Living together in inclusive democracies: how can the intercultural approach promote participation in diverse societies?

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LIVING TOGETHER IN INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACIES: HOW CAN THE INTERCULTURAL APPROACH PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN DIVERSE SOCIETIES?

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REPORT

"Tolerancia convivencia, convivencia tolerancia
No es un juego de palabras, son palabras de Amistad
Que tenemos que sembrarlas para que siempre haya paz"

Gabriel Rancel Gonzalez
Neighbour of El Fraile

Background note

Participation is a core principle of human rights and – at the same time - it is "at the very heart of the idea of democracy"; democracy and human rights are two of the three core pillars of the Council of Europe's mission. The intercultural policy model promoted by the ICC network is also intimately linked to both human rights and democracy. As a matter of fact, the intercultural approach is more and more used by local authorities as a tool for the substantive implementation of human rights at the local level; at the same time, it fosters inclusion, dialogue, mutual understanding and new forms of participation – such as participatory democracy, and urban citizenship – that reinvigorate democracy.

Diverse societies wishing to avoid that a large number of their population is excluded from the democratic process, have two main options: 1) they can include newcomers - migrants and refugees namely - into the group of citizens by facilitating their access to citizenship/nationality (national competence); 2) they can explore and test alternative forms of participation that would facilitate access of non-citizens to civic and political rights, and contribute to the local, political and social life of the community (competence of local public authorities).

One way does not exclude the other; they can be complementary, and local authorities are particularly well placed to test, create and enable opportunities for people of different backgrounds and lived experiences to come together to make, shape and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

The Council of Europe and its Committee of Ministers have recently enriched their body of standards on participation by adopting a very progressive Recommendation on the participation of citizens in local public life. What is innovative in this text is the definition of "citizen" intended as "any person (including, where appropriate, foreign residents) belonging to a local community. Belonging to a local community involves the existence of a stable link between the individual and that community" . Besides, the Recommendation acknowledges the complementary roles of representative and participatory democracy, and the contribution of both to inclusive and stable societies. Interestingly enough, the text defines local democracy as one of the cornerstone of democracy in European countries, considering its reinforcement as a factor of stability. It also acknowledges the "leading

role" that local public institutions play in promoting the participation of citizens, and in re-engaging with them "in new ways in order to maintain the legitimacy of decision-making processes". Finally, it advocates for further steps to be taken to "involve citizens more directly in the management of local affairs, while safeguarding the effectiveness and efficiency of such management".

Many cities that are part of the Intercultural cities network have already adopted and implemented serious and fruitful steps in this sense. And yet, there are a few challenges and obstacles that need to be addressed, for instance:

1) the low levels of participation of migrants, refugees, minority groups, and of people with a foreign background in the political life, even when the legislation provides them with the relevant rights. This opens a wider reflection on the barriers to a more active involvement of a whole part of the citizenry in the democratic process, including socio-economic exclusion and urban segregation;

2) the normalisation of hate speech, so as the growing populism, and the spreading of xenophobic public discourse that nurture racism and intolerance and go against the values of an open society;

3) an increasing lack of trust of citizens in public institutions, which also materialises in a lack of interest for politics and participation;

4) the spreading of online collaboratory platforms that, although it has undoubtedly opened the ground for citizens to influence the power through petitioning, policy initiatives, policy evaluation, fact-checking and crowdsourcing, also presents the risk of reducing the quality of the participation through a sort of easy civic engagement without real commitment.

Through working group sessions and field visits, the seminar explored pilot practices that are likely help overcome these and other challenges and engage our societies in a process of education, solidarity, promotion of equality, justice and human rights. Participants proposed a set of actions for future implementation that can usefully feed and contribute to Council of Europe wider work on

participatory democracy at national level, having in mind the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making recently adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

1. Methodology

Through collaborative sessions, participants in the ICC 2018 Thematic Seminar identified practices and means to build cities where **a diverse range of people have the skills, knowledge, confidence and opportunities to participate; but also where public authorities are open and welcoming of diverse participation**.

Equal participation, non-discrimination and inclusiveness are principles of great importance to the ICC Network. Participation can cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging to the community, and it can extend to people that are more transient or face systematic barriers, including migrant, refugee, and Roma communities. Strategies for participation can also encourage greater mixing and interaction between diverse groups in the public space.

