect diversity and promote equal participation.

a. Collaborations of the ICC Programme with International Partners

1. Inter-agency academy on the integration of migrants and refugees in the Baltic countries

The Academy on the Integration of Migrants and Refugees in the Baltic countries is a joint initiative of the Intercultural Cities Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Together, these institutions aim to provide local authorities with the expertise, tools and peer support necessary to develop inclusive integration strategies.

The Academy was launched in Riga, Latvia, on 12 March 2025, with the objective of strengthening the capacity of city administrations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to welcome and support newcomers

effectively. Over its 18-month duration, it will equip municipal officials with key skills to address the diverse challenges related to refugee and migrant integration while encouraging cross-border cooperation among participating cities.

Building on the successful [pilot carried out in Polish cities in 2023–2024](#),

the Baltic Academy places a strong emphasis on practical training and peer learning. In the months ahead, participants will engage in activities covering a wide range of priorities, including intercultural competence development, partnership building, combating misinformation, addressing the specific needs of refugee groups, and preventing gender-based violence, with the overarching ambition of creating resilient and inclusive communities.



In November 2025, a training session of the Baltic Integration Academy took place in Riga, bringing together over 30 participants from cities across Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to strengthen their skills in the fields of anti-rumours and cross-cultural competences. The sessions, jointly organised by the ICC Programme and the UNHCR, focused on cross-cultural communication strategies, conflict resolution, and protection-sensitive approaches, as well as the methodology and use of anti-rumours strategies to counter stereotypes and discrimination through long-term community engagement.

2. International Forum on city networks for a cohesive society

Organised jointly by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 28th International Forum on the Acceptance and Integration of Foreigners, took



place in Tokyo and online on 13 February 2025. Focusing on “*Domestic and international partnership among municipalities towards realising the integration and inclusion of foreign nationals in society*”, the forum brought together over 250 participants, including local and national stakeholders, experts, civil society actors and municipal representatives.

The forum emphasised the importance of Japan’s Council of Municipalities with sizeable foreign populations, and acknowledged the increasing involvement of regions such as Shizuoka Prefecture in international city networks. Presentations were given on valuable tools such as the ICC Index and the IOM’s Migration Governance Index. Furthermore, the forum emphasised the importance of

transparent communication regarding Japan’s ongoing commitment to promoting intercultural cohesion, particularly given the current global climate of growing anti-immigrant sentiment.

From the standpoint of the ICC Programme, the event demonstrated the vital role played by both international and national networks in supporting municipalities in developing inclusive governance frameworks and intercultural integration strategies. Representatives from ICC member cities Ansan (Republic of Korea) and Hamamatsu (Japan) shared their experiences of using the programme to facilitate knowledge exchange, promote best practices and strengthen intercultural policies at different stages of integration.

Overall, the forum showcased how collaboration between domestic and international city networks fosters innovation, active citizenship, and sustainable inclusion—principles central to the ICC Programme’s approach to building welcoming and resilient communities.

3. ICC Contributions at the OSCE Human Dimension Meeting

In June 2025, the Council of Europe’s intercultural inclusion approach was prominently featured at the OSCE Third Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting held in Vienna, Austria. The ICC Programme presenting its intercultural model to a diverse international audience during plenary sessions. The focus was on fostering trust and resilience locally through inclusive, multilevel governance and addressing structural inequalities and discrimination.



The ICC Programme also organised a side event titled “The Council of Europe’s Intercultural Inclusion Approach: Unlocking the Diversity Power for Cohesive Societies”. This session provided practical insights into promoting inclusive governance at local, national, and international levels. Experts such as Karoline Fernandez de la Hoz (Spain), Peter Kariuki (Finland), and Robin Wilson (UK) shared their experience and perspectives on strengthening cohesive, resilient communities through intercultural policies.

b. Developing new partnerships

In 2025, the ICC Programme also aimed to expand its network of partners by establishing or strengthening collaborations with several international and regional organisations, especially through participation to the informal Network of cities launch by KAICIID. These include the [European Coalition of Cities against Racism \(ECCAR\)](#), which forms part of UNESCO’s [International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities \(ICCAR\)](#); the [Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe \(NALAS\)](#); the [Network of Border Cities and Islands](#); the [European Association for Local Democracy \(ALDA\)](#); and [IDEMA](#), a social innovation consultancy. These partnerships could help strengthen the programme’s impact, foster peer learning, and promote the exchange of best practices in sustainable urban development, inclusion, and intercultural relations. The objective is also to draw on shared experience and build sustainable cooperation links to advance inclusion across different fields of work.

The collaboration with [KAICIID](#) Dialogue Centre was strengthened through the active participation of the ICC Programme in two events, namely the roundtable on the role of Religious Institutions in belonging and civic engagement in Europe in Luxembourg in July and 6th European Policy Dialogue Forum (EPDF) in Geneva in November 2025.

Following the publication of the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) 2025 results, the ICC Programme reinforced its collaboration with [MPG - Migration Policy Group](#) by participating as speaker to their event “A Roadmap for Inclusive Policy in the EU” in September 2025. Work with MPG has continued throughout the year through ADI-INT.

2025 gave rise to opportunity for the ICC Programme to collaborate with the private sector, especially the [Ernst Llunch Foundation](#) by contributing to the public dialogue: “Public policies and practices for the management of coexistence in a diverse metropolitan city” in Barcelona in October.

The ICC National / Regional networks

The main objective of the ICC Programme is to build capacity to develop and implement intercultural policies and strategies at local level in a sustainable and organic way. National networks act as multipliers, facilitators and repositories of expertise at the national level. They also contribute to further dissemination and development of the intercultural inclusion approach through peer-to-peer co-operation and implementation of projects.

Established and more structured co-ordination of national networks is present in Australia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Quebec and Ukraine. The Italian, Portuguese and Spanish networks are also partners in several projects funded by the European Commission to promote the principles of intercultural integration.

In 2025, the ICC Programme gave annual grants to the **Italian, Portuguese and Spanish networks** to carry out certain projects aimed at promoting intercultural inclusion in cities.

