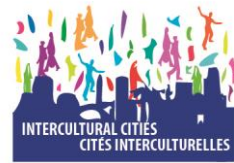




INTERCULTURAL CITIES
BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING WALLS



Intercultural Cities (ICC) Advisory Group

First meeting

4-5 July 2023 – Strasbourg, France

Summary report and follow up actions

Introduction to the purpose of the meeting and expectations sharing

The objective of the meeting was for the ICC Advisory Group to start providing strategic guidance to the ICC Unit regarding the ICC programme implementation and functioning, including needs assessment, thematic priorities, review of tools and services, institutional communication and representation of the ICC network. It was also the occasion for members to meet in person for the first time, share their expectations, and agree on working methods.

Each member of the ICC Advisory Group shared its expectations for this mandate. It was highlighted that this is a two-way contribution between the ICC programme and member cities/networks.

Presentation of the findings of the evaluation report and main recommendations

The ICC Unit has commissioned an external evaluation covering the period from 2016 to mid-2022. This was primarily a formative evaluation with an emphasis on identifying areas for enhancement and fine-tuning of the programme, rather than an assessment of achievements and successes. The evaluators included a total of 19 strategic and operational recommendations in their [evaluation report](#). In May 2023, the ICC Unit published a [management response and action plan](#) explaining how these recommendations will be tackled. These documents constitute the basis for the work of the Advisory Group.

The ICC Secretariat presented the recommendations and whether they were “accepted” or “under consideration” and the Advisory Group had a first, general, exchange on the evaluation. The Group highlighted that the needs and constraints of the ICC programme should be made clearer to members for them to support the programme and to manage expectations.

The following elements were mentioned as cities’ needs that the programme could fulfil:

- policy recommendations,
- capacity building activities,
- a network to be part of,
- political support, including support from the Council of Europe as an international organisation.

It is not necessary for all stakeholders in a city to know the programme (e.g. citizens might not need to know their city is part of ICC) but there needs to be a general understanding of interculturalism and why this model of inclusion is needed. It is also important to use a vocabulary that everybody understands.

The members of this Advisory Group could become ambassadors of these positive messages and inspire others. For this, there needs to be continuity in cities, in terms of knowledge of the ICC programme among staff. Coordinators might need to “share their role” with other colleagues.

Finally, the Advisory Group suggested that the programme focusses on quality rather than quantity of members. Growth of the network should not be the main objective.

Identification of priorities

Keeping in mind the objectives of the Advisory Group, members discussed the recommendations of the evaluators. (Due to time limitations, certain topics/objectives were postponed to the 2nd meeting (13 November 2023, back-to-back with the ICC coordinators annual meeting)).

- **Objective 1 – Guide the strategic and operational framework of the ICC programme and provide a shared (Council of Europe Secretariat – member cities) governance to it.**

The Advisory Group discussed more in depth the possibility for cities to designate a group of people, rather than a single person, to ensure the coordination of ICC related activities. While the idea was deemed relevant per se, members of the Group highlighted that it might be difficult for cities to appoint and train multiple people. The possibility to make use of existing internal interdepartmental units/meetings/structures, or to set up new ones, to talk about interculturalism transversally was raised. It is left up to cities to choose the option that suits them the most.

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed actions	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Update the ICC coordinators mission description with a set of suggestions to coordinate ICC related activities as a group. E.g. setting up intercultural working groups; appoint liaison officers in each department; ensure interculturalism is spread transversally by making use of existing inter-departmental units/ meeting /structures.	September 2023	ICC Secretariat
The ICC coordinators mission description could also be added as an Appendix to the Statement of Intent (Sol) that cities sign when joining the programme (or periodically depending on the type of agreement). This is expected to give more legitimacy to the coordinator/coordinating group.	Possibility to be assessed by next meeting (13 November 2023)	ICC Secretariat

- **Objective 2 – Assess needs with the view to prioritising services and tools to be offered to ICC members.**

One of the recommendations stemming from the evaluation was to develop indicators to measure progress in diversity management and interculturalism. The Advisory Group discussed the challenges of scientifically measuring the impact and benefits of interculturalism, especially as a lot of elements are interrelated. The cities of Bradford (United Kingdom) and Stavanger (Norway) shared that they both had launched surveys among their populations. They would share the questionnaires they had developed with the ICC Secretariat, as they could be used to inspire other cities.

