

REYKJAVIK



ICC INDEX ANALYSIS 2020



Diversity, Equality, Interaction

**BUILDING BRIDGES,
BREAKING WALLS**



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REYKJAVIK
INDEX ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Intercultural Cities is a Council of Europe flagship programme. It seeks to explore the potential of an intercultural approach to integration in communities with culturally diverse populations. The cities participating in the programme are reviewing their governance, policies, discourse and practices from an intercultural point of view.

In the past, this review has taken the form of narrative reports and city profiles—a form which was rich in content and detail. However, narrative reports alone were relatively weak as tools to monitor and communicate progress. Thus, an 'Intercultural City Index' has been designed as a benchmarking tool for the cities taking part in the programme as well as for future participants.

While this report was being written (July 2020) 140 cities embraced the ICC programme and approach, and 103 (including Reykjavik) had analysed their intercultural policies using the Intercultural City Index. The respective reports can be found here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/index-results-per-city>.

Among these cities, 34 cities (including Reykjavik) have 100-200,000 inhabitants and 35 (including Reykjavik) have 10-15% foreign-born residents.

This document presents the results of the Intercultural City Index analysis for Reykjavik in 2020 and provides related intercultural policy conclusions and recommendations.

INTERCULTURAL CITY DEFINITION

The intercultural city has people with different nationality, origin, language or religion/belief. Political leaders and most citizens regard diversity positively, as a resource. The city actively combats discrimination and adapts its governance, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population. The city has a strategy and tools to deal with diversity and cultural conflict and to enhance participation. It encourages greater mixing and interaction between diverse groups in the public spaces.

METHODOLOGY

The Intercultural City Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 86 questions (73 of which are mandatory) grouped in 12 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators have been weighted for relative importance. For each indicator, the participating cities can reach up to 100 points (which are consolidated for the general ICC Index).

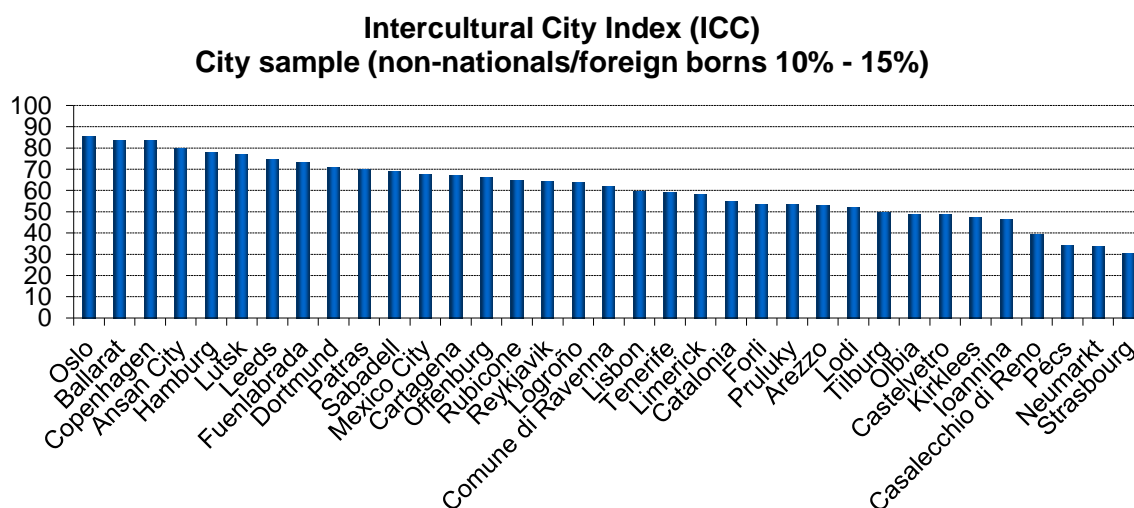
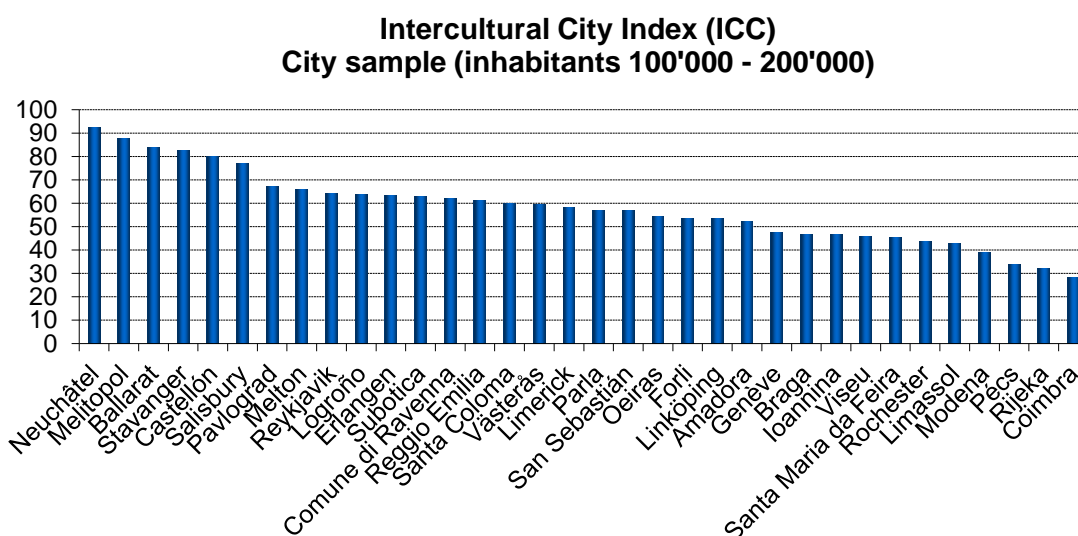
These indicators comprise the following (including the two new indicators in bold):

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Commitment | |
| 2. Intercultural lens | Education |
| 3. Mediation and conflict resolution | Neighbourhoods |
| 4. Language | Public services |
| 5. Media and communication | Business and the labour market |
| 6. International outlook | Cultural and social life |
| 7. Intercultural intelligence and competence | Public space |
| 8. Welcoming newcomers | |
| 9. Leadership and citizenship | |
| 10. Anti-discrimination | |
| 11. Participation | |
| 12. Interaction | |

The comparison between cities is strictly indicative, given the large difference between cities in terms of historical development, type and scale of diversity, governance models and level of economic development. The comparison is based on a set of formal criteria related to the intercultural approach in urban policies and is intended **only as a tool for benchmarking/benchlearning**, to motivate cities to learn from good practice.

Taking into account the above-mentioned differences between the cities and a growing number of new cities willing to join the Intercultural Cities Index, it has been decided to compare the cities not only within the entire sample but also according to specific criteria. Two of these have been singled out: the size (below 100,000 inhabitants, between 100,000 and 200,000, between 200,000 and 500,000 and above 500,000 inhabitants) and the percentage of foreign-born residents (lower than 10 per cent, between 10 and 15 per cent, between 15 and 20 per cent and higher than 20 per cent). It is believed that this approach allows for more valid and useful comparison, visual presentation and filtering of the results.

