



## Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network (RPCI) meeting on Gender and interculturality practice exchange

**Date:** 27/04/2022

**Attendance:** Loures, Braga, Albufeira, Vila Verde, Famalicão, Paranhos, Lisbon, RPCI.

### Agenda:

1. General information
2. Gender and Interculturality Project
3. City practice exchange

### 1. General information

#### 1.1. New Members

RPCI welcomed its newest member, the city of Vila Nova de Famalicão. At the present time, the network comprises 15 cities. Additionally, the Parish of Paranhos (Porto) was invited to this meeting as a guest. The Parish is currently undergoing the process of joining the network.

#### 1.2. NET IDEA Project

The Net Idea project will be launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2022. Its goal is to create and test intercultural competence training. Each of the participating cities will also carry out a project with local organisations, develop a joint communication campaign, refer young people from all partner countries to the Anti-Rumours Youth Summit (Poland - 2023), and participate in good practice sharing initiatives with other cities. Coordinated by the [Italian Network \(ICEI\)](#), its partners are the [Spanish Network \(RECI\)](#), the Swedish Network, as well as the cities of [Erlangen \(Germany\)](#) and [Lublin \(Poland\)](#). The project is financed by the European Commission (Network of Towns) and will last two years. The partner cities of this project in Portugal are Braga, Santa Maria da Feira, and Vila Verde. The city of Vila Nova de Famalicão also expressed interest in participating. Although the budget does not allow all cities to participate in all the phases of the project, in some areas, particularly training, RPCI will try to invite all member cities of the network to participate. On May 17, a kick-off meeting will take place with all partners. Another consecutive meeting will then be organised with the three Portuguese cities participating in the project.

#### 1.3. Inter-city projects

##### - "Welcome Ukrainians"

This project will be carried out thanks to an inter-city grant awarded by the ICC programme, building on an initiative of Vila Verde, Santa Maria da Feira, and Vila Nova

de Famalicão. It aims to develop tools for the integration of refugees, in particular Ukrainian people. For this purpose, it is intended to organise a meeting with a view of sharing good practices; to create or develop three local welcoming guides; translate the inclusive recruitment guide produced by the network in 2021 into Ukrainian; and to develop a good practice manual.

- **"Employability networks"**

The project was also presented in the frame of the application to the inter-city grant scheme and was initiated by Lisbon and Loures. The project aims to promote the sharing of practices regarding the methodology for "employability networks"; to increase cities' skills to support inclusion in the labour market; and to raise awareness among employers on this issue. To this end, it is intended, to develop a guide with good practices, promote initiatives of practice sharing, and deliver training on supported employment methodologies.

#### **1.4. Podcast**

The cities were reminded of the podcast "Portugal Plural", developed by RPCI. The first episode introduces the RPCI cooperative. The second episode addresses recruitment and hiring of people of migrant origins and includes an interview of representatives from the legal department of the High Commission of Migrations. The third episode discusses organisations supporting Ukrainian refugees in Portugal. The next episodes will focus on interculturality and gender issues. The RPCI channel is called "[Portugal Plural](#)" and can be found on Spotify.

#### **1.5. ICC seminars and events**

The cities were informed of upcoming seminars and events promoted by the ICC Programme:

- Webinar on "Identifying and preventing systemic discrimination: the importance of data and evidence" (May 23)
- International Refugee Day Campaign (June 20)
- Webinar on Intercultural Competence (7 July)
- Seminar on Sustainable intercultural cities (September, date to be confirmed)
- International Migrant Day Campaign (December 18)

Cities were reminded that every year the ICC Programme promotes two campaigns for which cities have been invited to contribute and to share information within their networks: the International Refugee Day Campaign (June 20) and the International Migrants Day Campaign (December 18).

Dedicated introductory meetings with the new cities and/or their new representatives will soon be organised.



Image 1: Meeting photo

## 2. Gender and interculturality project

The "Gender and Interculturality" project encompasses all cities of the national network. The project aims to promote intersectionality by integrating gender-based cross-cutting issues into the intercultural plans and strategies of the cities. The following activities have been planned in frame of the project:

- A RPCI meeting to share policies and practices (held today);
- A guide with good practices (in Portuguese and in English);
- 3 webinars and 3 podcasts.

The member cities had the possibility to choose the themes of the three webinars and to appoint experts to participate in them. The idea is that each webinar has at least one expert and one city to share good practices. In this regard:

- **Loures** has been working mostly with Roma communities. The city underlined the importance of communication - information transformed into communication is the cornerstone of everything. Loures also suggested that the health area be crossed with Roma communities and the issues concerning women's health be raised. The importance of access to education and the development of inclusive educational practices has been stressed by the city.
- **Vila Verde** also communicated on the projects it has been developing with Roma communities. The city emphasised the necessity to work with men for them to understand and promote women's rights, with a view of tackling gender issues and empowering women. The city promotes "The voice is your weapon", a meeting with Roma women, on a regular basis. It has been understood that many issues need to be addressed and many prejudices must be dismantled in order to empower Roma women. The dream of many women in the local Roma community is to obtain a driving

license. The city also mentioned that there were some barriers to COVID-19 vaccination in Roma communities in the territory.

- **Albufeira** reported that several training sessions with a nurse from the High Commission for Migrations were promoted. The city mentioned as well that the health area may be an important theme for one webinar.
- **Lisbon** informed that the city was developing a pilot project "Menarche goes to school" aiming to raise awareness on education, and particularly on the issue of school attendance by girls in pre-adolescence from the Roma community. A session with the girls' mothers is planned to be organised in frame of the project.

After the debate, the following **themes for the webinars** were chosen: communication, health and education.

