

Introduction to the intercultural checklists

This practical intercultural checklist aims to help ICC 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 1-5) and addresses only the principle of **valuing diversity**.

This guide contains a brief **description** of what is meant by the term valuing diversity in the context of intercultural integration; a set of **indicators** to help you measure how much you are using them; and, in the online format, 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.

Valuing diversity

How can we value diversity?

Valuing diversity means addressing diversity positively and putting policies and processes in place to maximise its potential. The diversity advantage approach is a way of governing, managing and decision-making, based on the idea that diversity can become a key opportunity and resource for the overall development of society.³ The basic idea is that it is possible to achieve more positive results with diversity than without it, when diversity is managed correctly.

Research has shown that diversity in business⁴, government and other contexts can have great potential in terms of productivity and creativity, conflict resolution and innovation. However, to benefit from this diversity, societies must ensure equal rights and equal opportunities.⁵

ICC member cities have found that the diversity advantage approach has contributed to considerable change at local level. They have observed an improvement in social cohesion, in particular with regard to better neighbourhood relationships, improved openness and tolerance towards migrants and minorities and a decreased intensity of conflicts.⁶

The diversity advantage may be particularly useful in a city's work with the private sector. By highlighting the diversity advantage in business, and partnering with their chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs, cities can influence how diversity is perceived in sectors like shops, clubs, restaurants, industry, technical services, and science.

The diversity advantage approach can also help the city maximise the potential of multilingualism in the city and diaspora links with countries of origin.

For more information, you can read:

- [Identifying and preventing systemic discrimination at the local level](#) (2020)
- [10 criteria for the creation of effective alternative narratives on diversity](#) (2019)
- [Step-By-Step Guide](#) – A guide to intercultural policymaking
- [Language policies for the intercultural city](#) – Policy brief
- [How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities](#) – MPG Assessment report

How can you tell if a policy or project positively addresses diversity and helps maximise its potential?

Indicator 1: Planning for positive impact

The diversity advantage is a way of governing, managing and decision-making. To maximise its benefits a city or team needs to embrace the concept from the beginning of their work on a particular policy

³ [The Reci Challenge 2018-2019](#), Inspirational Initiatives that Reflect the Diversity Challenge, page 2.

⁴ For example, see: [A diverse leadership yields higher earnings](#), ISS and Proacteur, 2016; [Migration Policy Debates](#) © OECD May 2014; The effects economic integration of migrants have on the economy of host countries, Evert-jan Quak, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), 5 April 2019; Migrants' Role in Enhancing the Economic Development of Host Countries: Empirical Evidence from Europe, Gratiela Georgiana Noja, Simona Mirela Cristea, Atila Yüksel, Ciprian Pânzaru and Raluca Mihaela Dracea; World Economic Outlook, April 2020: The Great Lockdown, April 2020; Chapter 4: The Macroeconomic Effects of Global Migration.

⁵ [The Reci Challenge 2018-2019](#), Inspirational Initiatives that Reflect the Diversity Challenge, page 2.

⁶ See [How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities – MPG Assessment report](#) (November 2017) and our webpage on the results and impact of the Intercultural Cities programme.

or practice. We need to ensure that it is part of the team's planning, monitoring and evaluation of a project or policy as well as being an integral part of promoting it.

To embrace the diversity advantage in all stages of planning, you could consider a meeting or training to introduce the concept of diversity advantage to all the stakeholders involved and discussing with them what embedding the diversity advantage would mean for their day-to-day work. They could try and find examples in their areas of work where the diversity advantage has played a role and think what processes and approaches could help promote it in the future. It can also be useful to identify obstacles and ways of overcoming them. A section on the diversity advantage could be included in project descriptions and briefs. There could be monitoring, evaluation and reporting criteria on how the project or action aims to help maximise the diversity advantage and how this has worked in practice for future learning.

Indicator 2: Diversifying decision-making

The diversity advantage applies to the city's team too. This means ensuring there is a diverse team, not just in terms of individuals, skills, or languages, but also in terms of the departments or services they engage with. If there is a department or individual in charge of diversity in your city or district, make sure they are included in the discussions. Do you need to engage a team or department that is less involved on a day-to-day basis in the intercultural work? What about the media or communications team? Think about the different stakeholders it would be useful to have on board and be ambassadors for the diversity advantage in your own city's work. A diverse team in itself is not enough, however. How you give space to diverse voices, empower diverse perspectives, and negotiate final outcomes is also important to ensure that new, unexpected perspectives have a real chance to influence decisions.

This approach should be mirrored in the work with external partners. You want to try to engage a wide range of (relevant) partners. This could include, but is not limited to, intercultural councils, business community, chambers of commerce, umbrella organisations, business incubators, migrant and diaspora organisations, civil society organisations, educational establishments, the media, and religious or faith groups.

Indicator 3: Promoting diverse participation

The target groups or beneficiaries of intercultural cities policies and projects are often the city's residents. When you use the diversity advantage approach you want to harness as many of their skills, talents, and ideas as possible, as well as taking their diverse needs into account when providing services. You can do this through participatory processes for designing, planning, and evaluating your work. You can also check what barriers there may be for residents to participate in or benefit from programmes and seek to minimise these. When people encounter barriers to participation, or otherwise choose intentionally not to participate, they may, passively, withdraw from social and public life or choose, actively, to live outside prevailing social customs and law. An intercultural city actively seeks the participation of all residents in the various decision-making processes that affect life in the city. By doing so, it increases support, and thereby the sustainability of local policies, while at the same significantly reducing the economic costs of social exclusion and instability. Practical ideas for encouraging participation may include using non-verbal communication methods where needed to engage those who have not yet mastered the local language. Cities should also check if procedures are in place to ensure that all team members feel equally welcome to express their views and that they indeed do so, that all views are considered, and that there is a spirit of openness, risk-taking and innovation which help maximise the diversity advantage. Training can also be considered for team leaders managing diverse teams.

Indicator 4: Encouraging others to maximise the diversity advantage

You also want to leverage your influence and knowledge to ensure that external partners adopt techniques that maximise the diversity advantage. Cities can play a role in influencing others to maximise the diversity advantage in many ways including through policies, partnerships, funding, and procurement. For example, diversity advantage criteria could be included in partnership agreements or in criteria for tenders. The diversity advantage may be particularly useful in a city's work with the private sector, where they can interact in partnership to influence a wide variety of sectors in city life. Discussions of the diversity advantage therefore are needed in interactions with the private sector including with business leaders, migrant-owned businesses, chambers of commerce, sector groups, etc. This could be approached through presentations at events, hosting trainings and feedback sessions and through mainstreaming the concept in all city interactions with businesses. Again, it is important to engage a diversity of views and ideas.

Indicator 5: International outlook

The diversity advantage approach can bring your city additional benefits when it engages with and supports diaspora links with countries of origin as well as the potential of other languages that migrants or minorities may speak. A strong relationship with countries of origin of diaspora can help the city understand the geopolitical, cultural, and economic context in which newcomers have been socialised so it can shape its policies of welcome and integration accordingly. It can also support migrants in developing a sense of belonging to their new community, by giving a formal recognition their country of origin and their cultural identity.

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