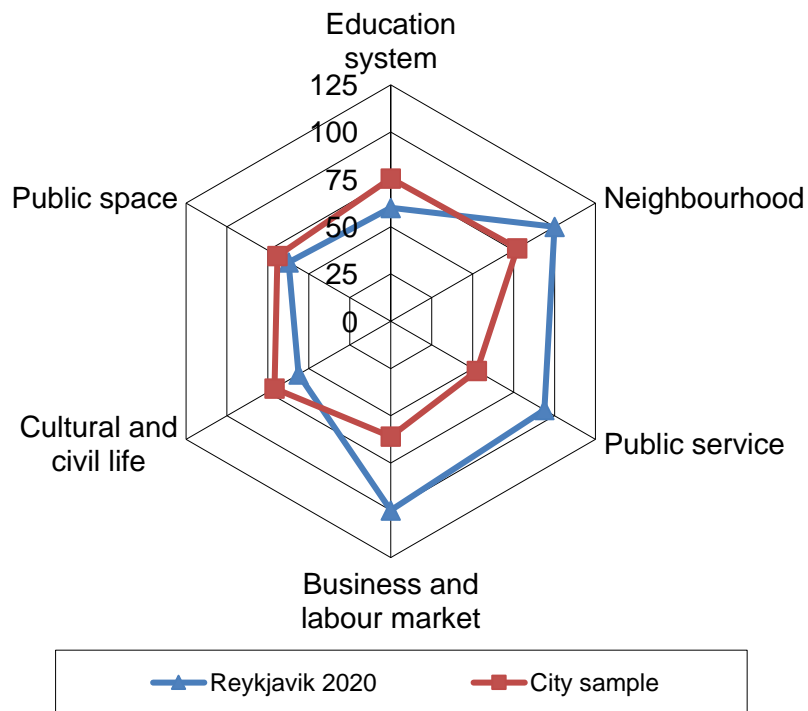
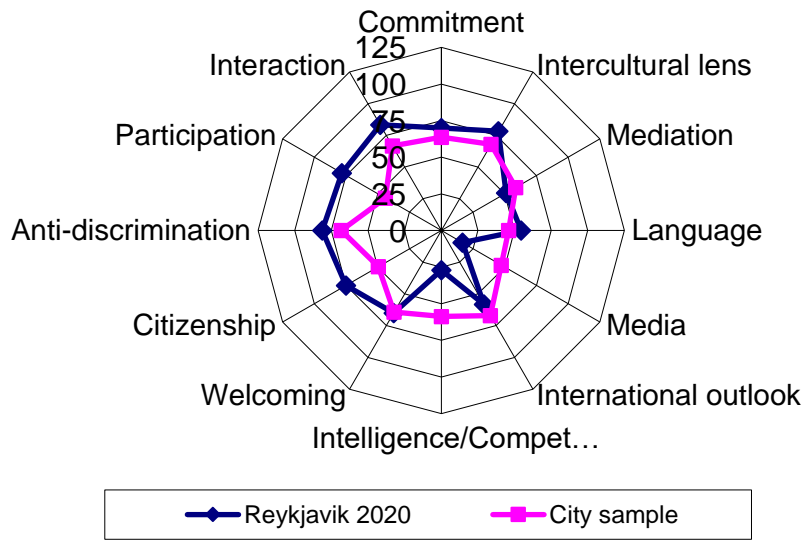
According to the overall index results, Reykjavik has an aggregate intercultural city index of 64 (out of 100 possible points). The details of this result will be explained below.

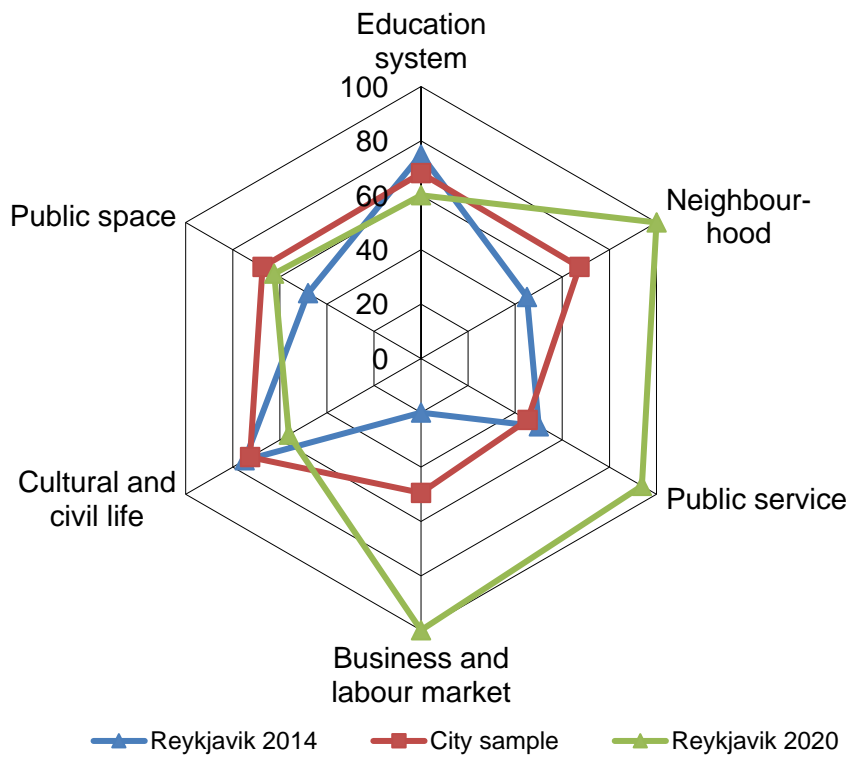
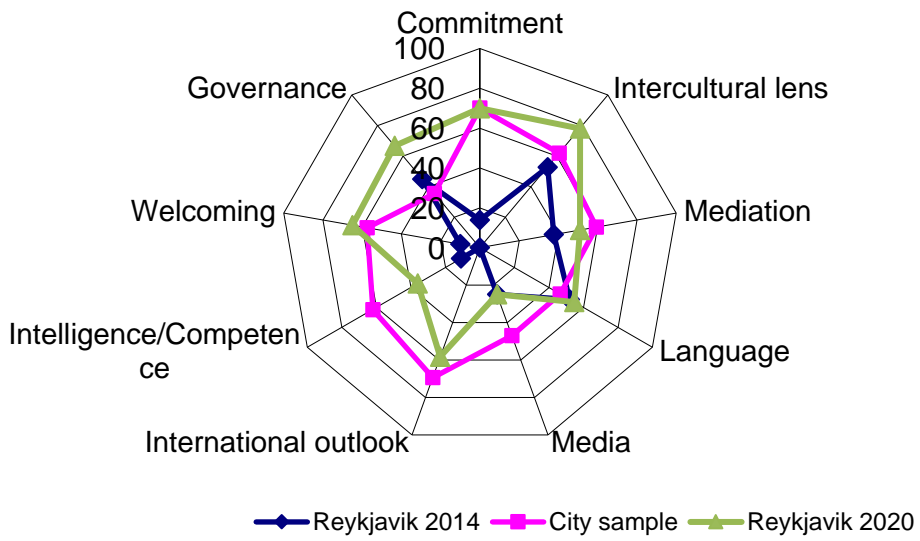


So far, 25 cities have used the index containing the new indicators in their evaluations, including Reykjavik. Thus, the city will be compared with the entire sample of ICC cities for all the indicators, and to the new sample for the new indicators relating to participation and interaction.

The top two spider charts below show how Reykjavik performs relatively when all indicators are used, and the intercultural lens is applied. The bottom two charts provide a comparison, confined to the old indicators, between the performance of Reykjavik in 2020 with that in 2014 and the city sample.

The comparison over time demonstrates major improvements in its own performance in welcoming and international outlook, which not surprisingly reflects a big increase in commitment.





REYKJAVIK: AN OVERVIEW

Iceland is a typically prosperous and socially comfortable Nordic country, surpassed only by Norway on the inequality-adjusted United Nations Human Development Index. Its relative inaccessibility and climate mean it is the most sparsely populated country in Europe, with just some 364,000 inhabitants in an area larger than 100,000 square kilometres. Reykjavik dominates the island: 36 per cent of the population live in the capital, 63 per cent in the wider region.

