



**RPCI (PORTUGUESE INTERCULTURAL CITIES NETWORK)  
ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2017**

**I**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network (RPCI) was created in 2012 and currently involves 12 municipalities: Albufeira, Amadora, Beja, Braga, Cascais, Coimbra, Lisboa, Loures, Portimão, Santa Maria da Feira, Setúbal and Viseu. During 2017, the RPCI organized (or was involved in the organization of) a coordination meeting (June – Albufeira), three expert visits (to Braga in January, Cascais in March, and Viseu in May). Three municipalities (Albufeira, Cascais and Viseu), have successfully delivered the ICC index survey, and results are already at their disposal. Finally, it is also worth mentioning that some of the member cities have been actively involved in various ICC initiatives, and shared good practices through the newsletter and the official website of the programme.

During 2017, the RPCI reduced the number of joint activities, as already foreseen in 2016. The network is now set-up and stabilised, and cities do not need anymore to hold two or more coordination meetings per year. Still, attention should be paid at keeping high the level of commitment and encouraging the active participation of all members. Also, the city of Lisbon should ensure regular communication with the other members as it is the only city that is also part of the International Intercultural Cities Network. It is therefore its duty to share with national cities the knowledge and expertise gathered through its international membership.

Finally, work should focus in future on improving and strengthening RPCI global impact on the transformation of Portuguese society towards the valorisation of interculturality and diversity.

**II**

**ACTIVITIES**

**9<sup>th</sup> RPCI coordination meeting**

The 9<sup>th</sup> RPCI meeting took place in Albufeira, on 8 June. Three main topics of relevance for the RPCI were raised: i) the intercultural cities index review for RPCI cities; ii) the STEPS project on participatory heritage-based action plans for community cohesion; iii) and the Inclusive integration policy lab. The host city of Albufeira further presented its own intercultural policies and vision. Although Albufeira

joined only recently the RPCI, it has an interesting set of activities related to ethnic minorities, diversity and integration taking place on a regular basis, and it has reiterated its commitment to the network's agenda. Moreover, it should also be underlined that, similarly to other members, Albufeira has also to deal with a series of issues directly related to *Roma* communities, a cross-cutting issue for most RPCI members. In future, RPCI could organise an event on intercultural inclusion of Roma people so to enable member cities to discuss the strategies implemented and share challenges and possible solutions.

On the ICC Index, the discussion aimed at exploring its utility, the challenges related to fulfilling the ICC index questionnaire, and the importance of the whole index process to alter the internal arrangement of municipalities thus facilitating interdepartmental communication, change discourses and make contacts and cooperation more friendly towards the intercultural narrative, and to pursue a constant effort to have updated information fully available to the public.

Besides, the STEPS project – in which the city of Lisbon is involved - was briefly presented to provide inspiration regarding future projects that are designed and implemented by/with RPCI members.

Finally, regarding the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab, this meeting was useful to initiate a debate that is a priority for the near future of the network. Although a more nuanced and careful discussion needs to take place soon, it was already possible to identify some common denominators, regarding main themes to address, stakeholders to invite and the privileged format of the lab. In this respect, RPCI agreed that the main themes for a multi-level dialogue on inclusive integration in the country should be 1) access to nationality and residence rights, 2) access to employment and formal recognition of qualifications, 3) access to language training. Some cities also considered a 4th priority, i.e. social, civic and cultural rights as the basis for political participation processes.

Key stakeholders to be involved would be the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, Parliament representatives, the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF), the High Commissioner for Migrations (ACM), the Ministry of Education, Local Authorities and Universities.

Two proposals are still pending regarding the methodology:

- 1) The policy lab should take the form of a regular working meeting, or a task force focused on addressing the aforementioned themes;
- 2) The policy lab should be materialised in the form of thematic seminars involving community members, municipal workers, decision-makers and scholars.