1. [Australia – ICANN](#)

The Intercultural Cities Australian National Network (ICANN), established in 2022, comprises three members ([Ballarat](#), [Salisbury](#) and [Melton](#)), all fully integrated into the international network. Over the past year, the work has focused on four main areas: recruitment and network growth, advocacy, crisis support for a member city, and international exchange.

Building on a successful series of webinars on intercultural practice delivered last year in collaboration with colleagues from the international network, ICANN has continued targeted engagement with local governments.

Alongside recruitment, ICANN has devoted significant effort to advocacy for the intercultural approach. In Australia, the key challenge is not resistance to interculturalism, but limited familiarity with it. Member cities have played an important role as ambassadors, influencing diversity policy thinking within local government, including through municipal associations. In addition, the convenors have engaged with influential scholars connected to state and federal ministers, as well as senior government officials. The network is also collaborating with the iGen Foundation on the establishment of a new entity, the Australian Intercultural Collaboration, designed to foster networking between cities, policymakers, and researchers.

The network rose to help one of its members when facing a tragedy in the murder of two young Sudanese boys in Melton. ICANN has supported this work by assisting Melton's intercultural officers—whose roles have been made more challenging by recent staffing cuts—through sharing best practice, supporting outreach to affected community leaders, and exploring the potential for a research project to underpin longer-term initiatives.

Finally, the network hosted a delegation from Shizuoka Prefecture (Japan) which undertook a study tour to Australia to explore the Intercultural Cities approach, having recently joined the ICC network. The collaboration was mutual as the network joined the international symposium for the launch of the Intercultural Month in Shizuoka prefecture.

The network also strengthened ties with the Moroccan ICC network during a visit in the summer, providing an opportunity to engage deeply with the Moroccan context of interculturalism, which differs markedly from the Australian experience

2. Italy - Città del dialogo (RCD)

Together with its cities, the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities continued to involve citizens, especially young people, in intercultural initiatives to develop and promote intercultural inclusion values and behaviours and to combat discrimination. Particular attention was paid to the development of local anti-discrimination plans, with six cities currently working on such plans and others potentially interested. This topic was addressed both during the annual event and in online webinars and bilateral meetings with cities, as well as with national institutions (UNAR).



RCD organised its annual meeting in Ravenna on 22–23 October 2025. This event brought together representatives from Italian cities and regions, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE) and the National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR), with the aim of reviewing the network's activities for 2025 and exchanging ideas on how to develop local anti-discrimination plans that are tailored to the specific needs of each city. The discussions focused on concrete municipal actions to combat discrimination and effect systemic change within an intercultural framework. The meeting combined theoretical insights with practical exercises to help participants draft effective local

anti-discrimination strategies. It concluded with information on tools and resources available from the ICC Programme and other initiatives designed to help cities implement inclusive, anti-discriminatory policies. The event emphasised the network's dedication to promoting intercultural inclusion through collaborative learning and shared knowledge.

Two cities were supported in writing the Index during 2025: the Municipality of Montesilvano and the Municipality of Pontedera . ICEI provided technical assistance to the two public administrations, which successfully completed the Index. Pontedera also received an Expert Visit from the ICC Programme.

The Italian network continued its work through projects in 2025, namely:

- The project ***Annual events of the Italian ICC network for 2025***, funded by the ICC Programme, allowed stronger participation of cities through opportunities for discussion both in person and online. The grant supported the organisation of RCD annual event, bilateral discussions with cities from the network and two thematic webinars on the “process of developing local intercultural strategies: steps, risks and suggestion” and “the role of local anti-discrimination services and data: good practices and critical elements”.
- The project ***CITIES - Cities Initiative Towards Inclusive and Equitable Societies***, launched in March 2024 and lasting two years, is led by ICEI with Reggio Emilia as lead partner. It involves partnerships with municipalities, universities, and civil society organisations across Italy and Europe. The project supports cities in developing local anti-discrimination plans, strengthens prevention and anti-discrimination services, and includes a data collection component. Activities in 2025 included training municipal staff and CSOs, a study visit to Strasbourg, research work on detection of direct and indirect discrimination as well as developing a new tool for collecting and analysing data on discrimination. Finally, a communication campaign was launch in November for 3 months to promote the project.
- The project ***EPIC_IDEA Empowering youth Participation for Inclusive and plural Communities*** started in September 2024 for two years and is led by ICEI. It is a transnational partnership involving CSOs from Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The project's core objective is to enhance democratic participation among young people by engaging them in bottom-up initiatives that promote inclusive and plural societies. Activities include research on youth perspectives, organisation of national events for youth workers, youth camps, working on anti-rumours and strengthening community of practices among youth workers and activities.
- ***#ARTE – Anti-Rumours, Teatro ed Educazione***, started in February 2025 until June 2026. It targets neighbourhood youth centres in Milan to prevent and combat discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability. It empowers around 250 young people and 30 youth workers through training programmes and a community of practice focused on anti-rumour techniques and fostering positive social interactions. The project aims to strengthen social cohesion by enhancing awareness and changing attitudes among young generations.

- **STAND – Strengthening Towns’ Activation for new Narratives on Diversity** launched in January 2025 and lasting for two years, engages 15 ICC cities across Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. This project focuses on narrative change, addressing social polarisation by analysing existing local narratives and co-creating alternative narratives that promote diversity and inclusion. Activities in 2025 included a diagnostic phase to gather experiences, perceptions, and concerns of those involved in local diversity work or affected by existing narratives, training sessions, and co-creation of local narratives through multistakeholders working groups.
- **PAMI – Antidiscrimination Plan of the City of Milan** supports the municipality in developing local anti-discrimination policies. In 2025, several awareness raising events were carried out, the anti-discrimination policy document was adopted by the municipality of Milan together with the activation of a discrimination reporting desk. The project continued its preparatory work for the creation of a network of formal and informal organizations/entities that can cooperate with the Municipality and benefit capacity building within the framework of the anti-discrimination policy.
- **D.R.O.M – Diritti, Riconoscimento, Opportunità e Memoria**, funded by UNAR and coordinated by ICEI with the Municipality of Milan, combats antigypsyism and promotes Romani culture across Italian municipalities. Key activities include creating a permanent working group on Romani inclusion and organising cultural events to enhance visibility and awareness about Romani heritage, thereby fostering pluralistic local communities.