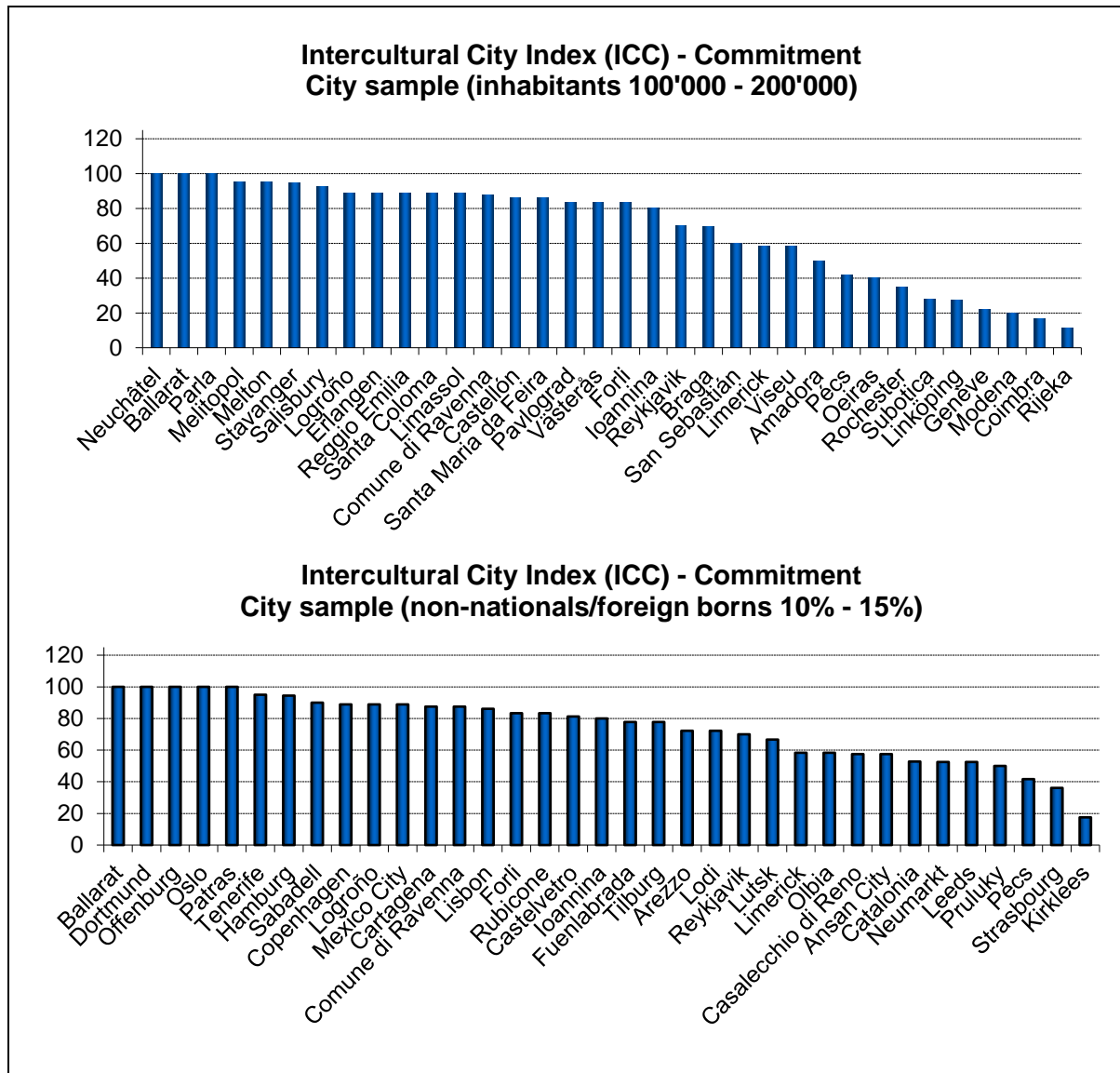
Despite its geographical remoteness, however, Iceland has become a magnet for immigration with its prosperity — *per capita* gross domestic product is around €60,000 — as well as the social security of a universal welfare state. Between 2014, when the city last compiled its ICCs Index, and 2019 the immigrant population of Reykjavik increased by almost 10,000 to 24,000, meaning 19 per cent of residents are now foreign-born, over a third coming from Poland (by far the largest minority) or Lithuania alone. Refugees are a relatively small component of that diversity, with the city currently supporting 220 asylum-seekers; it is aware that some are refugees because of their LGBT+ status.

This change in the demography of Reykjavik provides the backdrop to the marked improvements in the index factors of ‘welcoming’ and ‘international outlook’, as well as overall commitment on the part of the municipality. Equally, on application of the intercultural lens, it is no surprise that ‘business and the labour market’ and ‘public service’ should see the big gains since 2014. Clearly the city’s political leadership appreciates its changing face and seeks to adapt accordingly, managing this shift to best advantage. Its challenge is to improve performance further in those areas where perhaps the pressures are not so compelling as in the economic arena.

COMMITMENT

For intercultural inclusion to occur, city authorities need to send out a clear and well-publicised message emphasising their commitment to intercultural principles, i.e. diversity, equality and interaction. Ideally, a majority of elected officials and senior policy officers will have a clear understanding of these core principles and their implications for policy-making. City authorities also need to initiate an institutional process to translate the principles of interculturality into concrete policies and actions. Most importantly, an intercultural city actively seeks to include residents of all nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups in the policy-making process. The authorities also highlight and nurture any intercultural practices that may already exist in the city.

Reykjavik's score in the field of commitment is 70, equivalent to that of the ICCs average, having risen dramatically from 2014.



The city council has taken important steps to commit itself to an intercultural perspective and to demonstrate that commitment publicly. In 2019 it made a [statement](#) asserting that stance, having in 2016 adopted a [policy on integration](#) with intercultural elements and action plan *vis-à-vis* migrants and refugees which is annually reviewed. The statement was discussed and endorsed by the local council (city parliament) and adopted by the municipal council (city government). The city has also put in place an evaluation of the intercultural strategy and action plan. This is done based on the [Immigrant Policy](#), which sets out the Human Rights Office to annually assesses implementation and progress by sending a formal request for progress updates to each responsible department.

The city does not have an allocated budget for the implementation of the intercultural strategy or action plan. However, the city reports to have adopted a process of policy consultation and co-design including people of all ethnic or cultural backgrounds. This is seen in the projects [My Neighbourhood](#), [Better Reykjavik](#) and the [Intercultural Congress](#), which all aim to involve a wide array of residents. The [Reykjavik Human Rights Policy](#) states that decisions taken by the city should be transparent and guided by the interests of its residents. As a public authority, the City of Reykjavik shall endeavour to consult with residents and encourage their democratic involvement in matters concerning them in one way or another, creating a forum and channels for such participation.

Official communications by the city aim to make clear reference to the city's intercultural commitment. The hashtag #ICities has recently been added to all the news concerning intercultural events and project taking place in the city. The city also has an official webpage that communicates its intercultural statement, strategy, and/or action plan, which can be reached in three clicks or more.

The city has a dedicated body responsible for implementing the intercultural strategy based in their action plan. This is done through a special team of employees working in immigrant's affairs. The group established in 2018, is a cross-departmental body and its main working area is to disseminate knowledge and information on immigrants and integration between employees of the city. The main objective is to enhance co-operation between city departments. The group members also oversee educational programs on integration that will be offered to employees. The group consist of 20 individuals from all city departments. The Human Rights and Democracy Office oversees the work of the group.

Finally, the Reykjavik Human Rights Office advertises for [nominations for individuals, institutions and grass root associations](#) who have excelled in promoting the human rights of minority groups in the city every year. Immigrant associations and those working with immigrants are often nominated and have been awarded the prize three times. The Intercultural Centre, W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland and Móðurmál -The Association on Bilingualism have all been recognised for their work.

Recommendations

Interculturalism necessarily straddles different municipal departments and a 'joined-up' approach is essential for success. But it is easy to fall into a 'silo mentality' where individual departments pursue their own specialist agendas and the city's commitment overall is not therefore reflected in day-to-day work and so can seem purely rhetorical. This is where preparing an intercultural strategy is particularly advantageous.

It is positive that Reykjavik has an integration strategy, addressing the migrants and refugees who have come to the city in recent years. An intercultural strategy stresses that integration is a two-way process, in which all citizens are implicated in a positive way. It also allows the intercultural work of the municipality to be interwoven with other policy arenas—as addressed in the [municipal plan](#), with its commitment to a 'creative city'—rather than being seen as separate and distinct.

The development of such a strategy provides a valuable opportunity to encourage broad participation by citizens and their organisations and to engage fully the elected political leadership of the city, so that everyone realises what is involved goes beyond a one-off verbal commitment. If such a strategy sets clear objectives, then annual goals can be set for individual departments, which can then be reviewed at the end of the year, in a process of dialogue across the municipality.

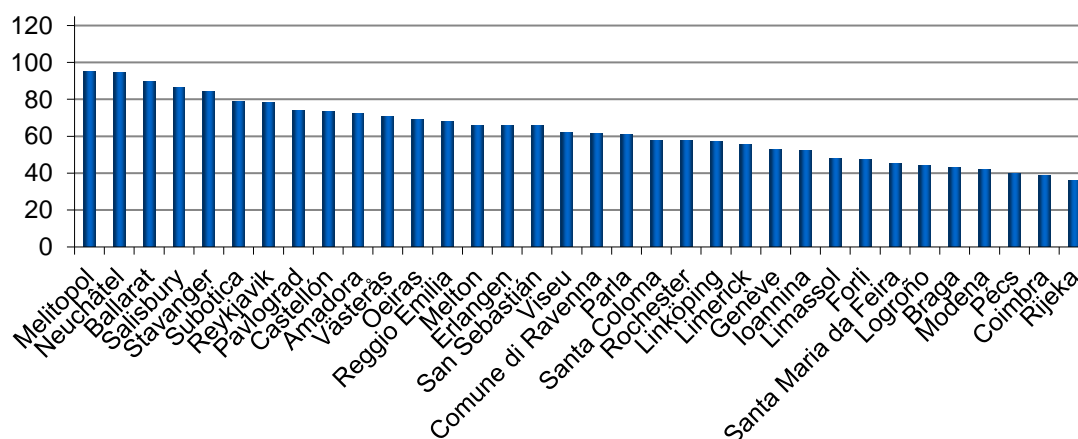
This innovation was found to be a useful way to maintain a transversal commitment in [Botkyrka](#) in Sweden, ensuring all departments buy in rather than interculturalism being the property only of one set of dedicated officials perhaps frustrated by perceived inertia elsewhere. It is also positive that Reykjavik already has such a transversal network in place, which could be the vehicle to ensure an intercultural strategy affects the whole fabric of the work of the municipality.