Pilot practices and creative thoughts were shared to set the scene, namely through a fishbowl session that explored experiences in Ioannina, (Greece), Reggio Emilia (Italy), and Tenerife (Spain), followed by a case-studies session that delivered practical examples from the following cities: Getafe (Spain; the City Plan for Coexistence), Vinnytsia (Ukraine; the Intercultural Hub for social innovation and inclusive participation), Paris (France; Co-designing public policies through participatory budgeting, and the Card for citizens' participation), and Madrid (Spain; intercultural policies as an antidote to hatred: revitilising a segregated neighbourhood). A special focus was given to the political participation and representation of Roma, through the experience of the Roma community in Tenerife.

Work further developed around five themes that were dealt with transversally. Five thematic areas were addressed, namely:

a) Incorporation of the intercultural approach into the development of inclusive and participatory tools for participatory democracy and local governance;

b) Social innovation for full, intersectoral and inclusive participation in diverse communities (paying special attention to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Roma, isolated groups, etc.);

c) Co-design and co-implementation of public policies: definition, capacity building, consultation and participation processes, tools and community evaluation;

d) Methodologies and instruments for the development of inclusive participation in multicultural contexts (including the promotion of intercultural dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution);

e) Building political will and understanding of the inclusion of Roma through joint actions at the local level. Learning from the ROMACT case.

The Working Groups tried to harness the collective wisdom of participants to go beyond recommendations and agree on actions that cities (local authorities) can take to promote participation in inclusive societies.

The programme of the event further included field visits to different neighbourhoods of Tenerife Island, to showcase projects and programmes implemented under Tenerife intercultural strategy "Together in the same direction".

The interactive use of the "shared story" technique allowed participants to deliver thoughts and outcomes at any time during the whole event. The information gathered through the shared story has been analysed from three perspectives: key issues, challenges, and solutions.

2. Outcomes of the Working Groups

2.1 Incorporation of the intercultural approach in the development of inclusive and participatory tools for participatory democracy and local governance

Keys

- ➢ Educating local leaders towards new ways of thinking and implementing public policies: promoting intercultural competence and a change in perspectives;
- ➢ Detecting what people have in common and give them the tools to work together towards the achievement of shared objectives;
- ➢ Using challenges as opportunities to federate the citizens;
- ➢ Setting participation as a process throughout the whole life of public policies

Challenges

- ➢ Promoting sense of belonging so to encourage newcomers to become active citizens;
- ➢ Accepting that the right to participate does also mean the right not to participate.

Action Points

- ➢ Implementing participatory methodologies that are open to every resident willing to contribute;
- ➢ Identifying the opportunities for social transformation, and intervening on those from an intercultural perspective;
- ➢ Implementing targeted actions to reach out to vulnerable groups;
- ➢ Adopting an overarching intercultural strategy that is co-thought, co-designed, co-implemented and co-evaluated with and by the citizens.

Intercultural competence of city leaders and staff is crucial to be able to turn diversity into an advantage for the whole society. It also helps creating a common vision of an open society that is co-designed building on the bonds that unite.

Public statements that portray the city as an open and welcoming space, have strong impact also on citizens' behaviours and contribute to educating them to act in an intercultural way, a precondition for inclusive participation. As a matter of fact, the intercultural approach seeks to foster a sense of shared citizenship among individuals of diverse backgrounds in the city, including through opportunities for participation in the public sphere.

Intercultural policies can be also used to advocate for co-design, co-implementation and co-evaluation of public policies.

From the experience of the participants in this Group, it appeared that cities with strong and objective-oriented intercultural strategies or action plans, find spaces for horizontal work with citizens, the civil society, and other stakeholders more easily than cities which do not have (yet) an overarching intercultural strategy.

Besides, intercultural strategies set the frame for policies that foster the sense of belonging to a pluralistic local community, which is an incentive for people to take action in it and be involved in decision making. These strategies also prepare the citizens to intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and willingness to engage in a debate that may end in a change of their own perspectives for a common one that would include all sides. They empower communities and neighbourhoods to think and act collectively in a given context that is subject to change.