3. Portugal - Rede portuguesa cidades interculturais (RPCI)



In 2025, **Vila Nova de Gaia** joined the Portuguese Network, raising the membership to 19.

The city of Oeiras was supported in writing the Index which also received an Expert Visit from the ICC Programme in December.

On 10-11 February 2025, RPCI held an annual face-to-face meeting in Oeiras to organise a field visit in Oeiras and discuss with local associations on how to improve collaboration. This connection and support for local community leadership puts into practice one of the most important pillars of the intercultural perspective: **participation** or, in other words, ‘Nothing about us without us’. The meeting was also the time for members to discuss the workplan for 2025 and priorities of the network.

- **Intercultural educators** – annual project funded by the ICC Programme aimed to foster deeper intercultural competencies among school staff and strategic partners, as a continuation of the 2024 project. Activities included a practice-sharing event, a training of trainer, and one final webinar.

Finally, **three new episodes of the “Portugal Plural” podcast** (launched in 2022) were recorded, focusing on [“Educating for diversity: the intercultural club”](#), [“Beyond translation: the role of linguistic mediation in schools”](#) and [“Intercultural competences in school practice”](#). They are available on Spotify in Portuguese.

- ***STAND – Strengthening Towns’ Activation for new Narratives on Diversity*** continued to be implemented in collaboration with the Italian and Spanish ICC networks. In Portugal, four cities are engaged: Barcelos, Loures, Vila Verde and Viseu. During the months of June and July the training on Alternative Narratives was prepared and delivered in 3 cities, engaging more than 50 people. A session for more than 50 young people in Loures and another for more than 60 young people in Barcelos were held to listen to the perspectives of young people regarding oppressive and alternative narratives. Currently, each city is hosting meetings with target groups chosen (Viseu and Barcelos – Roma people; Loures and Vila Verde – people with migrant background) to gather common negative and oppressive narratives and collect ideas for alternative narratives.
- The project ***EPIC_IDEA Empowering youth Participation for Inclusive and plural Communities*** keep on being implemented in 2025. During that time, the National youth workers event was held (Santa Maria da Feira) with 27 participants and a National Youth Camp was held with more than 25 young people from the 3 cities gathered in Cascais (September 2025) to learn about Anti-Rumours and discuss ideas for awareness raising actions. Cities also continue to hold local events to kickstart conversations with youth.
- ***PMIM – Municipal Plan for Migrant Integration of Loures*** started in February 2025 and will end in March 2027. The project envisions a set of actions to improve the integration of migrants, in several fields such as education, health, housing, culture, language, digital citizenship, documentation and public services. A recruitment process was conducted to choose 4 mediators that started to work in August, covering the 4 main areas of the city. A set of cultural activities, training for public services and awareness raising actions to prevent racism and xenophobia is also envisioned.

Finally, several partnerships were maintained and new ones established with the following entities: Aga Khan Foundation Portugal; Alcaldía Local de San Cristóbal, Bogotá, Batoto Yetu; Clube Intercultural Europeu; Colômbia; Cidade de Leeds; Chorus, Grécia; Education and Transformation 2026; Holly House of Mercy Sabugal; Jerónimo Martins Agro alimentar; Mãos para o Mundo Project (Barcelos); MEERU; Porto Polytechnic University, PEA, Post Graduation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (10% discount for RPCI cities); REEI – Network of Schools for Intercultural Education (AKF, AIMA e DGE); Stone Soup Consulting.

4. Québec (Canada) – RÉMIRI

The year 2025 marked the 10th anniversary of the *Réseau des municipalités en immigration et en relations interculturelles* (RÉMIRI).



It continues to expand, welcoming seven new members: the **Borough of LaSalle**, **Municipalities of Sawinigan** and **Saint-Eustache**, alongside three new Municipal Regional Counties (MRC)⁴: **Charlevoix-Est**, **Etchemins**, **Montmagny**, **Vaudreuil-Soulanges**. Additionally, four cities already part of RÉMIRI announced their intention to join the international network of the ICC Programme.

The network held four meetings this year on the following topics:

- The first meeting was held online in February on the various changes in Quebec's immigration ecosystem, which included a presentation on Bill 84 on national integration.
- The second meeting was held in person on issues of welcoming policies at local level and funding available for cities, with an emphasis on the working relations between the RÉMIRI and Ministry of Immigration, Francization and Integration (MIFI).
- On 29 August 2025, during an online meeting, members of the network exchanged with the Mayor of Sherbrooke on the topic of public consultation for the pluriannual planification of immigration. They also followed a presentation of the new “Guide for inclusive local authorities and their allies” to which many members contributed.
- Finally, a last meeting was organised in October to mark the 10th anniversary, reflecting on the added value of the network and its future. It also was the opportunity for some members to present their latest work on anti-discrimination strategies, especially the new anti-rumours strategy of Sherbrooke and the LABBRI project Dialogues.

The work of the network remains active through its three established working groups:

- The **Fire Prevention and Safety Working Group (GTPSI)** has begun producing four tools to support the skills development of prevention officers and firefighters.
- The **Anti-Rumour Strategy Working Group (GTSAR)** has followed with great interest the actions of the City of Sherbrooke, which held the first meetings with community partners and obtained funding for a doctoral research project on the evolution of the strategy in Sherbrooke. Two other cities have joined the working group, and the first training sessions and the launch of the network are scheduled for February 2026.
- The **Working Group on Awareness for Elected Officials (GTSE)** has a new coordinator who has mobilised members by clarifying the group's objectives and planning the first actions. The group has planned several actions to facilitate closer ties with elected officials involved in the issue, including proposing activities at the annual events of the Union des municipalités du

⁴ These administrative entities ensure the regional management of small municipalities that are grouped into supralocal communities.

Québec and the Fédération québécoise des municipalités. The group also launched the idea of organising a forum on living together for municipal elected officials in October 2026.