The risk of measuring cohesion was also mentioned. For example, if one year the data collected shows a decline, it may result in less funding for related activities. City officials do not always know how to tackle questions on data evolution, especially if it is not positive. To support cities, the Advisory Group suggested to develop a set of questions and possible answers to be used as a guidance document for members of the programme.

Finally, it was agreed that examples of changes brought about by the ICC programme should also be shared with member cities to collect experiences and inspire others. This process could start from within the Advisory Group.

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed actions	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Short videos to be recorded and disseminated to share real stories about good practices or changes that took place thanks to knowledge of interculturalism. With the idea to start with the Advisory Group members and motivate others.	End of September 2023	Bradford Stavanger Reykjavik With the support of ICC Secretariat
Collect examples of surveys used by cities to measure the benefits/need of intercultural policies. Bradford and Stavanger to share their questionnaires (already existing).	September 2023	ICC members Bradford Stavanger
Merge the questions received from Bradford and Stavanger, and other member cities if applicable, and prepare a list of inspirational questions that cities can use to carry out their own surveys.	By next meeting (13 November 2023)	ICC Secretariat

Create a webpage with the recorded videos, the list of inspirational questions, and the existing resources on participatory processes.	January 2024	ICC Secretariat
Develop a guide on frequently asked questions and possible replies, collecting the most difficult or unsettling questions asked to city officials by their politicians or by the media to politicians and compile tips for possible replies to defend the intercultural inclusion work and model.	July 2024	ICC Secretariat

The ICC Unit shared that it had been difficult to engage mayors in ICC-led activities. This is both a problem of available time and interest. The Group shared the need for interculturality to be linked to mayors' programmes. Some tools and opportunities offered by the ICC programme should be tailored to the mayors' needs/expectations (they cannot benefit as much if the services were designed for city coordinators for instance).

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed action	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Build one package of services/tools for coordinators and city officials, and one for mayors.	To be taken into account for the planning of 2024	ICC Secretariat

The Advisory Group agreed on the need to keep periodically assessing ICC members' needs. They highlighted that it might be useful to select a limited number of topics of interest on which to work for 2-3 years in a row (as opposed to changing topics more often). The choice of topics should be left to member cities.

Concerning the annual survey, it was shared that it takes a long time to answer because coordinators need to consult other colleagues, who are not always available. The worst-case scenario is that this process takes too long and cities end up not answering at all. The ICC Unit clarified that questions on priorities for the cities can be answered from the point of view of the coordinator. Members of the Action Group also mentioned that it would be important for cities to receive a copy of their answers to the questionnaire for their internal records.

In addition, Advisory Group members also raised the need to continue organising regular exchanges in person. For example, study visits rank highly in the preference of ICC members (according to the annual surveys) and they should be maintained as they cannot be held online.

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed actions	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Collect ICC members' needs: poll to be launched to all cities: propose 2-3 open topics on which to work for the next two years.	September 2023	ICC Secretariat
The ICC Secretariat will compile the results and share them with the Advisory Group. Then present them at the ICC coordinators annual meeting.	November 2023	ICC Secretariat
The ICC Secretariat will revise/rephrase the questions of the annual survey (include that answers can be based on the coordinators perception) and share them with the Advisory Group for revision prior to the meeting in November. Then present it at the ICC coordinators meeting.	Mid-October 2023	ICC Secretariat
	13 November 2023	ICC Secretariat
The ICC Secretariat will start sharing copies of surveys' answers with cities that fill them in. this is in order to build an institutional memory inside local administrations on answers given.	Starting in January 2024 with the annual survey	ICC Secretariat
Increase opportunities for in person meetings, starting with study visits.	Ongoing – to be taken into account in ICC calendar planning	ICC Secretariat
One could take place in the city of Bradford (tbc) and bring together ICC members and ADI-INT members.	Spring 2024 (tentative, availability of the city of Bradford to be confirmed)	Bradford and ICC Secretariat

- **Objective 3 – Ensure that the communication around the ICC programme, including its tools and services, is consistent, easy to access and clear, so to increase the programme's visibility, uptake, and utility.**

In its management response to the evaluation, the ICC Unit has accepted to restructure its website in order to better communicate on the ICC programme and ensure that resources are available to different audiences. It was clarified that the ICC Unit does not have a team member solely dedicated to the website or even to communication, and therefore resources are limited. Advisory Group members were asked to provide feedback on how they use the website, e.g. which tabs they use the most, how they find the information and share any issue they might have faced. It was highlighted that resources should not be proposed as a standalone, but as part of a broader initiative, like an event or a study visit. This will ensure they are used.