Moreover, intercultural strategies foresee intercultural mediation as a tool to connect to the communities, empower the residents, assist them to find common rules and processes, and help breaking the barrier of fear so that people feel confident enough to participate.

The group stressed that, in order to promote the active involvement of a diverse citizenry, intercultural strategies should not set participation as a goal, but as a process that needs to be implemented throughout all life of public policies and measures. Engaging citizens in the co-design of policies from the earliest stages will not only ensure that these are focused compared to the needs, but also create a sense of ownership among the residents that is likely to commit them to policy endorsement and implementation, ensuring greater impact[1]. If people participate, they understand; if they understand, they commit to implementation. Tenerife's Strategy "Together in the same direction" provides a good model for that.

Finally, practice shows that opportunities for participation often arise from unfavourable situations or contexts that push the citizens to gather together to find solutions on issues of common concern. Intercultural strategies should therefore foresee tools to turn challenges into opportunities, and create spaces to seize them, namely through cooperation and public debate.

2.2 Social innovation for full, intersectoral and inclusive participation in diverse communities (paying special attention to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Roma, isolated groups, etc.)

Keys

 ➢ Putting the focus on the relationship between people;
 ➢ Encouraging citizens' commitment: working with people and not for people;
 ➢ Promoting multidirectional learning;
 ➢ Maximizing the resources offered by the administration to the public. The neighbourhood as the epicentre of the action.

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[1] See also sub-chapter 1.2 of this report

Challenges

➢ Bureaucratic inertia;
➢ Building mutual trust.

Action Points

➢ Applying inclusive and participatory methodologies;
➢ Avoiding 'marrying' with a specific methodology, but combining them according to the process;
➢ Always maintaining contact with the participants, even when they seem away from the process;
➢ Identifying the target groups to work with.

Social innovation is not anymore a new concept and there are numerous strategies, ideas and organizations that have been created over the last decade to meet civic and social needs. However, it is often seen as an end to itself rather than a means to an end and we need to shift from ideas to implementation.

There are 2 important strands in exploring this: 1) How do we ensure inclusive participation in the process of social innovation? For example, isolated groups not just recipients of innovation but as creators, experts and decision makers; 2) Ultimately, so what? How does it make a difference? Specifically, how does this translate for turning the ambition for full intersectoral and inclusive participation into reality? How can diverse communities be fully involved in the creation of social innovation?

Participants agreed that social innovation can be broadly understood as a process by which new solutions are provided to meet already existing or recent societal needs.[2] Community engagement is a vital part of intercultural policy-making. It provides benefits such as better outcomes for all stakeholders, community ownership and lower project costs. Effective community engagement is about recognising that involving the public in a project is no longer about information dissemination and telling the people what is being done ("top-down approach"), but is a two-way information sharing and decision-making tool. Such an asset-based approach views migrants as part of the solution to a problem that concerns society as a whole rather than the unique source of the problem to be solved. Effective and sustainable solutions require that migrants participate fully in the policy-making or project-management process.

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[2] A more elaborate definition is proposed in a 2012 report of the TEPSIE (Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Foundations for Social Innovation in Europe) research project: "Social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act. "

The group assessed two case studies (from Reggio Emilia, and from Portugal) to draw on the learning to identify common challenges and opportunities to inform a set of principles and recommendations. In terms of challenges, both cases suffered from:

Bureaucratic inertia: Social innovation requires first and foremost intellectual and organisational flexibility, qualities that are seldom associated with bureaucracy. Indeed innovation is only possible when the all stakeholders are seriously committed to considering new ideas, processes, and actors. In public administration the capacity to "think out of the box" is rarely rewarded and seen more often than not as a disturbance of daily routine. Whereas innovation is the central driving force in the private sector, it is stability, predictability and accountability that prevail in public management. Organisational flexibility can indeed be very challenging for public administrations. The higher the level of government, the more difficult it is to manage public policies in a flexible manner. Local authorities can be more reactive and pragmatic, for example by setting ad-hoc structures (advisory groups, consultative bodies, etc.) that function with less hierarchical and more informal rules. Problems can arise when external funding bodies from higher tiers of government, most notably from the EU, require precise forecasting data and give little or no leverage to the fund recipients wishing to introduce changes during project implementation. Rigid bureaucratic procedures leave little room for new ideas to emerge.

