



## Concept note for the webinar on the intercultural inclusion of Roma and Travellers (27 April 2022)

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Members of the Intercultural Cities network identified the development of guidance for an intercultural approach to Roma and Travellers inclusion as a priority area of work for 2022.

This webinar is therefore a first attempt to initiate a conversation on this topic from the perspective of available solutions.

Among the main challenges for achieving full inclusion of Roma and Travellers residents, the following are particularly relevant for the local level:

- Increasing trust in public institutions;
- Increasing institutions knowledge about the community, its diversity, needs and barriers;
- Improving the accessibility to early formal and informal education, and improving integration in the school environment in general;
- Increasing confidence and capacity in the community to participate in decision making;
- Dismantling the stereotypes, prejudice and negative narratives about Roma and Travellers people;
- Addressing stark health inequalities;
- Including the Roma and Travellers community in intercultural activities and events.

Prepared in co-ordination with the [Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers](#) team, the webinar will present some of the Council of Europe's tools and best practice including: the role of mediators in creating bridges across communities; community participation; and participatory budgeting. It will further invite for a discussion on how to use them through an intercultural lens. During the webinar, a few local authorities that are members of the Intercultural Cities programme will also share their experience on how they have addressed some of the barriers to intercultural inclusion of Roma and Travellers.

### Background

It is estimated that there are some 10 to 12 million Roma and Travellers in living in Europe today. The community is spread across the continent and represents a wide variety of cultures, languages and lifestyles. Indeed, Roma and Travellers are the largest minority group in Europe and do not represent one homogenous Roma population. For the Council of Europe, the term "Roma and Travellers" encompasses a wide diversity of groups covered by its work: i. Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; ii. Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali) and iii. Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

The Roma and Travellers community is one of the most disadvantaged groups in Europe, facing widespread discrimination, prejudice and exclusion; however, the specific situation will vary greatly across several divides, and a tailored approach is hence needed. Reoccurring challenges for the Roma and Travellers community include widespread discrimination and lack of access to social services and rights as well as a lack of inclusion at all levels of society, leading in many instances to a lack of job opportunities, poverty, and a higher level of distrust in public administration. As the majority of Roma and Travellers in Europe live in urban areas, cities are often the first authorities to be in contact with the Roma and Travellers populations and are in the best position to develop specific solutions, including through policymaking which enables access to the city for all residents and an opportunity for the city to access the valuable know-how and experience of all residents.

Cities may for example include multiple, distinct Roma and Travellers communities that have different needs, including for instance a mix of autochthonous Roma and Travellers, long-term residents and recently arrived. More recently arrived Roma and Travellers are often confronted with a language barrier and need more support to reach the public services offered to them and to gain confidence in using them, exactly as any other migrant group. However, individuals in addition often face the negative consequences of deep-rooted stereotypes that may even lead to anti-gypsyism<sup>1</sup>. An intercultural city should address all forms of discrimination and pro-actively seek solutions.

### **The Intercultural Cities approach**

A first step to address these challenges is the implementation of key elements of the intercultural integration model: real equality, diversity advantage, meaningful intercultural interaction, and active citizenship and participation. Translated into policy practices, these principles require local authorities to:

- Put in place a framework of rights and responsibilities;
- Prepare all sides to change, communicating a vision of an open city built on common principles;
- Foster belonging and cultural reciprocity (against discrimination): setting-up spaces and opportunities for deep interaction and co-creation between people of different cultural origins and backgrounds, to build trust and realise the creative potential of diversity;
- Acknowledge hybrid identities: embracing cultural pluralism and the complexity of identities through leadership discourse and symbolic actions;
- Promote power-sharing: involving people of diverse origins in decision-making in urban institutions, be they political, educational, social, economic or cultural;
- Empower the places where cultures meet and hybridise, breaking up administrative and urban silos;
- Foster intercultural competence in public, private and civil-society organisations;
- Anticipate, expect and manage conflicts: managing conflict positively, busting stereotypes and engaging in a debate about the impact and potential of diversity and inclusion for local development.

Through the Intercultural Cities programme, cities have proven that diversity can be managed as a resource, amplifying the social and economic benefits of heterogeneous communities and minimising

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<sup>1</sup> See also ECRI revised General Policy [Recommendation No.13 on Combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma](#) - adopted on 24 June 2011 and amended on 1 December 2020.

its potential negative effects. Despite the enormous complexity of diverse communities and the potential conflicts involved, cities can manage diversity and benefit hugely from what migrants and minorities can offer to the community. To do this, they need to review a range of institutions, services and policies, and create the appropriate governance structures and mechanisms to remove obstacles as well as enhance the integration of migrants and minorities and their contribution to the development of the city.