The issue of transparency in communication was discussed. The Advisory Group felt the restructuring of the website was enough to address the recommendation. A potentially restricted website for members-only was also discussed, but was not deemed necessary.

Finally, clarity around the ICC programme, its tools and services, should be provided to new and old members, as well as to cities planning to join the programme, via welcoming sessions, once a year.

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed actions	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Website: review the configuration of tabs and sub-tabs. Suggestion to merge the good practices, resources and thematics tab.	Website restructuring to be carried out by December 2024, in line with the management response	ICC Secretariat
Follow up is needed on the resources produced – link them to an event or a study visit.	To be taken into account for the planning of 2024	ICC Secretariat
Advisory Group members to provide feedback on how they use the website.	Mid-September 2023	Members of the Advisory Group
Organise a welcome session once a year for cities joining or planning to join the programme, e.g. how it works, membership fees, functioning of index visits.	Starting in 2024 and repeating every year	ICC Secretariat

- **Objective 4 – Identify areas in which additional capacity building is needed and - where appropriate – explore ways to secure additional funding to the programme**

The Advisory Group discussed possible areas in which additional capacity building is needed by ICC members and that the programme could provide. The discussion focussed particularly on support to be provided before the indexing process (to get started) and after (to implement recommendations). It was agreed that the best way to approach this is asking member cities directly through the annual survey.

The idea to train experts to support cities in “all things index” and not the cities directly was also mentioned. The support could also be provided by geographical scope. As the Spanish network of Intercultural Cities (RECI) is currently working on a model to draft strategies at the local level they offered to share it with the group to trigger further reflection.

One of the recommendations of the evaluation was to train ICC city coordinators not only on ICC concepts and procedures, but also on other topics, e.g. on how to engage key actors in the city to institutionalise ICC concepts. The Advisory Group deemed the idea of providing ICC city coordinators with capacity building beyond the understanding ICC procedures outside the scope of the programme. This was considered to be rather under the cities’ scope of work. This recommendation, the way it is formulated, was not considered a priority.

Agreed follow up actions:

Agreed actions	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Include questions in the annual survey to know if member cities need: 1) support before starting the index; 2) support after the index process to draft strategies; 3) intercultural competences training.	Propose questions to the Advisory Group by mid-October 2023; to be discussed at next Advisory Group meeting in November	ICC Secretariat
Consider providing a template to design strategy in the city – i.e. a model strategy (the step by step guide and model framework should be used when designing the template).	The ICC Spanish network - RECI - is currently working on this and will share its work by the next meeting (13 November 2023)	ICC Spanish network

- **Objective 6 – Ensure member cities’ participation in institutional communication by drafting, agreeing and issuing communications on behalf of the ICC network and/or by addressing public events in the name of the network.**

Objective number 6 was not part of the recommendations stemming from the evaluation, but was added by the ICC Unit to manage institutional communication around the programme and create a sense of belonging. The ICC Secretariat explained that it cannot issue statements on behalf of cities, so it was proposed that the Advisory Group communicates on behalf of the network for specific occasions e.g. International Migrants Day. The ICC Unit would support the group in drafting messages and would publish them.

A majority of Advisory Group members said that they would need more clarity on the task itself and on the type of messages they would be asked to endorse/sign. It was also stressed that they should not be asked to support any political message. The ICC Secretariat offered to test the model, flagging to the Advisory Group possible messages they might be asked to endorse/sign, until its next meeting in November 2023.

Agreed follow up action:

Agreed action	Timeframe for implementation	Responsible body
Pilot the idea until the 2nd Advisory Group meeting in November 2023. When an opportunity for institutional communication arises, the ICC Secretariat will send it to the Advisory Group to show which type of messages they would be asked to endorse/sign.	Ongoing	ICC Secretariat and Advisory Group

Working methods

The following points were agreed upon for future work of the Group:

- Rules of procedure were not considered necessary for the time being;
- The ICC Secretariat will continue chairing Advisory Group meetings;
- Communications will be shared by email in between meetings. If needed, an online gathering can be organised in between the two yearly meetings (as per the Advisory Group's ToR).