Information on the network projects includes:

- A representative from RÉMIRI participated in two major events organised by the Quebec Network for Research on Immigration, Integration and Intercultural Relations (RQ3i): the first annual conference and the first training activity.
- Quebec's Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Francization (MIFI) asked RÉMIRI to propose changes to the accountability requirements for agreements. In response, RÉMIRI set up a working group that has already held two meetings and plans to submit a report to MIFI in the spring of 2026.
- Several RÉMIRI members, including two municipalities, are participating in the publication of the book *Intercultural Cities Beyond Europe*, edited by three experts from the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme (Bob White, Glenda Ballantyne and Keizo Yamawaki).
- The Bridging Divides project is an initiative of Toronto Metropolitan University funded by the Canada Excellence Research Fund. RÉMIRI offers its expertise in French integration policies and programmes, as well as any issues related to municipal action since 2024 and will continue its active work in the project in 2026.

5. Spain – Ciudades Interculturales (RECI)

The Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities (RECI) was reappointed as a member of the Advisory Group of the ICC Programme in June 2025 for two years, as well as the city of Donostia/San Sebastian as an international city.

At the beginning of 2025, RECI had 4 active working groups: intercultural strategies and advocacy, narratives, indicators and anti-rumours. Since November, the network has planned to create a roadmap to be followed by each of the working groups (WG), clearly defining the following aspects: the objectives to be achieved by the group, medium and long-term results (6 months and one year, respectively), the results to be obtained and the approximate timetable for these actions.

In the framework of the RECI, cities and territories complete the ICC Index every three to four years. In 2025, two index reports were published: [Manlleu](#) and [Tenerife](#). In the framework of the presentation work of the ICC Index, the city of Manlleu received a first ICC expert visit on 7-8 July 2025.

In 2025, RECI conducted multiple activities partly thanks to the ICC annual grant, including:

- Two in-person meetings: the first in April in Barcelona aimed to discuss some key issues around the working groups and the presentation of strategies framed in the cultural field by several territories. The second meeting in November in Santander allowed for progress to be made in the definition of objectives and roadmaps of the working groups (Indicators, Strategies and Advocacy, Narratives and Anti-rumours) and for sharing the results of the working groups and the RECI Dialogue, with local educational experiences and a reflection on critical thinking, artificial intelligence and digital narratives.

- One virtual meeting: held on 10 July 2025, it provided an opportunity to share progress in the different areas of the network's work. Among the main topics, new developments in the Intercultural Cities programme were presented, such as the recent study visit to Manlleu, focused on strengthening local intercultural tools.
- RECI Visits: the RECI team visited the city of Castelló de la Plana in February and met face-to-face with technicians and managers of the Department of Social Coexistence and Interculturalism of Castelló to learn first-hand about the work being carried out in the city in the field of mediation, accompaniment and awareness-raising to strengthen social cohesion. In addition, this moment of exchange was the occasion chosen to sign the commitment and the renewal of the collaboration agreement between the entity and the city for the next four years. Among the main challenges that were put on the table, the lack of transversality between municipal areas, the scarce presence of diversity in the public workforce and school segregation, stand out among others.
- RECI Dialogues: two dialogues were organised in 2025, the first one in July to discuss the new Regulation from 20 May 2025 on aliens regulation and the second one in November focused on various innovative practices in education, focusing on how the combination of traditional methodologies and emerging technologies can promote critical thinking, inclusion and intercultural coexistence.

Information on the projects includes:

- The project ***EPIC_IDEA Empowering youth Participation for Inclusive and plural Communities*** keep on being implemented in 2025. Bilbao, Castelló, Fuenlabrada and Tenerife are the RECI territories involved in the project.
- ***STAND – Strengthening Towns’ Activation for new Narratives on Diversity*** continued to be implemented in collaboration with the Italian and Portuguese ICC networks.
- ***SPIRIT - Sports for Participation, Inclusion, Respect, Interculturality and Tolerance***, is a project aimed at strengthening social cohesion by reinforcing the role of municipalities and their cooperation in the field of sport. It involves the networks of intercultural cities of Italy and Portugal and the cities of Erlangen (Germany) and Linköping (Sweden), with the collaboration of the RECI territories of Bilbao, Cartagena, Castelló de la Plana and Tenerife.
- ***CADiDE - Senior citizens against disinformation and stereotypes for a democratic and diverse Europe***, is a project in which, together with various entities in Spain, two cities in Eastern Europe and with the collaboration of 9 cities in Spain and Italy, the aim is to promote critical thinking and counteract disinformation among senior citizens, promoting their active role as part of the citizenship that defends democracy.

6. Ukraine - ICC-UA

The Intercultural Cities Network of Ukraine (ICCUA) maintained its sustainability and operational capacity despite the challenges posed by martial law and limited institutional resources.

Communication and coordination among participating cities were carried out primarily through horizontal contacts, thematic working interactions and joint participation in events within the ICC Programme framework. In particular, eight working online meetings of local coordinators took place

The functioning of the network in 2025 was also characterised by a high level of responsibility demonstrated by individual cities which, despite difficult security and social conditions, continued to implement intercultural approaches within their communities. This made it possible to avoid an institutional pause in the network's activities and to ensure its continued practical presence within the national and international framework of the ICC Programme.

The network main activity was the *Cities of reciprocities* project, funded by the ICC Programme through an intercity grant (see above). Its implementation contributed to strengthening horizontal interaction among cities, preserving the integrity of the network in the context of war, expanding the professional competencies of participants and laying the groundwork for future initiatives.

The project also helped to reinforce trust, solidarity and shared values, which are fundamental to the sustainable development of intercultural practices within the framework of the ICC Programme.

Each city of the network carried out several activities throughout the year in addition to the actions of their annual project. Activities focused on education and youth involvement as well as national minorities participation and involvement of the Roma community.

7. The Intercultural Regions Network



Since 2020, the ICC Programme has played a key role in supporting the Assembly of European Regions' (AER) Intercultural Regions Network. As an active member of the Advisory Committee for the AER's three-year EU-Belong project, the ICC Programme has provided essential expertise and advice to ten regional authorities from seven European countries: Arad (Romania), Catalonia (Spain), Donegal County

Council (Ireland), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Leipzig/Aufbauwerk (Germany), Navarra (Spain), Pomerania (Poland), Salzburg (Austria), Timiș (Romania) Västara Götaland (Sweden) and Wielkopolska (Poland). Drawing on the ICC's intercultural integration model, the project aims to enhance socio-economic inclusion and foster a sense of belonging for migrants by developing and implementing regional intercultural strategies.

