



Italian Network of Intercultural Cities

RDC – Rete Città del Dialogo

Activity Report – April-December 2020

1. Online meeting of the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities “Perspectives beyond emergency”, 18 June 2020

The impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities took to the cancellation of the thematic event on the Anti-rumours Strategy, planned for the end of February and to be hosted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. In the following weeks and months, the situation got worse and worse and led to a national lockdown and to a dramatic crisis, with the collapse of the healthcare system an unbelievable situation that led to more than 34.700 deaths in less than 5 months, with a severe increase on death rate in many provinces.

The worse the situation got, the more the member cities enhanced their efforts to ensure one basic principle: the so-called “social distancing” could not erase social solidarity. In fact, during this difficult phase, many Cities of the Network reaffirmed the **centrality of the intercultural approach to face the crisis**. The pandemic turned out to be a crucial moment to shape and test new practices to **promote interculturality as a fundamental value to create more inclusive communities and societies**.

The analysis of the intercultural policies promoted by the Città del Dialogo during the Covid-19 crisis was one of the core topics discussed in a recent coordination meeting of the Network. This online meeting took place on the 18th June and it was divided in 3 main parts:

1. Analysis of intercultural policies
2. Work plan & next steps for the Cities (for the second semester of 2020)
3. Communication activities of the Network

The first part of the meeting was dedicated to an analysis of intercultural policies that emerged during the Covid-19 emergency. This part was introduced by Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, professor of City Diplomacy at Sciences Po and the Polytechnic University of Paris and president of the think-tank “Urban Flag”. Thanks to his intervention, some particularly effective initiatives boosted at European level were reviewed, as inspiring practices for the Cities to transform the current crisis into opportunities and relaunch the theme of interculturality at local level.

After this first introduction, each City started to share projects and initiatives activated to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. All the attending Cities underlined firmly that during this difficult phase the promotion of more inclusive communities and societies remained a central value.

Many Cities also underlined the fundamental contribution that all the various communities of citizens have made to activate immediate responses in the management of the crisis. Some of them can be considered good practices to be improved even now that the most serious part of the health crisis is turning into an announced economic crisis.

Furthermore, during the online meeting, the Città del Dialogo also discussed the work plan envisaged by the network and the prospects which will be outlined in the months to come. To this end, after the meeting all the Cities have been invited to share their thoughts about the second half of the year, evaluating in particular:

1. Their interest in reprogramming the thematic event on Anti-rumours strategy and its feasibility (according to the current scenario and the ongoing Covi-19 restrictions)
2. Their preferences regarding new activities to be done in the 2nd semester of 2020 (eg. a National Communication Campaign of the Network, trainings on Intercultural Competences for municipal staff, etc.)

Finally, the latest session of the meeting was dedicated to the internal communication among the Network to innovate, in a strategic sense, the way to disseminate information and contents, thus enhancing the visibility and the intercultural commitment of each City of the Network. To this end, the Network has decided to explore new solutions and tools that will be set up in the coming months to systematize contents and smoothen the communication process among the Network from now on.

More detailed information (in English) and the video-recording of the meeting (in Italian) can be found [here](#).

2. Manual on Antirumours at school

In September 2020 a new manual about Antirumours at school was launched ("L'Antirumours a scuola", in Italian). This document collects the experiences implemented by 4 different cities belonging to Città del Dialogo (or about to join), under ICEI coordination. These cities are: Milan, Turin, Albano Laziale and Palermo.

The manual was produced within the [#IORISPETTO project](#) and was widely disseminated thanks to the support of the Intercultural Cities Programme.

3. Participation to ICC meetings

ICEI as coordinator of the Italian ICC network, together with some member cities, participated regularly in events organised by the ICC programme to share the views and experience of Italian municipalities, namely in the following:

- Brainstorming meeting on Cities response to the Covid-19 emergency,
- Gentrification and Public Space - Interaction in crises and beyond, 11 June 2020
- Preventing the potential discriminatory effects of the use of artificial intelligence in local services, 21 September 2020

- 1st meeting of the GT-ADI-INT, 29-30 September 2020
- Systemic Discrimination - Local Authorities' Actions to Identify and Prevent, 22 October 2020
- Annual meeting of ICC coordinators, 3-5 November
- 2nd meeting of the GT-ADI-INT, 1-2 December

4. Media and Communication

Thanks to the support of the national Coordinator, ICEI, the Italian network held continuous multilateral exchanges, and replied to surveys designed to engage member Cities to widen the decisional process and implement common strategies.

Exchange of information has been regular also with the Council of Europe, thanks to the feedback provided by ICEI on good and promising practices; Italian cities have been kept regularly informed of all ICC new tools, documents, and events. ICEI has given its support also in revising official documents to be translated in Italian (eg. the ICC Welcome Pack, the ICC Brand Pack, the Intercultural Citizenship Test). During the latest months, ICEI and the Italian network made big efforts to boost the visibility of the network and the intercultural activities and policies of the Cities. In particular, the following actions were implemented:

a. Mapping and scouting to collect Good Practices

ICEI, starting from the current situation of the Italian Good Practices (GPs) already described in the ICC website (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/good-practice>) has implemented a mapping with some interesting new intercultural activities promoted by the Italian Cities, identifying the following elements:

- Name of the City
- Name of the GP
- Municipality's department involved in the activity
- Period
- Kind of GP (eg. Event, project, webinar, programme, etc.)
- GP category (eg. Art & Interculturality, Rights & Interculturality, Education & Interculturality, etc.)
- Contacts / references (link)
- Short description (summary)
- Partnership

An in-depth research was then conducted, and a selection of GPs was done. Relevant cities were contacted bilaterally in view of preparing articles to be published on the website of the Italian network ([news section](#)). These articles were launched also via social media, as part of the online communication campaign (ongoing).

