Introduction to the intercultural checklist

This practical intercultural checklist aims to help ICC coordinators and their colleagues assess in a user-friendly and quick way whether a city's proposed project, policy or action is intercultural. This guide is a shortened version adapted to the online format of the intercultural checklist (pages 1-2, 30-33) and addresses only the principle of meaningful intercultural interaction.

This guide contains a brief description of what is meant by the term meaningful intercultural interaction in the context of intercultural integration; a set of indicators to help you measure how much you are using them; and, in the online tool, an intercultural checklist to assess the project.

The intercultural checklist can be used to review a city's own project, or a project proposal received from a partner. It could also be used to evaluate completed projects.

Cities have suggested that the intercultural checklist could be a useful process for a project team or a working group to complete together. Civil society and other partners could also use the intercultural checklist.[1]

Measuring the intercultural nature of an activity or project means understanding to what extent it:

1) positively addresses **diversity**;
2) promotes real **equality**; and
3) fosters meaningful intercultural **interaction**.

The principles of diversity advantage, real equality and meaningful intercultural interaction are at the core of the intercultural integration approach advocated by the Council of Europe. They can help a city design a comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion as well as identify the specific role of national and local authorities.

The three principles are not stand-alone concepts. They can and should support each other in different situations and policy areas. Focussing too much on one principle can lose goodwill or progress in another. For example, creating interaction in mixed neighbourhoods, schools, public spaces, and organisations, could be counterproductive without measures to ensure equality, and to embrace and protect diversity. The 'intercultural mix' is finding the right balance of each for different projects, policies, or actions.

The intercultural integration approach focuses on managing diversity based on cultural (ethnic, religious, and linguistic, etc.) difference, in the context of the growing cultural diversity of European societies. However, interculturalism understands that human identity is dynamic and can be diverse in many ways which intersect with cultural diversity. This means that both the intercultural checklist and the principles it is founded on, can be successfully applied to other diversity-related policy areas, such as human rights, anti-discrimination, gender equality and sexual orientation.

[1] From working group discussions at the Annual Meeting of ICC Coordinators, 3-5 November 2020.

The intercultural checklist aims to be simple and transparent. Questions are phrased so that you can tick the box in the survey tool should the answer apply. After completing the intercultural checklist, your city should be able to easily identify to what extent the principles of diversity advantage reflected in the policy or project. Not every project is the same, however, and depending on the project the "weighting" may differ intentionally. The intercultural checklist is a useful basic tool, to raise awareness of intercultural principles amongst the project team, it provides indications where further action may be needed and can help a city strengthen different aspects of a project's interculturalism.

Finally, there are suggestions for further reading and good practice on the areas that could be strengthened.

Please note, that the intercultural checklist is intended to be indicative and thought provoking, and that there naturally are several additional factors which apply to each project. The intercultural checklist aims to apply broadly to all projects, whereas some areas may be more or less applicable in some instances.

It is also important to note that this intercultural checklist is not intended to help cities measure the overall outcomes and impact of their intercultural policies but rather to what extent specific measures and/or project proposals are intercultural. For information on measuring impact more generally, see our report Evaluating the performance and impact of intercultural cities, our Step by Step Guide to becoming an intercultural city and the ICC INDEX.

Introduction to the Intercultural Cities programme

The Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme seeks to support cities in benefitting from the opportunities, skills and creativity associated with diversity and managing diversity as an asset.

The ICC programme provides a framework for cities to review their policies through an intercultural lens and develop comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them realise the diversity advantage, reach real equality and achieve meaningful intercultural interaction. It also provides opportunities for cities to network and engage in mutual learning with other like-minded cities.

The programme works together with a range of cities across the Council of Europe member states and beyond on a global scale to gather experience and good practice. This ground-up, collective input has shaped a unique concept to migrant/minority integration called intercultural integration.

There are now[2] over 150 city members of the ICC programme.