THE CITY THROUGH AN INTERCULTURAL LENS

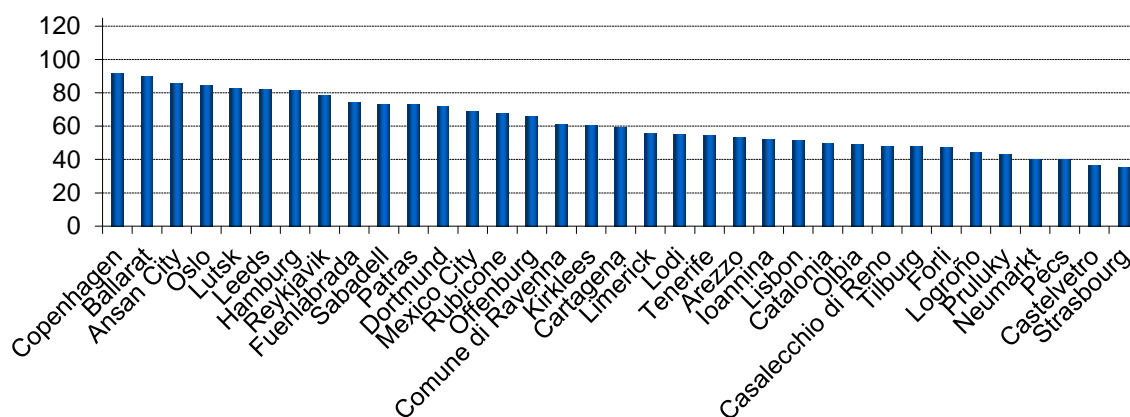
Although the formal functions cities and other local authorities assume vary considerably from one country to another, all cities have the primary responsibility for maintaining social cohesion and preserving the quality of life in the city. The policies designed to achieve these goals will therefore be re-conceived and re-configured in order to assure they provide adequate service to all residents regardless of their nationality, origin, language, religions/belief, sexual orientation and age group. This is most notably the case for policies concerning education, neighbourhoods, public services, business and the labour market, cultural and social life, and public space.

Reykjavik's overall figure on this measure is 78, higher than the model city's measure of 62.

Intercultural City Index (ICC) - Intercultural lens
City sample (inhabitants 100'000 - 200'000)



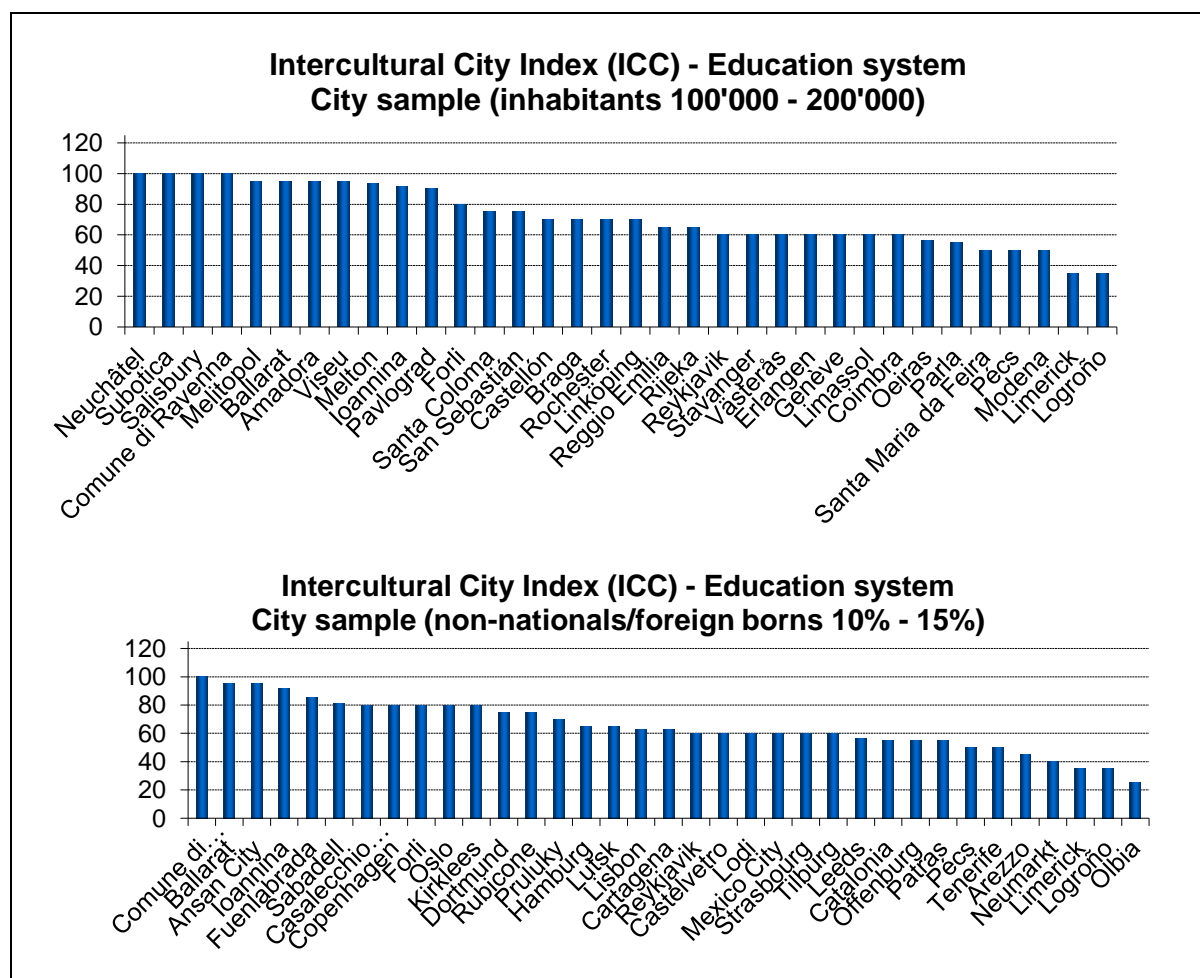
Intercultural City Index (ICC) - Intercultural lens
City sample (non-nationals/foreign borns 10% - 15%)



EDUCATION

Formal education and extracurricular activities have a powerful influence on how children will perceive diversity as they grow up. Schools therefore have a strong potential to reinforce or, on the contrary, challenge prejudices and negative stereotyping. Although school programmes are defined primarily at the national or regional level, local schools can look at alternative and innovative ways of providing opportunities for children of different cultures to build trust and mutual respect, and create thereby favourable learning conditions for all pupils, irrespective of their nationalities, origins, languages, sexual orientation or gender identity, religions/beliefs. From the intercultural perspective, cultural and other diversities, including multilingualism are treated as positive opportunities and are nurtured accordingly. Intercultural schools also consider parents of pupils with migrant/minority backgrounds on an equal basis as other parents. They take steps to ensure that all parents overcome any reluctance they may have in engaging with the school and give them in this way the possibility of playing the educational role usually expected from parents.

Reykjavik's score in the field of education is 60, lower than the city sample result of 68. This in part reflects the fact that in Reykjavik most children are still educated in mostly mono-ethnic classrooms. Over time, however, classrooms are only going to become more diverse.



The city reports almost all children in primary schools of the same ethnic/cultural background and that the teaching staff rarely reflect the composition of the city's population. Only a few schools are further reported to make strong efforts to involve parents with migrant/minority backgrounds in school life. Actions to include parents with diverse backgrounds in school life include an information group for Polish speaking parents in Reykjavik as well as a project named Welcome to the neighbourhood. Finally, pre-school principals in Reykjavik can fill in an order form to benefit from services of cultural mediators.