### **First expert visit to Braga**

The first expert visit to Braga, carried out on 17-18 January, counted with the presence of a Council of Europe representative and an independent expert. The morning of the first day was mainly used to discuss index results with the experts and the various stakeholders attending the meeting. Participants also had the chance to engage in a collective reflection focused on a number of questions raised by Robin Wilson, independent expert, in order to provide privileged insights for the intercultural profile report he had to produce. Issues such as the kind of relationships that exist between the municipality and stakeholders in the field of interculturality and diversity, the type, scope and duration of local projects currently being implemented, as well as the way the municipality organizes itself to face the challenges brought by expressions of diversity in its territory, were addressed in this debate. During the afternoon, the team carried out visits to basic schools with migrant oriented projects, to a deprived neighbourhood in which the Roma community is over-represented, as well as to a local radio station. During the morning of the second day, the ICC team met the Mayor of Braga and the local team, as well as the main actors responsible for communication and media in the municipality. Overall, this expert visit provided sound empirical evidences of the various initiatives taking place in Braga, and a more context-sensitive understanding of how the municipality organizes itself, in articulation with multiple and highly diversified stakeholders.

### **First expert visit to Cascais**

The first expert visit to Cascais took place on 21-22 March. The morning of the first day was used to present and discuss the results of the index with the Cascais' Platform for Integration and Multiculturality (i.e. an assemblage of the most significant stakeholders operating in the field of migration and cultural diversity). Moreover, there was still time to organize an open discussion, revolving around a number of issues that were raised by Phil Wood, independent consultant for this visit, such as the importance of the national framework to understand how local policies are devised and implemented, the specific socio-economic profile of Cascais migrant communities, and their relationship with the city council. The Council of Europe's representative further presented the Inclusive integration Policy Lab, an initiative of the ICC to launch a platform for dialogue among all level of governance in the field of migrant integration. During the afternoon several field-trips were organised: to a locally managed community garden inscribed in a context in which ethnic minorities are over-represented; and to the Cascais Urban Art Route, an initiative of public art located in one of the most stigmatized neighbourhoods of Cascais. Both cases illustrated well the kind of projects currently being implemented by the municipality, and how they seek to involve communities in a shared process of co-development. The morning of the next day, was mainly used to have a

structured discussion with municipal workers and politicians, to further explain some of the issues that were addressed the day before. This expert visit provided an overview of the work developed in Cascais, and also the diversity of departments collaborating in the field of intercultural integration and cultural diversity. As a result, the intercultural profile of the city was drawn up, and the Index report was published, including a set of specific recommendations.

### **First expert visit to Viseu**

The first expert visit to Viseu took place on 23-24 May. The whole first day was used to discuss index results, and to display several undergoing projects in the field of education, in different school environments. As it often happens in the RPCI, the specific needs of Roma communities seem to play a central role in most of these projects. The anti-rumour campaign implemented in Viseu was also presented. Furthermore, during the morning period, there was also a debate structured around a couple of issues pointed out by Anne Bathily, independent expert for this visit, such as the way the municipality relates itself with stakeholders other than those coming from the field of education and training, the way migrant communities are formally organized in associations operating at the local scale, and the type of policies that are currently being implemented, targeting migrant groups and ethnic minorities. In the second day, there were field-trips to schools (basic and secondary education), to better grasp the integration work, focused on culture and arts, that is under development in those specific environments. Although enlightening, anchored on a solid political support and backed up by very interesting experiences, the visit to Viseu was narrow in scope, and it would have been beneficial, both for the experts as well as for the municipality, to provide a broader framework of analysis and a more diverse set of cases. **In the future, RPCI members should take this recommendation into account, and the coordinator should adopt a more proactive role in the elaboration of expert visit programmes, in order to improve their adequacy to the elaboration of intercultural profile reports.**

## **III**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

- i) *Organise a continuous exchange – via electronic means as well as bilateral and multilateral meetings - between member cities to share good practice and develop a strategic approach to common challenges based on joint policy solutions and actions.* Overall, the level of achievement is positive. However, in the future, additional efforts should be made to promote a more intense, regular and fruitful exchange between RPCI

members, according to their own specific interests and agendas. The role of the coordinator as facilitator of these exchanges is crucial.