The project reached a significant milestone in September 2024 with the publication of "[Building Inclusive Societies: Regional Strategies for Intercultural Integration](#)", available in English and Polish. This was followed by the final EU-Belong Knowledge Sharing Event held on 25-26 March 2025 in Strasbourg, marking the conclusion of the 40-month AMIF-funded initiative that championed

intercultural inclusion and regional cooperation across Europe. Through this project, participating regions leveraged the Council of Europe’s intercultural approach to innovate policymaking at the regional level.

Following the closing event, strategic meetings involving the EU-Belong consortium and European Commission representatives focused on aligning ongoing intercultural policy initiatives and planning future collaborations. A key session during the event was a training on intercultural narratives led by an ICC Programme expert, equipping participants to continue advancing inclusive regional policies even in challenging contexts. The final conference not only celebrated the project’s success but also laid a strong foundation for the Intercultural Regions Network’s future work, with the ICC Programme playing a pivotal role in fostering inclusive, participatory, and effective regional intercultural policies throughout Europe.



Council of Europe - European Union joint projects

The EU/Council of Europe joint project presented below, show how the approach and tools developed and experimented under the ICC Programme have been used to advance intercultural inclusion and its multi-level governance in Council of Europe member states.

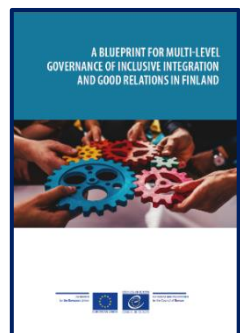
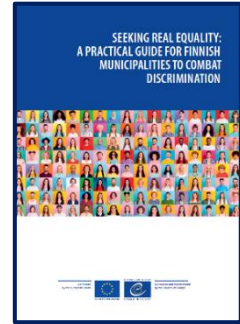
a. Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland

The project “[Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland](#)”, which ran from September 2022 to March 2025, was implemented by the Intercultural Inclusion Unit and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Finland. This initiative aimed to support Finland in strengthening its integration policies based on the Finnish concept of [good relations](#) alongside the Council of Europe’s intercultural integration methodology.

The project actively involved seven Finnish municipalities: [Hämeenlinna](#), [Kuopio](#), [Oulu](#), [Tampere](#), [Turku](#), [Vaasa](#), and [Vantaa](#). Together, these municipalities worked to enhance community relations, strengthen social inclusion, and implement intercultural integration strategies at the local level.

During the project, three key documents were published to support Finnish municipalities in their efforts to combat discrimination and promote inclusive integration. The most recent of these were released in 2025.

- The first guide, [“Seeking Real Equality: A Practical Guide for Finnish Municipalities to Combat Discrimination”](#), provides practical steps and tools for municipalities to more effectively identify, prevent, and respond to both individual and systemic discrimination. It encourages municipalities to build organisational capacity and commitment to equality through clear strategies and action plans.
- The second guide, [“Opas Kunnille: Kotoutumista Ja Väestösuhteita Edistävä Monitasoinen Hallinto Ja Monialainen Yhteistyö”](#) (English version: [“Guide for municipalities: multi-level governance and cross-sectoral cooperation to promote integration and good relations”](#)), offers tools and perspectives to help municipalities design policies, structures, and services that foster integration and community relations with a multilevel and multi stakeholder approach.
- The third document, the [“Blueprint for Multi-level Governance of Inclusive Integration and Good Relations in Finland”](#), serves as a guiding framework for all levels of governance with actionable recommendations for establishing efficient multi-level and multi-stakeholder coordination of integration policies. It includes a comparative analysis of international best practices versus Finland’s current governance structures and is a key resource for policymakers and practitioners working to strengthen collaboration and inclusive integration across all governance levels. A [Finnish version](#) is also available.



Together, these documents represent important milestones from the project, providing Finnish municipalities as well as regional and national authorities with practical guidance and strategic frameworks to advance equality, tackle discrimination, and foster more inclusive communities. Furthermore, as part of the project, a [Finnish](#) translation of the [community policing manual](#) was published in 2025. This guide provides practical tools to help police services adopt inclusive approaches and support peaceful coexistence in Finland’s diverse communities.



At the closing conference held on 6 February 2025 in Turku, national and local stakeholders, experts, civil society members, and municipal representatives gathered to celebrate the project’s significant accomplishments. The event, officially opened by Marja Ruotanen (Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe), Johanna Suurpää (Director General, Department for Democracy and Public

Law, Ministry of Justice, Finland), Mirka Muukkonen (Vice Mayor, City of Turku), and Giulia Porino (European Commission), highlighted the fruitful collaboration with seven Finnish municipalities - Hämeenlinna, Kuopio, Oulu, Tampere, Turku, Vaasa, and Vantaa - in developing local integration strategies, national policy recommendations, and a Blueprint for a national coordination mechanism.

Transposing the intercultural approach at all levels

The ICC Programme and its members are fully integrated in the Council of Europe intergovernmental work through participation in the Committee of Experts on Intercultural Inclusion (ADI-INT). This allows to support member states in overcoming the challenges created by diversity, complexity and fragmentation of institutional competencies in immigration and integration, and ensuring policy consistency and complementarity, based on transfer of innovation and good practice from local to regional and national levels and vice-versa.

1. Work of the ADI-INT

The Council of Europe's work on intercultural integration was taken forward in 2020 with the adoption of the [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy at the national level](#) which led to the adoption of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2022\)10 on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration](#). Since 2022, the Committee of Experts on the Intercultural Integration of Migrants (ADI-INT) took up the work and produced several tools to implement the Recommendation



In November 2025, a new Committee was elected by the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI). This committee comprises the following ICC member cities: Bilbao (Spain), Botkyrka (Sweden), Bursa-Osmangazi (Türkiye), the London borough of Camden (United Kingdom), Lublin (Poland), Reggio Emilia (Italy), Riga (Latvia) and Strasbourg (France), as well as Baden-Württemberg (Germany) and the Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) at the regional level. At the national level, representatives were elected from Armenia, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Representatives from Spain and Lublin (Poland) were re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, while the representative from the Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland), was re-appointed as Gender Equality Rapporteur. The committee will continue its work on the [Terms of Reference 2024-2027](#) and advancing intercultural inclusion policies across member cities and regions.