It was thus prescient in 2014 of the Department of Education and Youth of the municipality to publish a [policy](#) document entitled *The World is Here*. This encourages diversity in pedagogy to accommodate diverse students, supports bilingualism by encouraging development of the mother tongue (where different) alongside Icelandic and encourages parental engagement. Via the University of Iceland, the department provides (non-obligatory) courses for teachers in intercultural communication and cultural sensitivity.

Most Reykjavik schools have engaged in a project called [The Flying Carpet](#). This stimulates intercultural encounters, including involving parents. The municipality has also sought to enhance leisure/sports facilities for young people in parts of the city with high concentrations of members of minority communities, including access to the leisure card and the TUFF project.

Recommendations

Anticipating further diversification of the school population, Reykjavik could support a wider range of non-formal education projects to foster greater intercultural competence, following the example of [Sabadell](#). It could look to develop greater global awareness through curricular elements linked to citizenship education, geography, literature and so on, working with a network of teachers to pioneer approaches stretching the conventional curriculum.

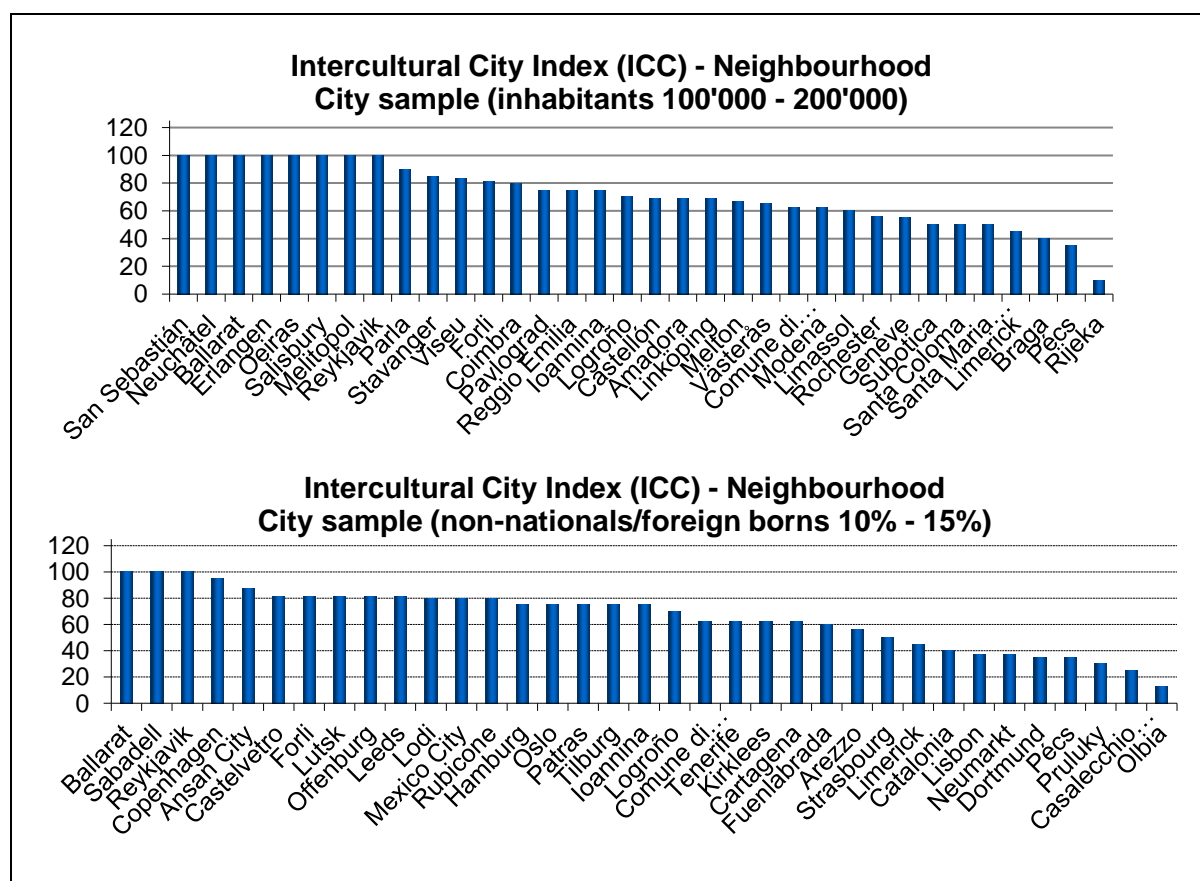
In parallel will come the need for associated diversification of the teaching profession in the city. Here the municipality could engage in positive-action programmes, working with minority associations, to encourage more individuals from migrant and refugee backgrounds to seek to train as teachers and to promote peer support in so doing. Interculturalism should be woven into the mainstream training of teachers, as all teachers will be preparing their students for an intercultural world. The resources and assistance of the Council of Europe [Wergeland Centre](#) in Oslo could be drawn on in this regard.

Montreal, Canada also has an interesting project [that empowers young people to be ambassadors](#). The project is called 'a light on our talents' and accompanies 10-12 young ambassadors for diversity who run their own sensitisation campaign for employers. The youth receive training from experts in employability, business and diversity before visiting employers to tell them positive stories of young people, recent immigrants and ethnic minorities. This is accompanied by another educational aspect where young people wishing to develop creative skills are trained to make short videos to share on social media as well as with employers. There are also 'young ambassadors against prejudice' who mobilise young people from primary and secondary schools and promote the importance of fighting discrimination and valuing diversity in their neighbourhood or region.

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Within a city, districts, neighbourhoods, or other territorial sub-units, can be more or less culturally/ethnically diverse. People are indeed free to move and settle in the neighbourhood of their choice. To be intercultural, a city does not require a 'perfect' statistical mix of people in all neighbourhoods. It will however make sure that ethnic concentration in a neighbourhood does not convert into socio-cultural segregation, and does not act as a barrier to the inward and outward flow of people, ideas and opportunities. In particular, the intercultural city ensures the same quality of public service delivery in all the neighbourhoods and plans public space, infrastructures, social, cultural and sport activities to encourage intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction.

Reykjavik's score in the field of neighbourhoods is 100, considerably higher than the city sample result of 67. This partly relates to the city's [My Neighbourhood](#) initiative, which draws citizens into online discussions about how budgets are allocated at the micro-level. But it also derives from the outreach efforts of the Department of Culture and Tourism in the city.



The city reports that most districts/neighbourhoods of the city are culturally/ethnically diverse. The city also reports to have a policy to increase diversity within the neighbourhoods. The city policy has been to spread social and diverse housing in all city districts, and to plan for shops and services in all neighbourhoods.¹ The city encourages interaction between neighbourhoods and at the origin of this process has been [Reykjavik City Library](#). Public libraries are an often-underestimated resource but with their branches as well as online facilities they can make real connections on the ground. The city library in Reykjavik has been an inspiration in this regard, with its commitment to interculturalism and the promotion of arts and creativity. The library is reported to hold regular events that are designed for people of all origins. Events are held in a few of the branches throughout the city, including Breiðholt which has the highest concentration of immigrants. Immigrants are especially encouraged to organise events. Further, the city's cultural institutions are reported to aim to open their doors to a diverse group of guests and to be a venue for fellowship, creativity and interactive cultural dialogue through Roots and wings - The Reykjavik Department of Culture and Tourism's policy on diverse culture in the city 2017–2020.

Work in neighbourhoods is often thought of as the province only of housing and social-work departments. This recognition by Reykjavik that they can be vibrant arenas for cultural practices is a valuable if counter-intuitive injection of fresh thinking.

Suggestions

Reykjavik does report that, unlike the schools, neighbourhoods do tend to be diverse in the city. The city may wish to also look into community policing. This can be described as a problem-solving approach by officers familiar with issues in the neighbourhoods which they police by consent and in dialogue with neighbourhood associations. The experiences of ICC members in this regard have been drawn together in a useful [manual](#).

A good practice to be inspired by could also be the practice from the London Borough of Lewisham. In 2006-2007 the Borough of Lewisham, United Kingdom, conducted [research of public attitudes](#). Residents complained of loneliness and alienation, intergenerational suspicion and fear of using certain public spaces. Public discussion forums were set up which elicited a great deal of deep knowledge about local lifeways which had previously been unknown to officials. It also raised issues which might appear obvious, but were nevertheless overlooked, such as the lack of seating in the public space. Since then a programme of targeted improvement has transformed numerous locations within the district – and Lewisham's commitment has aroused widespread recognition and approbation.