This process was useful to establish a more regular bilateral exchange between the Coordinator and the Cities, to stimulate the further participation of the local authorities in sharing materials and get engaged in the communication actions.

b. Social media management

In the referred period, the Italian Network has enhanced its brand identity and fanbase via its Facebook page. The account was constantly updated and around 60 original posts were created, with different formats and specific layouts. Some creative visuals were also prepared in English and used to implement the ICC editorial plan (as an animated video/GIF on Anti-rumours [in Italian](#) and [in English](#)).

Besides that, ICEI and the Italian Network supported the ICC programme and its specific actions regarding recurring events and international days, such as the International Migrants Day on the 18th December 2020. On this occasion, according to ICC inputs and suggestions, ICEI and the member cities collected via Facebook a series of contributions on intercultural positive and inclusive messages from the territories (see: [post 1](#), [post 2](#), [post 3](#)).

5. Fundraising aimed at ensuring the network's financial sustainability.

During the period April-December 2020, ICEI elaborated two initiatives aiming at supporting the work of the Italian Network and its sustainability:

- In April 2020, ICEI designed and submitted a proposal to the Programme RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME (REC) of the European Commission in the framework of the "Call for proposals to promote the effective implementation of the principle of non-discrimination" (REC-RDIS-DISC-AG-2020)

The project "**ITACA – Italian Cities Against discrimination**" has been approved and started its activities on November 2020, with a duration of 24 months, with the goal of promoting non-discriminating practices, improving the skills of the staff of municipalities and engaging civil society to raise awareness on this topic.

It directly involves 7 of the 28 municipalities currently part of the Italian network that are formally partners or associates to the project. These are: Reggio Emilia, Modena, Novellara, Olbia, Viareggio, Fucecchio, Casalecchio di Reno.

In particular, the objectives of the project are:

- a) To strengthen the role of Cities of the Italian Network in effectively implementing non-discrimination legislation, policies and practices, thus contributing to fight direct and indirect discriminations inside and outside the administrations.
- b) To promote structured public-private cooperation in Italian cities in order to increase rights-awareness among citizens.

To ensure the achievement of the project's goals, the Intercultural Cities Programme participates as an associate entity to this project.

The UNAR (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali – Italian Equality Body) is also involved in the action as an associate entity. Its participation will facilitate the exchange with Italian Cities in the context of the preventing and fighting of discriminations, thus improving the connection between the national authorities and the local municipalities.

The main activities are the mapping of discriminatory practices in the seven participating municipalities; Training sessions for Municipal staff on anti-discrimination legislation and policies; Peer review of European good practices and organization of a transnational Study Visit; A working group on anti-discrimination practices and the Elaboration of anti-discrimination tools; Public-private cooperation to design and implement an awareness raising campaign; National and European knowledge sharing events involving the whole network of the Italian Intercultural Cities.

- In July 2020, ICEI launched a call for the collection of expressions of interest from the Cities of the Italian Network for the participation in a call for proposals promoted by the Italian Government aiming at supporting the empowerment of young people in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Seven Municipalities of the Italian Network expressed their interest in joining the proposal designed by ICEI: Modena, Reggio Emilia, Palermo, Venezia, Novellara, Bari, Casalecchio di Reno.

The project "**Youth spaces free of rumours**" has been approved in November 2020 and it will be implemented in 2021 to promote experimental and innovative paths of youth activation, increasing their civic protagonism in fighting discrimination and creating youth spaces "free of prejudice".

In particular, in cooperation with the associated Municipalities, the project will foster youth visibility and engagement in combating discrimination (of gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, disability) using the "anti-rumours" methodology. For the first time in Italy, this methodology will be tested within youth aggregation spaces, thus activating young people to create "rumours-free" youth centres.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the difficult circumstances in which it had to operate, the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities was particularly active in 2020 and managed to carry out meaningful networking, information sharing, and joint activities. ICEI as a Coordinator particularly appreciated the good response of cities to the calls for action and their commitment towards being part of the two above-mentioned projects which will bring to the whole coalition of cities new knowledge, expertise, and financial resources.

Exchanges among the cities and between the cities and the Coordinator were more regular, which also allowed for a better visibility of the Italian municipalities within the wider Intercultural Cities programme and the Council of Europe as an institution.

Progress on compiling the Index were slow, but this has been the case for many members for other countries and is related to the need to adjusting priorities and the workplan to the unforeseen challenges posed by the pandemics.

The Italian network will gather at the beginning of 2021 to try and make a workplan for the year to come, also in light of the feedback of the Coordinator who will attend the ICC meeting of National coordinators in the beginning of February.

Prepared by ICEI, 18 December 2020
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