2. Guidance document on inclusion strategies and the self-assessment tool on multilevel governance for intercultural integration

As part of its mandate to develop strategic tools on intercultural inclusion, in 2025, the Committee of Experts on Intercultural Inclusion (ADI-INT) prepared the [“Guidance document on strategies for inclusion in the fields under the responsibility of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)”](#), which was adopted by the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on 2 July 2025 during its 11th meeting.



Conceived as a reference framework for policymakers and practitioners, the Guidance sets out key principles for designing effective and sustainable inclusion strategies across national, regional and local levels of governance. It promotes a holistic approach rooted in human rights and non-discrimination, highlighting the need to combine universal and group-specific measures, to mainstream equality across all policies, to embrace diversity as an asset, to address intersectional discrimination, and to strengthen participation and interaction in public life.

The Guidance also outlines the main policy areas where comprehensive inclusion strategies should be implemented, including education, employment, social welfare and housing, healthcare, culture, and the prevention of discrimination, hate crime and hate speech. Covering groups such as ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities, migrants, Roma and Travellers, and LGBTI persons, the document provides both group-specific standards and crosscutting measures. In line with its mandate, the ADI-INT will continue this work by developing, by 2027, a concept and methodology for a peer-learning and benchmarking tool on inclusion strategies.

Complementing this, in 2025, the ADI-INT also worked on the “Self-assessment tool on multilevel governance for intercultural integration”, to help governments at various levels evaluate and improve their policies for the multi-level governance of intercultural integration. The self-assessment tool was adopted by the CDADI on 19 November 2025 during its 12th meeting, and will be accompanied by a repository on good practices, tools and standards, which will all together form an online toolkit for member states.

3. Work in progress

The ADI-INT is currently advancing a series of deliverables to strengthen intercultural inclusion across member states. Central among these is the development of a new peer learning and benchmarking tool for inclusion strategies, building on the [“Guidance document on strategies for inclusion in the fields under the responsibility of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)”](#), and aiming to deliver both practical and adaptable resources fitting the realities of diverse governance systems.

Recognising the ongoing challenges of spatial segregation and their broader implications for equity and social cohesion, the ADI-INT has also agreed to undertake an analytical study as a foundation for future guidance and capacity-building on this topic. This will enable evidence-based policymaking and the development of new tools to empower regions, cities, and states to better address spatial and social inclusion.

Lastly, the ADI-INT is currently working on the online implementation of the “Self-assessment tool on multilevel governance for intercultural integration” and the accompanying repository on good practices, tools and standards which will serve as an online toolkit for member states.

Thematic Toolkit

- How [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration](#) | Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 April 2022 at the 1431st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (+ [Finnish version](#) + [Greek version](#) + [Japanese version](#) + [Spanish version](#))
- [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy for the National Level](#) (+ [Italian version](#) + [Finnish version](#) + [French version](#) + [Greek version](#) + [Polish version](#) + [Romanian version](#) + [Slovakian version](#) + [Spanish version](#) (Spain) + [Spanish version](#) (Mexico) + [Ukrainian version](#))
- [Guidance document on inclusion strategies](#) (+ [French version](#))
- [Capacity building Programme and tools for migrant integration](#)
- [Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence](#)
- [Training Manual on Equality Data Collection to prevent Systemic Discrimination](#)
- [Compendium of good practices on intercultural integration and multilevel governance](#)
- [Feasibility Study in comprehensive strategies for inclusion](#)
- [Guidance document on strategies for inclusion in the fields under the responsibility of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)](#)
- [Self-assessment tool on multilevel governance for intercultural integration](#)

Strategic development

1. The annual meeting of the ICC Coordinators

Every year, the annual meeting of ICC Programme Coordinators plays an important role in the development of the programme. This event allows members to share feedback, address new challenges and plan future initiatives together. Such exchanges are essential for strengthening the ICC network and refining the intercultural integration policy model to ensure its relevance in meeting the evolving needs of diverse urban communities.



The [2025 Annual Meeting of ICC Coordinators](#), hosted by Bergen's [Centre for Inclusion](#) in Norway, took place in October 2025. It brought together representatives from over 35 cities and institutions worldwide. The meeting featured presentations by the newly appointed ICC Programme Advisory Group on their ongoing work, as well as activities organised by national networks and initiatives funded through intercity grants. A peer-learning session enabled participants to share good practices and experiences. With the support of the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth and the City of Bergen, focused discussions explored ways to enhance the participation of diverse young people in intercultural cities. Through workshops, exchanges and collective reflection, attendees developed practical guidance to help local and regional authorities engage young people more effectively and ensure their voices are meaningfully included in the creation of inclusive and resilient communities. These annual meetings are essential for sustaining the ongoing growth and effectiveness of the ICC Programme.

2. Advisory Group of the ICC Programme

The first ICC Programme Advisory Group of seven members was appointed in June 2023 for a two-year mandate, which ran until June 2025.

A new Advisory Group was subsequently appointed for the 2025–2027 mandate, representing a diverse range of cities and networks: [Bergen](#) (Norway), [Canton of Neuchâtel](#) (Switzerland), [Donostia/San Sebastian](#) (Spain), [Mexico City](#) (Mexico), [Porto](#) (Portugal), [Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities](#) (RECI) and [Wroclaw](#) (Poland).

Building on the recommendations of the evaluation and the subsequent management response, the Advisory Group's Terms of Reference set out the following objectives for its mandate:

- Provide strategic and operational guidance for the ICC Programme, ensuring shared governance between the Council of Europe Secretariat and member cities;
- Assess members' needs and advise on the prioritisation of services and tools to be offered;
- Ensure communication on the ICC Programme, its tools, and services is coherent, accessible, and clear, thereby improving visibility, uptake, and impact;
- Identify areas requiring additional capacity building and explore opportunities to secure complementary funding;
- Promote systematic follow-up with member cities to highlight progress in implementing intercultural strategies and recognise positive changes driven by the ICC Programme;
- Strengthen collective communication by drafting and issuing joint statements and representing the ICC network at relevant public events.

