

Introduction to the intercultural checklists

This practical intercultural checklist aims to help intercultural 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, 16-19) and addresses only the principle of **real equality**.

This guide contains a brief **description** of what is meant by the term real equality in the context of intercultural integration; a set of **indicators** to help you measure how much you are using them; and through 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 now² over 150 city members of the ICC programme.

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

² October 2021.

Real equality

What is equality in the context of intercultural cities?

Intercultural dialogue allows us to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural divides and to move forward together, to deal with our different identities constructively and democratically on the basis of shared universal values. However, it can only thrive if certain preconditions are met. In its *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* from 2008, the Council of Europe underlines that for intercultural dialogue to work, it has to be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual.³

The concept of fundamental values includes equality before the law or equal rights as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. However, the concept of equal rights also requires positive action to ensure that rights are accessible to all. They also need to be promoted so that communities have a shared understanding and belief in equality for everyone within a community.

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

Mutual respect and equal dignity broaden the concept of equality further. Formal equality is not always sufficient because it can result in indirect discrimination when states fail to treat differently persons whose situations are significantly different. Over and above the principle of non-discrimination, states are also encouraged to take positive measures to address inequalities experienced by members of minority communities, a vital step in a diverse society. It may be necessary to take, within certain limits, practical measures to take into account the fact that diversity of situations requires a variety of approaches and norms.⁴ This can be difficult to identify and challenge as it is fundamentally about power.

For more information, you can read:

- New [thematic page](#) on identifying and preventing systemic discrimination.
- [LGBTI Inclusion and Equality Initiatives for the Intercultural City](#) (May 2020)
- [“Fighting discrimination and hate speech: is interculturalism the solution?”](#) - Meeting report (July 2019)
- Intercultural Cities [Bridging the equality, diversity and inclusion agendas](#), - Background Paper, (2017)
- [Human Rights in the Intercultural City, thematic seminar](#) – Meeting report (Oslo, 14-15 June 2017)
- White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue [“Living Together As Equals in Dignity”](#), Council of Europe (2008)

³ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue [“Living Together As Equals in Dignity”](#), Council of Europe (2008).

⁴ Page 4

How can you tell if a project positively addresses equality?

Indicator 1: Human rights and equality measures are reflected in policies and undertaken in practice

An intercultural city should ensure that the necessary regulations and policies are in place to promote a culture of human rights compliance and equality in all areas of its work. However, regulations and policies are not enough. There needs to be a way of ensuring that they are put into practice when undertaking individual projects, or actions. Translating broad concepts such as rights and equality into the everyday work and practices of a city is one of the biggest challenges.

When looking at a new policy, project, or action, it is useful to think of the project within the framework of equality in the city but also as an intercultural city and how it contributes to its goals. Does it contribute to the city's fundamental values? How does it contribute to the indicators and targets that have been set, for example in countering discrimination? Does the monitoring and evaluation of the project or policy include criteria on how it fits in with the bigger picture of equality in the city? When reporting on the project, will the results be collected so that others in the team/department/administration/city know that this project is contributing towards the goals? Have partners been asked to also consider these questions in their monitoring and reporting?

It is also good practice to undertake a project specific impact assessment that includes how the project will impact specific groups or localities from an equality perspective. The assessment could include accessibility for those with disabilities, cultural sensitivity, language, safety for children, gender, and other relevant factors.

There are four stages of an equality impact assessment: scoping/an initial discussion of the nature of the project or policy and the target population; any evidence you have on the target population, diversity, the needs you are addressing; the impact assessment itself; and decision making.⁵

Any equality impact assessment should take into account the input of those groups who are most likely to be exposed to discrimination as well as the effects of the plan or project. Decision-making should be informed by that input as well as equality data and information, with no room for assumptions or stereotypes about groups that experience inequality.⁶

Indicator 2: Active non-discrimination measures

Discrimination takes many forms and can impact the daily lives of its victims in a multitude of ways. Discrimination can take place in education, employment, housing, political participation, healthcare, and many other areas, which makes it complex and difficult to tackle. There is also systemic discrimination that hides in structures, policies, and procedures in organisations, including local authorities.