- ii) *Facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of a strategic plan of actions for the network, connected to the strategic plan of the International Network of Intercultural Cities.* For 2017, no strategic plan was drawn due to the fact that the main priorities for the RPCI were clearly defined: to have most cities with updated indexes, followed by expert visits and concomitant intercultural profile reports. In this sense, the level of achievement is positive. For 2018, a strategic plan of actions should be devised, in conjunction with all RPCI members, giving priority to the development of the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab, as well as to activities related to Roma minority, a topic that progressively became more visible and seems to be pivotal for the future;
- iii) *Offer methodological support to the member cities in carrying out specific activities, in line with the ICC paradigm (e.g. completion of the ICC index, development and implementation of intercultural strategies, etc.), in cooperation with the other ICC experts and member cities.* The Coordinators should continue providing methodological, conceptual and procedural support to the RPCI;
- iv) *Ensure effective sharing of information within the national network (via a web site, a newsletter, social media, various reports and other relevant means) and facilitate the necessary interactions between the members of the national network and the International.* It seems necessary to expand further the instruments of communication within the RPCI, and between the RPCI and international ICC network members. The network needs to put in place effective communication tools, within the network and outside it, and increase its visibility through social media. The experience of the Spanish network in this sense could be a source of inspiration. Additionally, an effort should be made to establish solid linkages between the national networks of the southern Mediterranean basin, namely from Portugal, Spain and Morocco, as they share several historical, cultural and economic characteristics;
- v) *Building relationships, connecting members, forwarding relevant information and documents coming from the Council of Europe, providing summaries in the official language(s) of the country and encouraging cities to attend international events.* This is something that has to be considered as a priority, and additional efforts should be made by the new coordinator to ensure the translation into Portuguese of all relevant documents, index surveys and intercultural profile reports in particular;

- vi) *Facilitate the development of specific projects involving member cities, and fundraising.* In this regard, the RPCI should structure its 2018 agenda around the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab.
- vii) *Liaise with relevant national authorities, NGOs, media, universities etc. in order to promote the ICC concept and the network's goals and achievements.* The last meeting bringing all stakeholders together took place in 2016. Hence, much work needs to be made in this sense if the RPCI wants to increase its global impact in the Portuguese society;
- viii) *Encourage and actively promote the joining of additional cities.* Until now, the strategy of enlargement of the RPCI has relied entirely on the work of the members hosting regular meetings. They have been responsible for inviting other municipalities within their regional context to attend these meeting as observers. The level of success has varied a lot, depending on the networking skills of each local team. In the future, all members should be made responsible for inviting other municipalities to attend RPCI meetings. Although geographical proximity may facilitate institutional relationships, this should not be seen as a universal rule. In addition to this, an effort should be made to clarify the level of commitment and engagement of the less active members. Eventually, face-to-face meetings with deputy mayors directly responsible for the RPCI in each one of those municipalities may help to overcome this situation;

#### IV

#### 2015-2017: GLOBAL EVALUATION

RPCI proved its relevance for the promotion of local development, inclusion and justice in the member cities. The network was able to: i) put forward several interesting and consistent initiatives, raise awareness to interculturality as a concept and an agenda that needs to be embraced at the local scale, in order to further improve the quality of public policies, strategies and other types of political interventions implemented by local authorities in conjunction with different stakeholders; ii) promote the diversity advantage concept, particularly regarding the need to acknowledge its non-cultural elements, and the potential that diversity has to foster socio-economic development at the local scale.

Since June 2015, the network increased the number of members from 8 to 12, which is a success per se. However, more efforts have to be devoted to keeping high the level of commitment and

involvement of all member cities. Regarding the Index, half of the RPCI members (6 out of 12) have now updated indexes, in addition to three other that have filled in the Index questionnaire for the second time. Over the past two years, half of the members have hosted expert visits, four of them between 2016 and 2017. Besides, some RPCI members have been actively involved in initiatives promoted by the ICC international network (e.g. Lisbon in STEPS project; Cascais in StoryCities; Santa Maria da Feira in the Diversity Connectors) and three RPCI members submitted successful applications to an extraordinary funding scheme made available by the ICC to develop anti-rumour campaigns (Amadora, Viseu and Santa Maria da Feira) to develop a series of initiatives within the anti-rumour framework, involving several stakeholders challenging prejudice and struggling against rumours targeting racial and ethnic minorities. Moreover, RPCI members have shared good practices with other member cities of ICC networks, either at the national or international scale, and have replied positively every time they were called to actively participate.

Although in 2017 there were no thematic workshops, this model was successfully introduced in 2016, providing members with the necessary time to address issues related to interculturality and diversity, discuss ideas with other RPCI members, and foster inter-municipal relationships.

Besides, over the past two years RPCI website was regularly updated, and various documents were uploaded and made available to the public.