Another example is the [EMPO Multicultural Resource Centre](#) in Bergen, Norway. Empowerment is the goal of this centre which pursues initiatives to create dialogue, mutual understanding and change. These include women's groups, men's gatherings, courses, theme days, seminars, counselling, parental guidance, language and work practice and social network across cultures. The city also arranges a 'living library' project held at the central library, where representatives of different districts can meet in the non-formal atmosphere of the library. It helps to get rid of stereotypes and increase the level of understanding and solidarity among residents.

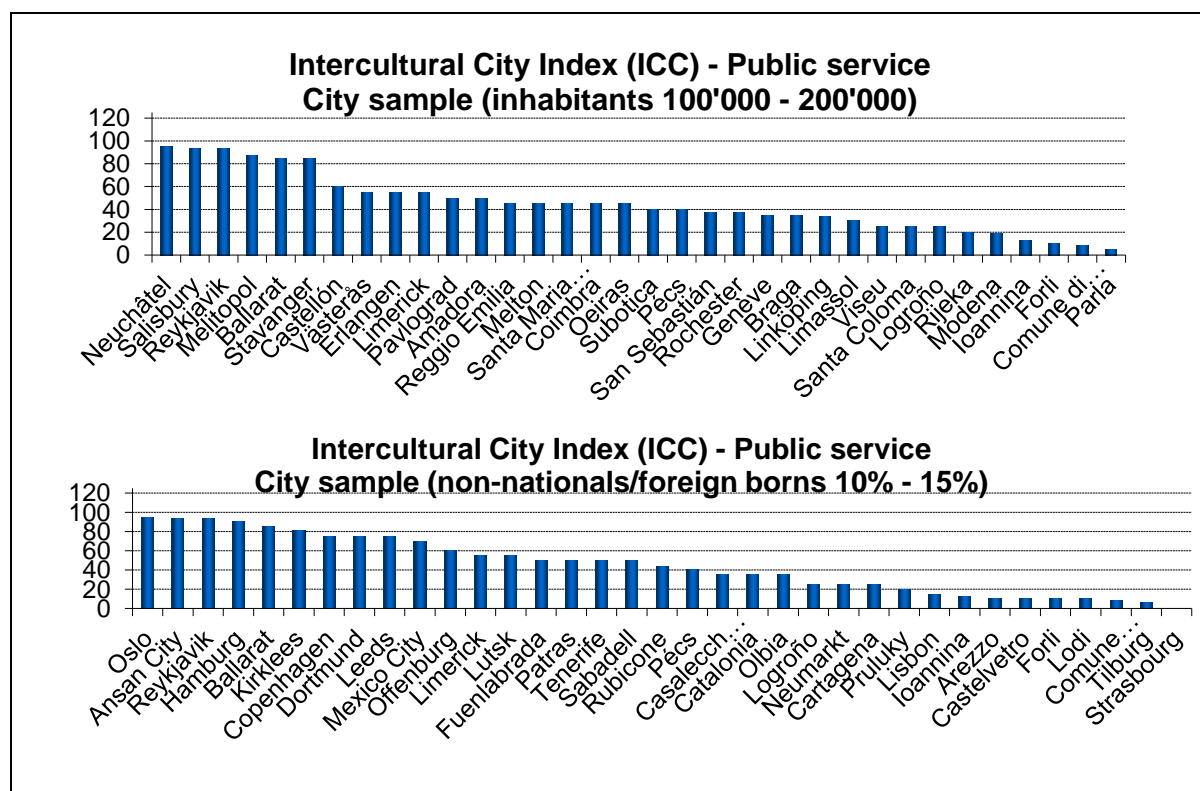
The city of Bergen, Norway has also implemented a strategy for [inclusive housing](#) which includes allocation of dwellings for social renting and interventions in the private rented sector. Similarly, Montreal, Canada has a policy in place for [regeneration of neighbourhoods](#) and Zurich, Switzerland has implemented a successful [housing policy](#) to be inspired by. Further, the ICC has published a study and policy brief on [Managing Gentrification](#), which together with other city policies on housing, could offer further inspiration within the field.

PUBLIC SERVICES

As their very name implies, public services work for the benefit of the public as a whole. If the population is diverse, public services will be more efficient in delivering adequate benefits and information if city officers, at all levels of seniority, are as diverse as the population in general. This requires much more than simply ensuring equal opportunities to access public service employment. When taking action to encourage a diverse municipal workforce, an intercultural city acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach to public services and actions does not guarantee equal access to public benefits. The city also recognises that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds should never be treated as passive consumers of public benefits but can contribute actively by suggesting new ideas and innovative solutions to public problems.

¹ [Reykjavik Municipal Plan 2010-2030](#)

Reykjavik's score in the field of public services is 94, considerably higher than the city sample result of 45. It has built on a classic Nordic equal-opportunities / anti-discrimination emphasis in employment, with exacting standards on procurement and development of the intercultural competences of officials.



The municipality takes the positive approach that its 8,000-strong workforce should reflect the diversity of the city as a whole. It pursues this through its diversity and equality policy. It recognises, though, that this is less true of more senior levels of the staff hierarchy.

It also recognises that municipalities hold a powerful lever in public procurement. Reykjavik is ahead of the pack in deploying that lever to ensure contractors have acceptable policies on human rights and equality if they are to enjoy the municipality's custom.

Finally, the city delivers various services in culturally sensitive ways, such as school-meal dietary options and burials for members of different religions. Additional further various women-only projects have been implemented such as swimming lessons. The city policy states interpreters should be used during interviews with social workers and whenever needed for parent/teacher communications. The city reports efforts have been made to translate applications for city services, and sections of the website.

Suggestions

The city could consider specific work with senior staff members on encouraging diversification of this cadre over time. Initiatives could include mentoring junior staff who could be encouraged to progress, fast-tracking individuals of minority backgrounds from outside the public service and sensitising managers to the [advantages](#) of diverse teams in fostering creativity via the introduction of fresh perspectives, to discourage the unwitting promotion of 'people like us'. There may be some lessons that can be learned from the experience of [Bergen](#), which, faced with exactly the same problem, agreed an action plan to tackle the issue.

Montreal applies a good practice that can be interesting. Minorities account for some 20% of the workforce in the city. The city's [recruitment policy is inspired by the concept of promoting diversity](#) and is geared towards talent of all kinds in terms of gender, age, background, experience and culture. Specific measures and programmes are implemented to ensure employment equality, with a specific focus on under-represented groups such as women, people with disabilities, Indigenous groups, visible minorities and ethnic minorities. Once again, these measures apply to all city departments. Some concrete examples include:

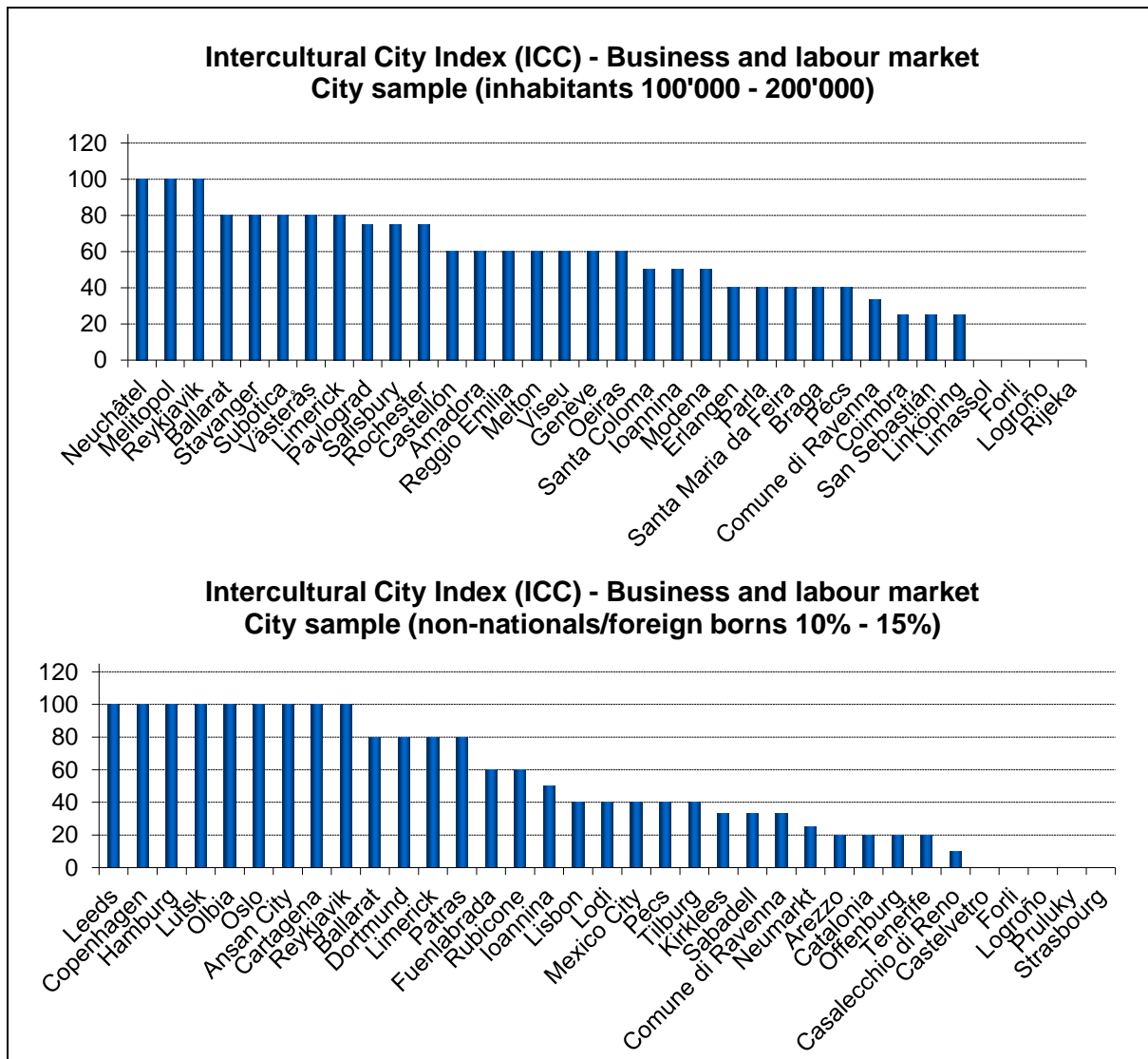
- The Police Service of Montreal city organizes recruitment activities specifically targeting women, visible minorities, and ethnic minorities in order to raise the interest of these groups to take a career as police officers, and thus increase their representation in these positions. On the other hand, police officers already in position receive training to learn how to better deal with populations of diverse origins and statuses.
- The Human Resources Department has a professional mentoring programme that allows candidates facing barriers to employment within the city, as public employees or trainees. In addition, the city addresses systemic discrimination through equal opportunity measures, in accordance with the Employment Equity Action Plan, which will be evaluated annually. The city also provides trainings for manager to facilitate respect for and understanding of cultural differences in order to increase the ability to successfully intervene in problematic situations. Also, recruiters at the City Staffing Centre receive training to demystify cultural differences in order to anticipate and avoid cultural misunderstandings.
- The Montreal Fire Department introduced a preferential appointment rate for ethnic and visible minorities with the view to eliminate any systemic discrimination in hiring in order to facilitate the integration of these groups within the department.

The [intercultural policy model](#) of Botkyrka, Sweden has a focus on intercultural competence in public administration. Actions included a critical, systematic and constructive analysis of practice and activity in public administration at strategic and operational levels and development and monitoring of a global intercultural strategy for inclusive integration.

BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Access to the public sector labour markets is often restricted by national or regional legislation. When this is the case, the private sector may provide an easier route for people with migrant or diverse backgrounds to engage in economic activity. As a result, private companies and activities tend to offer much more diverse working environments than the public sector. Research has also proved that it is cultural diversity in private companies, and not homogeneity, which fosters creativity and innovation. By constantly highlighting the diversity advantage in business, and partnering with their chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs, cities can influence how diversity is perceived in the private sector in such diverse sectors as shops, clubs, restaurants, industry, technical services and science.

Reykjavik's score in the field of business and the labour market is 100, considerably higher than the city sample result of 49. A prosperous city as indicated earlier, it is committed to ethical business practices, including in its human-rights focused procurement policy, its collaboration with the Icelandic Confederation of Labour and its membership of the Icelandic Association for Quality.



Reykjavik has an active policy of promoting entrepreneurship, including via start-ups. It has established an advisory group on diversity in the business domain. The city maintains a website for those wishing to start a business and sponsors regular start-up events in cooperation with Start-up Iceland such as the Hackathon. The city also in cooperation with Icelandic Innovation Centre held two training courses for people with business ideas.

The city reports to work closely with the Icelandic Confederation of Labour who lobbies for workers' rights and ensures a diverse and vibrant labour force. Iceland recently passed a law regarding equal opportunity and treatment on the labour market. The act ensures equal treatment of all in the labour market. The act includes access to jobs and self-employment. The city is also a member of [The Icelandic Association for Quality](#), a non-profit NGO whose goal is to promote business excellence to private, public and voluntary sectors in Iceland.

The city reports to be committed to purchasing from companies and providers that comply with the stipulations in the Reykjavik Human Right's Policy. Work is currently being done by the purchasing department on better defining what obligations service and goods providers must comply with. Recently the city has added responsibility clauses and subcontractor liability laws to the city's procurement policy.

Suggestions

The municipality might wish to develop a more focused linkage between its intercultural and business-development activities. [Oslo](#) is an interesting model in that regard. With these two domains falling within the same department of the Norwegian capital, it has long linked the two—in particular by promoting since 2013 a diversity charter among firms operating in the city, spotlighting diversity and its advantages through associated events and activities.

A number of intercultural cities have also developed expertise in promoting migrant enterprises specifically. These were collated in a 2017 ICCs [policy brief](#), which Reykjavik may find useful in developing a more targeted approach

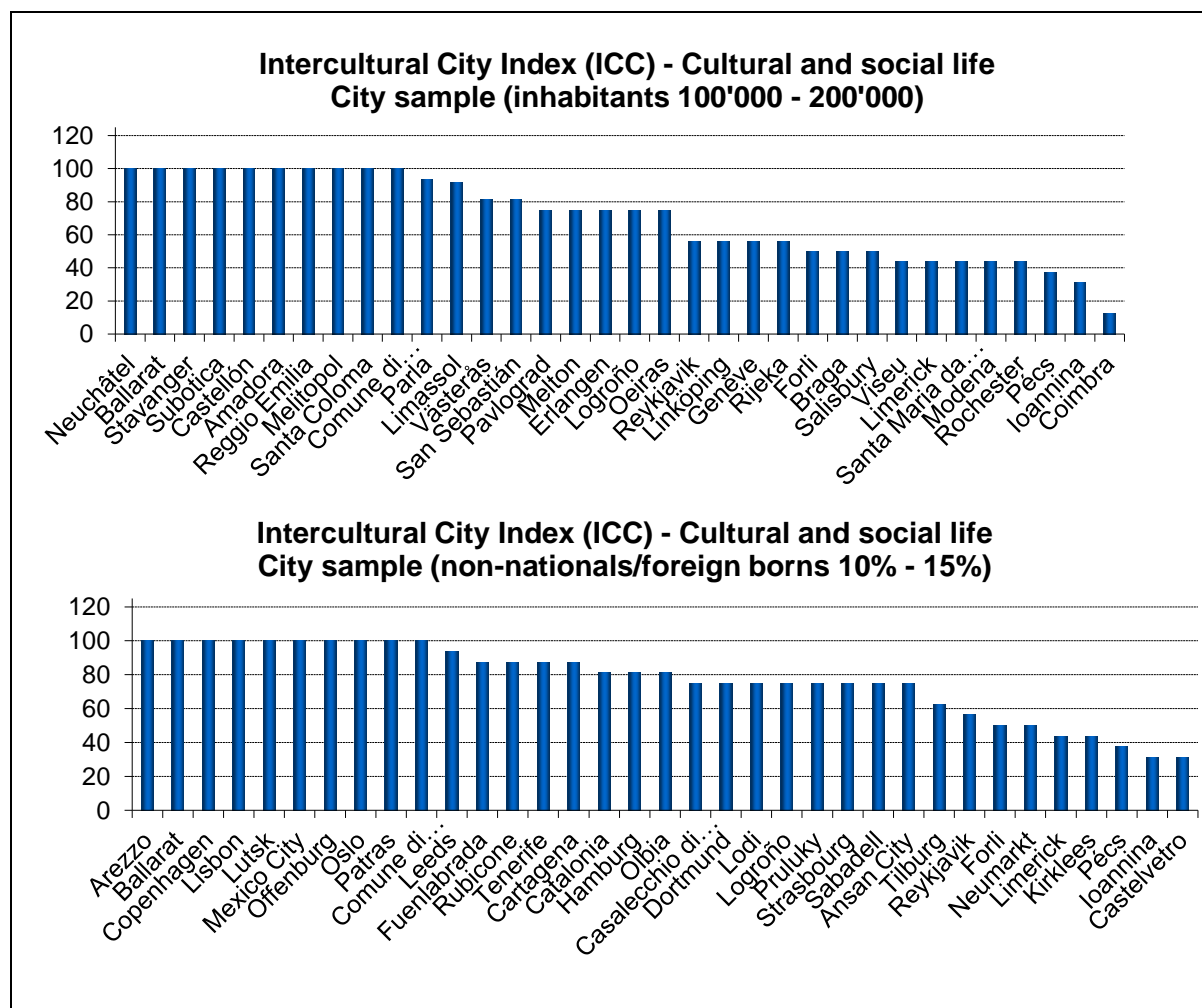
in this regard. For example, 'Do it in Barcelona' provides a [personalised service](#) to attract and support newcomer entrepreneurs.