An intercultural city takes action to identify and prevent any systemic discrimination in their structures and beyond. It ensures every effort is made to ensure non-discrimination in all of its policies, programmes, and activities. It also communicates widely on the risks that discrimination presents for social cohesion, quality of life and the local economy.

In any particular project or policy, the city should analyse the risk of discrimination, including any groups that may be at risk of discrimination, and plan for active non-discrimination measures to mitigate it.

⁵ Identifying and Preventing Systemic Discrimination, Policy Study, October 2020, page 31.

⁶ Ibid.

Indicator 3: Working together: Nurturing an understanding of shared fundamental values in communities

Sometimes human rights and equality can be seen as being for others in our society or not for the benefit of all. The discussion can become divorced from mutual respect and responsibilities towards each other and the place where we live, or the equal opportunities that need to be in place for real equality to flourish. This can create resentment and misunderstandings.

An intercultural city should try to nurture a shared understanding amongst all sectors of its population of the importance of fundamental rights and values for each and every resident. This does not mean just communicating, although this is very important (see indicator 4). A long-term political commitment and social engagement is needed with residents, with staff, as well as with a wide range of allies on the ground in civil society, schools, NGOs, sports, hospitals, neighbourhood groups, businesses, universities and institutions that combat discrimination and offer support and reparation to victims.

When looking at an individual project or policy it is useful to check if it is clear to the project team and others why the project is important and how it will contribute to the city and communities. What is the goal of the project and who does it aim to serve? For example, if a city is designing a new park, what is the aim of the park, who does it serve? Can all the relevant groups access it? Are there any barriers to using it that have not been thought about? As always, input from users and residents will be important from an early stage to ensure you have not made assumptions.

Indicator 4: Communicating and promoting human rights and equality

Linked to the third indicator, a city's use of media and communications can have a very powerful influence on attitudes towards cultural diversity and fundamental rights and can promote a climate of public opinion more conducive to positive intercultural relations. In its communication, an intercultural city should constantly highlight the positive contribution of people with migrant/minority backgrounds to the social, cultural, and economic development of the city, as well as the importance of shared fundamental values and how these benefit the whole community. Cities can also support migrant or minority voices to be heard in the media both through their own coverage and their work with others. The city could train and partner with local media agencies so that they have a similar message and cover events occurring in the city in an objective and unbiased way.

When you are communicating about a particular policy or action, it is important to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. How does this promote fundamental values, how are these values beneficial to all of the community, have you checked how messaging will be viewed by diverse sectors of our community? Were diverse groups involved in developing and delivering the communications? Do you have a diverse group of allies on board to help you share your communication? Did you ensure that residents with a minority or migrant background can access communications and have a voice too? In this regard it is important to think about where and how you communicate, which channels and what languages you use.

Indicator 5: Positive measures to address inequalities

Cities should be aware that positive measures are sometimes needed to address inequalities experienced by members of minority communities in diverse societies. Practical measures should take into account the fact that the diversity of situations requires a variety of approaches and norms. An intercultural city acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach to public services and actions does not guarantee equal access to public benefits. The city also recognises that residents with

migrant/minority backgrounds should never be treated as passive consumers of public benefits but can contribute actively by suggesting new ideas and innovative solutions to public problems.

When preparing projects or policies, cities first need to be aware of the inequalities that may need to be addressed, both through data and evidence that the city collects, but also through discussions with stakeholders and residents. Positive measures could then involve initiatives of positive action or targeting resources at disadvantaged groups to ensure they can participate and benefit to the same extent as others and that there are no barriers to their participation. This could include focusing on certain neighbourhoods, on educational institutions etc.; making specific skills connected with membership of minority groups, such as language, specific features etc., an asset or a requirement; outreach activities using language(s) and media easily accessible for minorities to spread information about the initiative; or individual support so that residents from a minority or migrant background can participate equally in standard procedures or activities.⁷ It can also be useful to work closely with community and other civil society groups who work with hard-to-reach communities, such as self-help groups, neighbourhood groups or refugee or other community groups.

Please see [the full guide to the intercultural checklist](#) for insights on all principles and checklists.

⁷ The Benefits of Positive Action, Thematic Discussion Paper, On behalf of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) - Elisabeth Strasser (project manager) August Gächter, Mariya Dzhengozova Vienna, March 2008, page 3.