For more information, visit our website: www.coe.int/interculturalcities.

[2] October 2021.

Meaningful intercultural interaction

What do we mean by interaction in an intercultural city?

Interaction is the cornerstone of intercultural integration and is what gives an intercultural city its distinctive value. Interaction means creating conditions for meaningful and constructive everyday encounters across cultural and other differences. Prejudice and discrimination can thrive where there is segregation or a lack of contact and dialogue between people, even where there are protective laws. Evidence has shown that, under the right conditions, the more contact people with different backgrounds and lifestyles have with each other, the less likely they are to think and behave in prejudicial ways.

Therefore, an intercultural city works in partnership with other organisations to develop a range of policies and actions to encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups. All local policies directly or indirectly influence the creation of an environment that facilitates or hinders social contact and meaningful interaction. This is not just a question of public space or certain socio-cultural activities. Housing and urban planning, education, sport, commerce, or culture, all influence the levels of interaction within communities. The way in which services, resources and equipment in the city are adapted, such as libraries, museums, social and sports centres, is also important. Thus, when diversity is recognised, it has a positive impact on interaction. Urban planners, park wardens and architects can all help to create an "interculturally" inclusive environment that attracts visitors from all walks of life that ensures that minority groups are incorporated into cross-cultural activities, dialogues, and organisations. City architecture such as statues and the way the history of the city is told can also enhance or hinder meaningful interaction depending on whether other cultural references are taken into account.

Certain conditions make activities to promote social contact and meaningful interaction more effective in reducing prejudice and generating more intense bonds: the equal status of participants; identifying and achieving common objectives; promoting cooperation.

Interaction also facilitates the creation of shared senses of belonging and is crucial for cities to benefit from the diversity advantage and the creativity this brings.

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

This explicit commitment has created the conditions for real policy innovation within intercultural cities.[3] For example, the Anti-rumours strategy aims to raise awareness about the importance of countering diversity-related prejudices and rumours that can lay the foundations of discriminatory and racists attitudes and hamper meaningful interaction and social cohesion. Originally devised in

[3] Intercultural Cities Bridging the equality, diversity and inclusion agendas, background paper, November 2017, Page 5

Barcelona, Spain, it has been endorsed by the Council of Europe and many different cities globally are adapting the methodology for their use.

For more information, you can read:

- Bridging the equality, diversity and inclusion agendas - Background Paper, (2017)
- Engaging with faith and convictional communities in the Intercultural city – Policy Brief (2015)
- Public Space Management – Report to the Intercultural Cities Research programme (2012)
- Intercultural spaces and centres: models and role for intercultural development in cities – Briefing paper (2011)
- Anti-rumours Handbook for cities (2018)
- Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Strategies for the Intercultural City – Policy Brief (2017)

How can you tell if a policy or project positively addresses interaction?

Indicator 1: Increasing meaningful every-day encounters across difference

An intercultural city works hard to maximise meaningful every-day encounters across difference between residents. The first step is the adoption (and implementation) of strategies that facilitate meaningful intercultural encounters and exchanges and promote equal and active participation of residents and communities in the development of the city, thus responding to the needs of a diverse population. At the level of individual projects or activities, the potential for increasing intercultural interaction is something that should be considered carefully.

All local policies and projects directly or indirectly influence the creation of an environment that facilitates or hinders social contact and meaningful interaction. This is not just a question of public space or certain socio-cultural activities - housing and urban planning, education, sport, commerce or culture influence the levels of interaction. The way in which services, resources and equipment in the city are adapted is also relevant.