The newly appointed Advisory Group held the 6th meeting online in July 2025, first meeting of the new cohort, to establish priorities and working methods for the new mandate. Later in the year, the 7th meeting of the Advisory Group took place in Bergen (Norway), providing a platform for members to review ongoing developments, discuss strategic priorities, and prepare contributions for the forthcoming ICC Coordinators' meeting. The exchanges focused on several key areas for the network's future.



Members examined a proposed reform introducing a fairer, GDP-based membership fee scale aimed at enhancing transparency, equality, and financial sustainability across the network. It was agreed that the current fee system had led to uneven accessibility, and the new system should be based on easily accessible and reliable data.

GDP per capita (in k)	Population <100k	Population 100 – 250k	Population 250 – 500k	Population 500 – 750k	Population 750 – 1.000k	Population > 1.000k
0 – 50	2 000	2 400	2 800	3 200	3 600	4 000
50 – 75	3 000	3 600	4 200	4 800	5 400	6 000
75 – 100	4 000	4 800	5 600	6 600	7 200	8 000
Above 100	5 000	6 000	7 000	8 000	9 000	10 000

Proposed table of fees

They also discussed the ICC Programme’s role within the Council of Europe’s New Democratic Pact as a means to reinforce democratic resilience, inclusion, and social cohesion. Discussions further addressed the updated template and guide for collecting good practices, developed to strengthen visibility, peer learning, and knowledge sharing among cities. Members underlined the importance of encouraging more cities to contribute and of maintaining the quality and relevance of the ICC’s good practice database as both a practical and academic resource.

In a forward-looking perspective, the Advisory Group reviewed strategies to enhance political engagement and strengthen collaboration with academic institutions through joint research, capacity-building initiatives, and international partnerships. Finally, members outlined preliminary plans for the ICC’s twentieth anniversary (2027), envisioned as a global, year-long celebration of two decades of intercultural innovation and collaboration under a shared “ICC20” identity.

3. ICC annual survey

From 17 December 2024 to 24 January 2025, the ICC Programme conducted its [annual survey](#), gathering responses from 37 member cities and regions across 16 countries. The collected data provides a comprehensive view of the network’s progress in implementing and developing intercultural strategies. Most participating cities reported that they had already adopted, updated, or were planning new intercultural strategies, with the formal role of “intercultural coordinator” becoming more established in local administrations. This commitment is further reflected in increased cross-departmental collaboration, signalling a shift towards making inclusion a systemic priority within municipal governance.

Survey results indicate that ICC members continue to focus on gender equality, alternative narratives, intercultural competence, refugee support, and strategic planning. Efforts to mainstream youth participation, LGBTI rights, Roma and Traveller inclusion, and sustainable development goals are also becoming increasingly prominent, with nearly all respondents incorporating at least one of these elements into their approach. The holistic integration of these dimensions demonstrates a deepening and broadening of the intercultural approach at local level.

Members consistently emphasised the value of the ICC tools, including the Intercultural Cities Index, anti-rumours methodology, and training programmes, which support their strategies on the ground. There is also a noticeable rise in participation in capacity-building activities, peer exchanges, and contributions to the ICC good practice database, with many cities using their ICC membership as a marker of local leadership and innovation in inclusion.

Despite progress, the survey reveals enduring challenges. Cities face persistent constraints in terms of staffing, funding and political climate, complicated by the spread of divisive narratives. Members expressed a strong need for flexible support from the ICC Secretariat as they tackle the renewal of local strategies, youth engagement, political buy-in, and the complexities of equality data collection. Nevertheless, nearly three-quarters of respondents credited the ICC Programme with influencing real, positive change and remain highly engaged in adapting and collaborating for greater intercultural inclusion.

Awareness and visibility

1. Website

Several improvements were introduced to the ICC Programme website in 2025 to make it more accessible, engaging and user-friendly. Furthermore, to ensure consistency with the Council of Europe's official bilingual framework, significant translation work was also undertaken. More than 150 examples of [good practice](#) were translated into either English or French, improving accessibility across the network and ensuring that knowledge and innovation circulate more effectively between member cities. In addition, the website was revamped with the update of its "about" section, creation of a new page on "[What is it and how to join – FAQ](#)" and a thematic webpage on [ICC work with young people](#).

The ICC website continued to be a major communication and knowledge-sharing platform, publishing 50 [news](#) items throughout the year to inform members and the wider public about events, tools, and ongoing projects. In 2025, the site received over 198,783 visits from 20 countries, generating more than 255,120 page views - a clear sign of its continued relevance as a resource for intercultural governance.

2. Social media

Visibility of the ICC Programme remained strong across social media platforms. Regular posts on the [Anti-Discrimination Department's X \(formerly Twitter\) account](#) ensured that ICC activities and events reached a broad audience within and beyond the Council of Europe community. The ICC [Facebook](#) page maintained a steady level of engagement.

Through these platforms, ICC publications, good practice updates, and highlights from network events were widely disseminated, contributing to the visibility of the intercultural integration model and reinforcing the ICC's reputation as a reference point for inclusive urban policy and practice worldwide.

Appendix I – Main documents and tools mentioned in the report

Policy briefs and guidance documents

- [Building meaningful public participation in Intercultural cities – A guide to the appreciative inquiry approach](#)
- [Data collection for refugee reception at community level](#)
- [Guide to designing a communication strategy in intercultural cities \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [Migration and integration: Which alternative narratives work and why? \(+ Polish version + Spanish version\)](#)
- [Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence: Part 2 – Concepts related to the Council of Europe intercultural integration model \(+ Polish version\)](#)
- [Inclusive communication – Policy brief \(+ Polish version\)](#)
- [Identifying and preventing systemic discrimination at local level \(+ Italian version + Polish version\)](#)
- [Anti-rumours handbook \(+ Arabic version + Italian version + Japanese version + Polish version + Portuguese version + Spanish version + Ukrainian version\)](#)
- [Step-by-step guide to conduct an Anti-rumours diagnosis \(+ Greek version\)](#)
- [Guide “Anti-rumour youth: keys to work anti-rumours content with young people” \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [An Anti-rumours’ Guide for the Educational Field \(+ Italian version + Spanish version\)](#)
- [Guide on Intercultural Competences \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [Intercultural competencies applied to the development of public administration projects: Guide \(+ Spanish version\), and video tutorial \(multilingual subtitles\)](#)
- [A practical guide – Recommendations and resources for Intercultural Ecosystems + Portuguese version](#)
- [Green urban planning for the Intercultural City - Policy brief](#)
- [Guide to designing a communication strategy in intercultural cities \(+ Spanish version\) / Summary of communications guide \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [A practical guide – Recommendations and resources for Intercultural Ecosystems + Portuguese version](#)
- [Rethinking welcoming policies from an intercultural perspective - Policy Brief](#)
- [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy for the National Level](#)
- [Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Strategies for the Intercultural City](#)