Mutual trust: The group agreed that participatory innovation requires that migrants have enough confidence in themselves and sufficient trust in the host society if they are to become active members of the policy-making or project-management process. On an individual level, people with a migration background often face a number of additional barriers to public participation compared to the indigenous population. Lack of experience in social participation, lack of awareness and understanding of how participatory mechanisms impact public policy outcomes, limited access to information and resources because of the language barrier, are all factors that inhibit participation and make it difficult for migrants to fully understand the issues at stake, voice their concerns and formulate proposals.

The group agreed that social innovation can be stimulated in intercultural policy-making by involving migrants from the very beginning and throughout the whole process. This is not always the case. Migrants are sometimes called on during the initial phases (definition of the problem to be solved and aims to be achieved) but are side-lined during project implementation. Conversely migrant community groups may be mobilised only at the implementation phase and expected to contribute to the project mainly through voluntary work. In both cases they may feel they are not considered to be genuine partners and refrain therefore from making alternative proposals. In intercultural policy-making participation is an over-arching principle and should not be used instrumentally to spare resources or to rubber-stamp earlier decisions.

Participants agreed that the management should ideally be trusted to an external project manager. If the person in charge is a public agent, he / she will not have the freedom to communicate openly and consider ideas that may clash with the strongly entrenched habits and hierarchy of his / her own organisation. In addition to that it can happen that the problem to be solved originates from earlier decisions, or non-decisions, of the organisation employing the project manager. This is likely, quite understandably, to generate some mistrust within the migrant communities. An external project manager is by definition more neutral and has far greater chances to build a trust relationship with

migrant groups. The project-manager should be selected not only on the basis of technical expertise but also on his / her capacity to engage positively with all stakeholders and to keep an open mind throughout the whole process.

Although planning is an important aspect of public policy- and project-planning, it should not be too inflexible. Indeed trial and error is a key component of social innovation. During project implementation, new ideas and new actors can emerge that may require reorienting certain aspects of the project without losing sight of the problem to be solved. Hence the project management process should not be seen from the outset as a linear process but as an iterative one capable of picking up new ideas as the process unfolds. For greater effectiveness it may be necessary to change the decision-making process, incorporate new actors or reallocate resources. Participation and the ability to accept change greatly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the policy / project.

Social innovation requires a specific mind-set that is untypical of public administration in which top-down decision-making and command & control mechanisms generally constitute the norm. It is therefore crucial that public organisations refrain from taking the lead of innovative processes. These will function more efficiently if they are organised as a public policy network, a highly decentralised and flexible structure in which no one person or organisation is vested with central authority. Migrants are more likely to participate in structures in which they are on equal footing with public officials, experts and alike. In policy networks the project manager's role is similar to an orchestra conductor seeking input from each musician but also collective harmony.

In conclusion, **to ensure inclusive participation in the process of social innovation, intercultural cities may:**

- set up training modules for local authority employees on the importance and mechanisms of social innovation and participation as tools for public management. Such courses should ideally be attended by normal staff members, supervisors, managers and directors. Only in this way is it possible to change the collective mind-set;
- connect migrant groups that want to develop a new idea with the mainstream organisations in charge. When the group is not well organised or limited in its capacity to interact with the local administration, for reasons of language for example, some specific support may be offered. The canton of Neuchâtel, for example, connects migrant groups wishing to develop a cultural project with the mainstream cultural institutions in charge.

To fully involve diverse communities in the creation of social innovation, cities may:

- allocate sufficient resources to overcome the language barrier and make migrants, whatever their language competencies, feel at ease when interacting with other stakeholders;
- engage not only with organised migrant groups but also with individuals with migration experience who are connected to other networks and could eventually take on leadership roles. This Multicultural Ambassadors Program of the Australian city of Ballarat could serve as an example in this respect;
- make sure that migrants are fully involved in all stages (needs assessment ▯ process design ▯ allocation of resources ▯ delivery ▯ evaluation) and at all levels of the policy-making or project-management process. Ample time should be provided for during the initial phases as

they are crucial for building confidence and mutual trust, which can, in many cases, open prospects of long term commitment.