AOB

The RECI coordinator stressed the need to exchange on how to best approach and continue working with cities that are currently led by far-right parties. The Advisory Group agreed that the point should be added to the ICC coordinators meeting agenda to discuss with the rest of the coordinators as it is a matter that can be relevant for other member cities.

The ICC Secretariat offered to present the content of the Statement of Intent (Sol) that cities sign when joining the ICC programme at the ICC coordinators annual meeting. This would allow to discuss if further instructions or specifications were needed in the Sol. In addition, there might be a need to discuss the particular situation of cities members of national networks.

APPENDIX I. AGENDA OF THE MEETING

Intercultural Cities Advisory Group

First meeting

4-5 July 2023 – Strasbourg, France

Agenda

4 July – All day

Chair: Ivana D'Alessandro

9:30 – 9:50

Welcoming words and objectives of the Advisory Group

Ivana d'Alessandro, Head of the ICC Unit

9:50-10:30

Sharing expectations

Members will share their expectations for the group, the challenges they see in their respective roles and what they hope to achieve during the present mandate.

10.30 – 11.00

Presentation of the findings of the Evaluation report and main recommendations

Summary of background documents

- [Evaluation of the Intercultural Cities programme's services and tools](#)
- [Management Response and Action plan](#)

Open discussion

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 17.00 (Lunch break: 12:30 – 14:00)

Identifying priorities

The Group will discuss the main recommendations relevant to the fulfilment of its terms of reference, review its objectives one by one, and agree on issues and areas to be addressed as a priority and how.

Objectives of the Advisory Group:

1. Guide the strategic and operational framework of the ICC programme, and provide a shared (Council of Europe Secretariat – member cities) governance to it;
2. Assess needs with the view to prioritise services and tools to be offered to ICC members;
3. Ensure the communication around ICC programme, including its tools and services, is consistent, easy to access and clear, so to increase the programme's visibility, uptake, and utility;
4. Identify areas on which additional capacity building is needed and - where appropriate – explore ways to secure additional funding to the programme;
5. Facilitate a more systematic follow-up with member cities to highlight progress in the implementation of intercultural strategies and promote positive changes influenced by the ICC programme;
6. Ensure member cities' participation in institutional communication by drafting, agreeing and issuing communications on behalf of the ICC network and/or by addressing public events in the name of the network.

5 July – Morning

Chair: Giulia Bianchini

9.30 – 10.15

Recap of Day 1 and finalisation of discussions

The Group will finalise any discussion left pending from Day 1.

10.15 – 11.00

Working methods

The Group is called to agree on working methods, including representation of the Advisory Group in external communication.

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break

11:30 – 12:00 Next steps

- Follow up actions
- Work programme for next meeting
- Closing words by Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of Division, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination programmes

APPENDIX II. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Advisory Group members:

- ❖ Barry Cusack, Project officer, Bradford for everyone, City of Bradford, United Kingdom
- ❖ Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez, Coordinator of RECI - Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities
- ❖ Gregory Jaquet, Delegate for Foreigners, Head of the Multicultural Cohesion Department, Neuchâtel state, Switzerland
- ❖ Ingrid Hauge Rasmussen, Special adviser in diversity and inclusion, City of Stavanger, Norway
- ❖ Joanna Marcinkowska, Project manager, Human Rights and Democracy Office, City of Reykjavik, Iceland
- ❖ Silvia Carballo Paz, Head of department of Gender Equality, Development Cooperation, Cultural Diversity and Human Rights, San Sebastian, Spain
- ❖ Vesna Haracic, Manager, Community Health and Wellbeing, City of Salisbury, Australia

Council of Europe/ICC Secretariat:

- ❖ Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes, Anti-Discrimination Department
- ❖ Ivana D'Alessandro, Head of the Intercultural Cities Unit, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes, Anti-Discrimination Department
- ❖ Giulia Bianchini, Senior Project Officer, Intercultural Cities Unit, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes, Anti-Discrimination Department
- ❖ Aytek Cingitas, Senior Project Officer, Intercultural Cities Unit, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes, Anti-Discrimination Department
- ❖ Catherine Wolf, Project Officer, Intercultural Cities Unit, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination programmes, Anti-Discrimination Department