ADI-INT documents

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on intercultural integration](#)
- [Recommendation CM/REC\(2022\)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration \(+ Finnish version + Japanese version + Spanish version\)](#)

- [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy for the National Level](#) (+ [Italian version](#) + [Finnish version](#) + [French version](#) + Greek version + [Polish version](#) + [Romanian version](#) + [Slovakian version](#) + [Spanish version](#) (Spain) + [Spanish version](#) (Mexico) + [Ukrainian version](#))
- Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence: [Part 1 - The core principles of the Council of Europe intercultural integration model](#) (+ [Polish version](#))
- Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence: [Part 2 – Concepts related to the Council of Europe intercultural integration model](#) (+ [Polish version](#))
- [Training Manual on Equality Data Collection to prevent Systemic Discrimination](#)
- [Feasibility Study on comprehensive strategies for inclusion](#)
- [Compendium of good practices on intercultural integration and multilevel governance](#) + [French version](#)
- [Guidance document on strategies for inclusion in the fields under the responsibility of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion \(CDADI\)](#)
- [Self-Assessment tool on multilevel governance for intercultural integration](#)

ICC Index reports and intercultural profiles

- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Kraków](#) (Poland)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Famagusta](#) (Cyprus)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Larnaka](#) (Cyprus)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Limassol](#) (Cyprus)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Nicosia](#) (Cyprus)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Paphos](#) (Cyprus)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Tenerife](#) (Spain)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Manlleu](#) (Spain)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Pontedera](#) (Italy)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Montesilvano](#) (Italy)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Arandjelovac](#) (Serbia)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Prijepolje](#) (Serbia)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Sjenica](#) (Serbia)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Asan](#) (Republic of Korea)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Oulu](#) (Finland)
- [Intercultural Cities Index Analysis – Oeiras](#) (Portugal)
- How to fill in the Index?
 - [A methodological guide](#) (+ [Italian version](#) + [Spanish version](#))
 - [Video Tutorial](#)
- [Index results per city](#)
- [Intercultural profiles](#)

ICC reports

- [International meeting of ICC coordinators 2023 – Meeting report](#)

- [ICC Programme Advisory Group – Summary report 3rd meeting](#)
- [ICC Programme Advisory Group – Summary report 4th meeting](#)
- [ICC Annual survey 2023-2024](#)
- [ICC Annual report 2023](#)
- [ICC Annual survey report 2024](#)
- [ICC Annual report 2024](#)
- [ICC Annual survey report 2025](#)

EU/CoE joint project deliverables

a. Building an inclusive integration approach in Finland

A set of recommendations to further enhance and implement the government's good relations strategy and action programme as well as recommendations for policy and legislative improvements, with a focus on the local level

- The Blueprint for multi-level governance of inclusive integration and good relations: [English version](#) | [Finnish version](#)
- The report reviewing the current practices in multi-level governance in Finland: [English version](#) | [Finnish version](#)
- The inception report mapping existing integration policies in Finland: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)
- The evaluation report analysing the good relations strategy and action programme of Finland: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)
- Report on capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on intercultural integration in Finland: [English version](#)
- The Practical Guide for Finnish municipalities on tackling, identifying and preventing discrimination: [English version](#) | [Finnish version](#)
- The Guide for Finnish municipalities on multi-level governance and multi-sectoral cooperation for promoting integration and population relations: [English version](#) | [Finnish version](#)
- The ICC Index Reports for Finnish cities: [Intercultural Cities: list of cities per country - Intercultural cities programme](#)

A set of translated and adapted policy documents and tools to link the concepts of good relations and intercultural integration

- Intercultural City: Step-by-step Guide: [Finnish version](#) (adapted into local context) | [Swedish version](#) | [English version](#)
- Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy at the National Level: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)
- Anti-rumours Handbook: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)
- ICC Policy Briefs: [Building meaningful public participation in Intercultural cities – A guide to the appreciative inquiry approach](#) and [Identifying and preventing systemic discrimination at the local level](#) in Finnish
- ICC Manual on Community Policing: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)
- Recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on Multilevel Policies and Governance for Intercultural Integration: [Finnish version](#) | [English version](#)

- Intercultural Citizenship Test: [Finnish and other languages](#)

Other training tools and resources

- [Intercultural citizenship test](#)
- [The Escape Roomours: an online game for young people](#)
- [Online anti-rumours training](#)
- [Anti-rumours diagnosis in educational centres \(+ Spanish version\)](#)
- [Claiming the power of dialogue: Toolkit for anti-rumours dialogue \(+ Polish version + Spanish version\)](#)
- [Pilot online course on equality data collection and analysis to prevent and address systemic discrimination \(+ Albanian version + French version + Serbian version\)](#)
- Intercultural competence manual for trainers: [English/Ukrainian](#) + [English](#)
- [An introduction to the Intercultural City for Local Governments in Japan \(+ Japanese version\)](#)
- [Challenges of Interculturalism: Guidelines for a training module](#)
- [Intercultural Cities in Placemaking - Intercultural Cities Programme](#)
- [Online training](#) on Alternative narratives and inclusive communication

National networks annual reports

- Australian Network of intercultural Cities – Annual report 2025
- Italian Network of Intercultural Cities – [Annual report 2025](#)
- Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities – [Annual report 2025](#)
- Quebec (Canada) Network of Intercultural Cities – [Annual report 2025](#) (French only)
- Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities – [Annual report 2025](#)
- Ukrainian Network of Intercultural Cities – [Annual report 2025](#)

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. Nearly two decades after this work began, there is growing evidence that diversity, when recognised and managed as a resource, brings positive outcomes in terms of creativity, wellbeing and economic development.

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

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