To start implementing the use of social innovation as a tool for inclusive communities cities (local authorities) may:

- introduce adequate mechanisms to ensure that project planning and organisational structures remain open to external inputs and informal interaction without losing sight of the main objectives to be reached;
- entrust the management of projects aimed at stimulating social innovation to external project managers who are neutral and independent enough to take on board new ideas or interact without the limitations of public office.

2.3 Co-design and co-implementation of public policies: definition, capacity building, consultation and participation processes, tools and community evaluation

Keys

➢ Training and empowering migrants' associations so that they can become autonomous;
➢ People have to feel that their voice is heard and their contribution will be taken into consideration;
➢ Searching and generating spaces where citizens, political leaders and technicians are able to work together.

Challenges

➢ Identifying who has the power to make change happen;
➢ Accepting immigrants as policy makers; involving people;
➢ Taking decisions together, even before the co-design;
➢ Committing people to invest their time to proactively resolve issues;
➢ Access to resources (ICT, media, and financial ones);
➢ Changing the usual spaces for decision making;
➢ Working from the local.

Action Points

➢ Promote inclusive participation through the setting up of relevant tools and training for public authorities, including on intercultural competence;
➢ Empower the citizens (leadership skills and training) through targeted capacity building activities;
➢ Involve the neighborhood in the design of the plan / actions / policies;
➢ Co-design and co-implementation step by step.

Participants defined what "Co-design & Co-implementation" is about. They agreed that the engagement of a wide range of actors is an important element for co-design and co-implementation, and emphasised the need to start any process by a co-decision on purposes and goals. This may more easily happen once a concrete problem affects a specific neighbourhood or a group. However,

it is important that public authorities develop competence to provoke situations that motivate the citizens to take an active role in public decision-making and implementation.

It is also important to know who is the so called "privileged group", i.e. who has the power and the mandate to implement concrete actions/initiatives, make changes; know whom to talk to, who is in power to decide and implement the ideas, who is in possession of the ideas, and bring all these stakeholders to work together.

Besides, co-design, co-implementation and co-evaluation should be seen as part of one process (the so called policy process) which assumes continuous feedback from the implementers, beneficiaries, target group, and takes into account the results of the evaluation for the decision-making process. This process should be planned and implemented step-by-step, considering both the long and short-term perspectives.

Public authorities should also work at setting-up structures and spaces for promoting interaction. This can be done through permanent round tables that gather local government officials, politicians, NGOs, the civil society and individuals. Besides, specific projects should be implemented to build capacity and empower the citizens so that they can participate on an equal foot.

Training should also be given to civil servants and municipality staff, to get technical and practical skills for intercultural dialogue, anti-discrimination action, and no-hate speech policies.

2.4 Methodologies and instruments for the development of inclusive participation in multicultural contexts (including the promotion of intercultural dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution)

Keys

- ➢ Training and informing the society in terms of opportunities related to social participation;
- ➢ Searching or creating common participation spaces;
- ➢ Putting people at the centre of policies, so that they feel recognised.

Challenges

- ➢ Promotion of equality in participation in the political, economic and social spheres.

Action Points

- ➢ Adapt the methodologies to the process, not the other way around;
- ➢ Opt for flexible methodologies;
- ➢ Consider implementing also artistic and cultural actions as tools to generate interest, commitment and participation.

The development of inclusive participation requires the use of methods and tools tailored to the objectives pursued; this is particularly true in in intercultural contexts, where diverse contributions, ways of thinking, proceeding and understanding participation meet and mix. In those diverse contexts, it is essential to apply intercultural dialogue and intercultural mediation or conflict resolution techniques to invigorate and stimulate the community. These techniques are even more effective when the target group becomes one of the actors in the definition, application and implementation of inclusive participation.

The Working Group first agreed on a common framework to understand what does a methodological approach for (inclusive) participation means; then, it shared and identified the specific characteristics of the tools and techniques that are commonly used to promote inclusive participation; finally, it extrapolated those elements and aspects that have a positive impact on the successful development of processes and / or projects that promote inclusive participation.