It was proposed that the webinars have a maximum duration of 3 hours and be held in the afternoon on May 30, June 27, and September 26.

Cities were asked to name people who may be invited to take part in the webinars. Several names were suggested and **Loures** mentioned the importance to involve people from the Roma community as participants of the webinars.

A meeting with the team of cities willing to participate in the coordination of the project was scheduled for the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, at 14:30. These two to three cities will partake in monthly meetings with the project team to support it and participate in the decision-making process. So far Vila Verde and Oeiras have shown interest in participating.

### 3. City practices

The sharing of practices was carried out by Vila Verde and Loures.



Image 1: Photo of the reunion: sharing Loures practices

## **Vila Verde**

The city shared a project under the 'Choices' programme with the Roma community. The project is linked to a school with several Roma children and young people. The project has worked on the issue of education and inclusion. On Tuesdays, an activity named "The voice is your weapon" is organised with Roma women: through dialogue, the city seeks to understand their difficulties, interests, and skills. The city has found that many of these women have very low self-esteem and that this aspect needs to be worked on.

The project has revealed the need to work with Roma men as well, with the aim for them to be more engaged in the education of their children. Many women mention not valuing education since, according to them, their children will not be able to find work in the labour market, being conditioned to work at the street markets like their parents.

All the children involved in this project attend school and their mothers are participating in training. A nurse supports the project once a week.

The project has also worked on employment issues, with some men in the Roma community already integrated into the labour market. The first woman from the Roma community of Vila Verde who obtained her driving license is currently preparing to enter higher education.

In conclusion, the project focuses the following problematics: education, health, empowerment and integration in the labour market. It is supported by several partners, notably the Red Cross and a local school.

Having the perception that being in school is not the same as being included, the city decided to carry out a joint activity with Roma children and a group of scouts. The activity is still being developed. The idea is to launch a survey for both groups to understand how they see each other, what perception they have of themselves, and how they think others perceive them. Later it will be possible to confront each group with what has been said and work on raising awareness of rumours and false mutual beliefs.

## **Loures**

The city presented the work that has been developing in the field of gender and interculturality and began by drawing attention to a mural in Quinta do Mocho: the gender of the two represented figures is unidentified, both have different skin tones. Next to the mural, the following phrase is written: "Union is strength".

Loures is the fifth municipality with the largest segment of foreign population in Portugal. Out of the 19,649 people of migrant origins residing in Loures, the largest group came from Brazil (19%); followed by Cape Verde (11%), São Tomé and Príncipe (10%), Angola (9%), Guinea-Bissau (9%), Romania (5%). This reality could be altered soon because of the recent reception of Ukrainian refugees. Loures asserts itself as a diverse territory in geographical and human terms, mixing rural and urban contexts on



the same territory. Loures' vision for interculturality is based on promoting equal opportunities, conciliation, knowledge and information:

- A Migrant Support Office (GAIM) was established in 2017.
- The Municipal Plan for the Integration of Migrants 2020-2022 (PMIM) promotes Portuguese language classes for people of migrant origins, and the city provides babysitting services for women to attend language classes.
- The GAP/Urban Art Project uses art to combat the stigmas associated with the neighbourhood of Quinta da Fonte and thus promote inclusion. The same project was replicated in Quinta do Mocho. Many women participated in the paintings of walls. Every month there are open guided tours in these neighbourhoods, in which the guide highlights the paintings made by women.
- Young 360° is a youth project that promotes sessions in the field of interculturality.
- The city takes a clear position against acts of racism, xenophobia and homophobia in demonstrations (e.g., raising the LGBTQIA+ flag on LGBT Pride Day).
- The balance of gender was a recent internal achievement, in the field of human resources of the municipality, which has already achieved equity concerning leadership positions.

The city also highlighted the existence of an agreement with the Roma association Techari and the AMPLOS association. With the Techari association, there are three axes of action: culture and interculturality, education (placing mediators in schools) and housing. A photography exhibition 'Nomads' has been held under the agreement. On the inauguration day of the exhibition, a dance group of Roma girls gave a performance. The association is mostly composed of men, which is not very common in the associative field. The agreement approved a common strategy to ensure girls attend school, an issue the president of the association was very interested in.

Finally, Loures intends to move forward on this matter. The city wants to rely on scientific evidence, also contributing to the creation of new knowledge. This applies to the different strategic plans: interculturality; Roma; disabilities; LGBTQIA+ and religion. The idea is to apply the strategic plans in the different contexts and phases of citizens' spheres of life (school; work; family; community; fun and leisure).

Carla Calado, the RPCI coordinator, shared her experience at a school attended by many Roma children. The school was concerned about the fact that girls from the Roma community stopped attending school in 5th grade (it implied going to a new school, further away from home and together with 9th-graders). To resolve this situation, the school considered it was best to choose the path of dialogue with the community to understand the reasons and origins of the issue. They realised that there was a great concern in the community for the safety and sexuality of the girls and that the community feared that they would be misled by older 9th grader boys. It gave the school a better understanding that the safety of the girls was the epicentre of the issue, not their education. The solution found was to create special classes designed just for girls, with a female teacher. The mothers of these girls even began to attend classes with their daughters, carrying notebooks and pens (since they themselves had not had the chance to attend school). They realised from experience that by ensuring that the

children were in school until a later age, they also married later. Currently, several years later, trust has been gained and there are no longer separate classes needed.

Regarding the issue of education and interculturality, Danielle Menezes suggested the work of the Quimlobolas de Conceiçãos Crioulas Association in Brazil, which has developed an important and relevant experience on the Creole pedagogy.

As a wrap-up, Carla Calado mentioned the need to address the issue of history that is taught at schools, which excludes the perspectives of racialized and colonized communities.