The design, renovation or use of public spaces can be a particularly important time to think about opportunities for intercultural interaction and how to maximise them. At the most basic level, evidence suggests that the quality and availability of infrastructure and amenities (e.g., cafes, restrooms, sport fields, trails) encourage the use of public space, whereas the presence of litter, vandalism, and unclean restrooms could deter them. There is also evidence that minority groups may avoid public spaces as a result of discrimination. Design features such as place names or architecture can fundamentally impact upon how places are perceived. Some policy measures may work for a particular group but socially and culturally exclude others, whereas other design elements seem to hold broad cross-cultural appeal.[4] It is important to take as many of these elements into account as possible. To do this an intercultural city will take into consideration the views of a diverse group of experts, partners, and citizens and where possible include participatory approaches into the design of place and planning of activities.

Indicator 2: Interaction and working in partnership

The intercultural city cannot increase intercultural interaction alone, although it can certainly encourage this through its activities, festivals, actions, communication, and funding. It needs a broad range of allies. Co-design of projects and policies with communities, residents and those who use the

[4] Public Space Management, 2012, page 35.

services and spaces, are one of the main ways of ensuring that a city works in partnership and that its projects are based on evidence and achieve the desired results.

It is very important to work on interaction from the bottom-up so that people feel involved and heard, which generates a sense of belonging at the local level. In this sense, it is very important to promote the participation in social spaces of people of diverse origins and profiles, but from an inclusive approach and going beyond the usual suspects. Cities need to be proactive and creative to reach wider and diverse targets.

Indicator 3: Understanding fears and barriers to interaction

An intercultural city tries to understand fears and barriers to intercultural interaction. This means that an intercultural city needs to regularly 'test the waters' or find ways of understanding what barriers exist. Where there are fears or tensions, the intercultural city actively engages with all the people concerned, firstly to understand the local context from their perspective, and secondly to identify solutions with them.

Another key issue is communication. How municipal services, resources and policies communicate can determine the level of interaction, communication should be adapted to the different profiles, information channels, and take multilingualism into account. Barriers to interaction can include language, lack of information, timing problems, but they can also be related to other more indirect issues such as having a very poor public transport network that leaves some areas more isolated, social housing policies that favour segregation etc. as well as barriers related to prejudices and stereotypes. In this sense, the importance of cities having resources, tools and strategies to reduce or eliminate these barriers should be noted, requiring professional profiles that act as bridges or connectors, or to adapt services so that they are truly accessible and also respond to the needs and interests of all citizens

Finally, to understand barriers to interaction cities need information and evidence to better understand the dynamics of interaction. If cities do not have information, it is very difficult to convince others within and without the city of the importance of promoting the intercultural approach in all municipal areas, especially with regard to interaction. It is important to get some idea about the levels of interaction, but also what kind of interaction takes place.

Indicator 4: Proactively facing challenges and conflicts

Instead of denying, ignoring, or repressing conflict, the intercultural city seeks to anticipate, identify, address, and resolve issues to the satisfaction of all protagonists without compromising the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The intercultural city views conflict as a normal feature of free, dynamic, and interactive communities and sees the very process of conflict mediation and resolution as an opportunity for innovation and sustainable social cohesion.

When planning specific projects or policies, a city may undertake a risk analysis of any conflicts that may arise during the planning process. It also may ensure there are fora for discussions about the project within localities or with different groups that can influence the project process. Sometimes this work is done in-house by the city or district. Sometimes the city works with civil society or other organisations who provide this service for them.

Indicator 5: Maximising sustained intercultural interaction

Increasing interaction as part of a project is very useful but it is also helpful to consider the outcomes of any project or policy to see if it can lead to longer-lasting change and more interaction as an outcome of the activity. In this way it should be verified if the project works with all those who can create more interactions as a long-term feature of the activity or policy. Perhaps it can be considered

a pilot project that you can evaluate and improve next time with more interactive features. A regular event may mean more participation and interaction. Perhaps the project or policy can include communication or training to ensure that results are sustainable, or interaction can be built into criteria for assessing projects with other partners or funding for civil society groups. Events or meetings to discuss or showcase good practice can also lead to mutual learning and interaction between projects.

Please see the full guide to the intercultural checklist for insights on all principles and checklists.