Methodological approach: Participatory methodologies are a set of very broad and heterogeneous methods, techniques, perspectives of intervention, applied to a wide range of cases and contexts which makes it difficult to find commonalities in terms of approaches. In fact it appeared that even at the level of each public administration, there is no clear framework that neither defines "Participation" nor determines its scope, implementation process, or actions. Participants considered it useful to encourage public administrations to set-up some common reference frameworks (legal, normative) for the implementation and development of participatory processes that promote inclusion. The Working Group decided to define "participatory process" as a horizontal process that implies a (positive) transformation of society, improving, among others, coexistence in diverse societies. "Inclusive participation" is the quality that guarantees (promotes) equal opportunities in the participatory processes that are engaged.

Participatory tools and techniques: A participatory process involves the development of participatory methodologies that, regardless from the way in which they are developed, must at least take into account the following key aspects:

1. Identifying and setting common objectives. Establishing common priorities brings people together. It is important to focus on a few core common objectives that are more likely to serve common interests, bringing coherence and solidity to the processes that are developed. As a matter of fact, if the objectives are too specific, there is a risk to move the center of interest to specific groups and to loose participation from others. Therefore it is important to promote a shared knowledge of reality and to carry out a participatory diagnostic beforehand so to pursue the common good.

2. Sharing the information: both about the process and the results. Information sharing (making it easily understandable, reaching out to all groups) is key to making community processes advance. It should be considered as a priority both

in inception phase of participatory processes and in the application of techniques and tools that are developed for it. The extent to which a person perceives the transparency of a process, the coherence of his/her own participation in it, and the commitment to the results obtained will largely depend on the efforts made in communication. In addition, informing in a successful way helps to build conscious citizens who understand the role they play in the process, thus increasing the chances that they will continue participate in the future. Informing in a successful way may be quite complex and should thus combine different communication strategies. The codes, terms and communication channels that are used may have a strong impact on the effectiveness of information sharing, especially when inclusive participation is sought.

3. <u>Making the process more flexible</u>: The participatory processes and, in particular, the techniques and tools used must be close and adapted to the target group. A sound diagnostic of the diversity of the population (to get to know and acknowledge diversity), as well as the ability to adapt to the a variety of backgrounds, exploring the different means and options for participation are all factors that – if applied with the necessary flexibility – will increase inclusive participation. The context will determine the degree of flexibility that is required. Yet, flexibility in techniques and tools should not be confused with flexibility regarding the objectives or aims of the participatory process: when these have been set for the common interest through a participatory process, they shall not be changed.

<u>Development of inclusive participatory processes</u>: The development of actions and policies through participatory processes brings – in the view of participating public administrations – better results in terms of implementation. They are a mean, not an end, that largely legitimises the public response. However, participatory processes do not proliferate on a day-to-day basis: many do not end, others lose their participatory character, also because people disassociate or drop out.

There is a general tendency to believe that participatory processes do not compensate for the efforts and the means put in place. Likewise, quality and consistency are generally not adequately valued or taken into consideration when assessing the results obtained. Another problem is that participatory processes are not defined *ex ante*. It is thus necessary to learn how to manage their uncertainties and risks, and how to develop them within the means and time that are available, compared to the expected results.

Once these obstacles have been overcome, there are conditions that can promote a better development of inclusive participatory processes from the personal-professional dimension, the corporate-institutional dimension or, from the social context itself.

1. An inclusive participatory process is more viable if the social context in which it is developed gives importance to common interests (against individual ones, or communitarianism). Also, it's easier to promote inclusion when the community, intended in a broad sense, maintains links and ties of union, developing a high sense of belonging and of co-responsibility with the territory, rejecting violence and hatred.

2. An inclusive participatory process can be better developed if the implementing institution manages to consolidate models of intervention that are developed by assuming the principle of uncertainty which is inherent to participatory processes; public institutions should favour the development of participatory processes also by releasing their staff personnel (allowing for flexible hours) so that they can adapt to the rhythms of the processes initiated.

3. An inclusive participatory process will be more successful if the professionals assume a role of facilitation and not of coordination, favoring that their action be a continuous learning for the people who participate in the processes (learning and service). In addition, from a staff training perspective, civil servants should have competencies in intercultural management and promotion of equal opportunities, being able to develop skills related to active listening and the organisation of resources.

2.5 From specific policies to general ones - Encourage political will and understanding of the inclusion of Roma through joint action at the local level. Learning from the ROMACT case

This Working Group lasted one afternoon only. The outcomes presented here are a sum of the discussions of the Group together with reflections that came out over the whole event, including the introductory session.

Keys

➢ People should feel heard;
➢ Civil society organisation should be empowered;
➢ The approach used should be really inclusive;
➢ The use of new technologies should be promoted;
➢ Empathy and respect should guide policies;
➢ Vulnerable areas should be more deeply targeted so to respond to their needs.

Challenges

➢ Improve the accessibility of the Roma population to early formal education;
➢ Empower the Roma population capacity to act and participate in decision making;
➢ Involve Roma people in public policy creation and implementation;
➢ Increase the political representation of the Roma people;
➢ Change the stereotyped perception about the Roma people;
➢ Implement transversal policies for the full inclusion-integration of the Roma people;
➢ Institutions must break the barriers of fear towards the Roma population;
➢ The Roma people should be part of the concept of interculturality.

Action Points

➢ Inform the population at any stage and about any actions that are carried out;
➢ Make processes transparent;
➢ Use participatory budget;

> ➢ The inclusion of the Roma people is a long process that requires constant support over time.

3. General Conclusions

The detected keys have, to a large extent, a direct relationship with the methodologies and ways of 'doing', managing and working on public policies, i.e. with how the processes are led to achieve inclusive and participative societies.

The Seminar stressed that the methodologies used, the mixing of models and paradigms, the adaptation and adaptability of the process as well the importance given not only to the results to be achieved but also to the way these are reached are fundamental elements of successful participatory policies.

The participatory analysis of the difficulties encountered during the processes, how these have been solved or managed, which conflicts arose and how they were addressed, is sometimes more important than the result obtained, because it generates a series of intangible outcomes that may have a stronger impact on the way the society feels and behaves.

People as the centre of participatory processes and policies, regardless of their cultural origin or their administrative situation, is another key element for success and must be taken into account in cultural diversity management. For instance, the visit to the neighborhood "El Fraile" (Arona municipality) that took place on the second morning during the seminar, allowed the neighbors to present to participants from all over Europe the place where they live, the work they do to improve the living conditions and the image of the territory, their platform for interreligious dialogue, and many other initiatives undertaken to implement the Island Intercultural Strategy "Together in the same direction". This is a direct contribution of the citizens to a public policy, and the fact of being able to share themselves the outcomes of this joint work keeps the process alive, allows the validation and recognition of the individual contribution of the neighbors, increases self-confidence and commitment.

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the need to transform the public space into a place of encounter, mixing and interaction. It's important to moving away from the traditional spaces and to create new and more horizontal meeting places in which all the social actors can be represented. The visit to the "Neighborhood for Employment: Stronger Together" was a good example in this respect. This is a project of an experimental and community-based nature that aims to improve employability and socio-labour inclusion at the local level, optimising existing resources and overcoming the traditional individual approach to unemployment. It builds on diverse experiences of interest with immigrant population and Roma citizens, in the framework of the Council of Europe ROMED programme. The visit to the project implementation space showed to the participants that, during the development of a project to improve employability, relational spaces could be generated and favored the inclusion and integration of vulnerable groups, giving each person the opportunity to showcase his/her own strengths.

Among the main challenges identified, there is the need to transfer local practices and working methods to the management of all public policies, at the highest level of management and leadership in the city, so that polices are designed, executed and evaluated in a participatory way.

An example of how to move forward in overcoming this challenge was given by the "ICI Taco Intercultural Community Intervention Project". Taco is an urban area belonging to two municipalities; it is made up of fifteen neighborhoods with their own identities, arising from intra and inter-island mobility and - more recently - from international mobility. A community process has been promoted in order to strengthen the social coexistence thanks to the cooperation and joint action of multiple public and private actors. Participants noted the huge impact of incorporating the community in all the development phases. Public policies acquire legitimacy and the level of trust in public institutions increases, which is even more stunning in a generalised context of political disaffection.