Kirklees, United Kingdom also provides a good example with its [Diversity = Inclusion group](#). The group involves public and private sector employers and large companies and SMEs. It provides space for employers to network, gathers and analyses data on diversity in the local labour market, shares and promotes good practice, and supports business leaders in championing diversity.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Whereas people living in a city may have different migrant/minority or other backgrounds, they very often share the same interests and satisfaction when engaging in leisure activities, especially in the fields of arts, culture and sports. Such activities are sometimes structured along ethnic lines. That is quite understandable when they aim to preserve folklore traditions or the language and history of countries of origin. What is problematic is when cross-cultural leisure activities are organised along ethnic lines, for example when a football team only accepts players from one ethnic group. The intercultural city can encourage cultural openness through its own activities and by introducing intercultural criteria when allocating resources to artistic, cultural and sports organisations.

Reykjavik's score in the field of cultural and social life is 56, lower than the city sample result of 73. As mentioned earlier, the city has been effective in its cultural outreach to neighbourhoods, with the city library at the hub. But the city admits that it does not encourage cultural organisations to address diversity and interculturalism and it only organises intercultural events 'sometimes'. An important aspect of moving from an integration strategy to an intercultural strategy would be in thinking of the cultural arena not just in terms of democratic inclusion but also of intercultural connection.



Since 2017, the city's Department of Culture and Tourism has supported a policy, [Roots and Wings](#), encouraging, as its name suggests, an appreciation of wider cultural links as well as local traditions—endorsing the 'diversity advantage' as it applies to this arena via the relationship between diversity and dynamism. And, as with its policy towards public procurement, grant-giving for cultural activities in the city is also regulated by human-rights considerations.

The City Library celebrates European Day of Languages and organises many regular events where Icelanders and immigrants are encouraged to participate. The city has begun reaching out to immigrant groups and inviting them to participate in Icelandic cultural and national celebrations. For instance, a special email was sent to the boards of various national and immigrant associations inviting them to participate in 17 June/Iceland's National Day festivities. The city encourages immigrants to apply for art grants by advertising in other languages and sharing the word on social media.

In 2014, the municipality decided to establish a [Peace Centre](#) with the University of Iceland's Institute of International Affairs. This has led to seminars and public events addressing issues such as immigration and asylum, thereby providing a forum in which the changing face of Reykjavik, as discussed in the introduction, can be discussed and articulated in a way which fosters public understanding.

The city also reports to use interculturalism as a criterion when allocating funds to associations and initiatives.

[Recommendations](#)

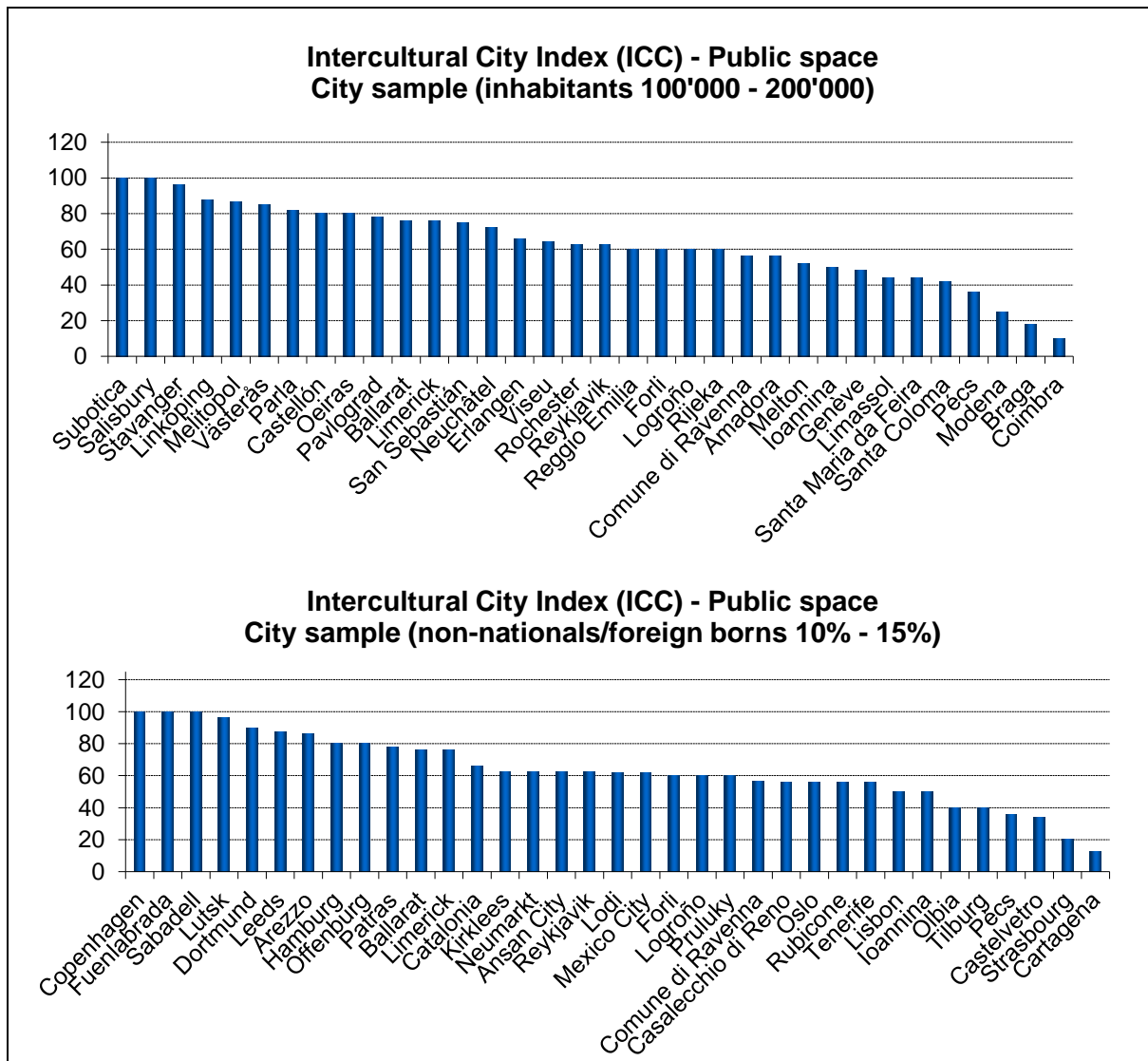
Projects in the arts and cultural domains have a special capacity to stimulate in participants and users the key intercultural capacity to put oneself in the shoes of the other with whom one would otherwise be unfamiliar and so avoid filling gaps in awareness with group stereotypes. One way to achieve this, within the framework of Roots and Wings, is by encouraging existing cultural institutions in the city to diversify their programming and make links to diverse communities (as, for example, the *Teatro Circo* in [Braga](#)). Another is to support an intercultural centre, as in [Botkyrka](#).

Sport is an important arena for making intercultural connections. The municipality already supports sports facilities in areas of significant migrant concentration. It is currently reviewing its sport and leisure policy with a view to rendering it more intercultural. [Bergen](#) has a scheme to promote co-operation between sports clubs in a manner to foster intercultural inclusion and migrant involvement. And there is much wider experience across Europe of how multi-ethnic sports tournaments can act as valuable connectors.

PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces (streets, squares, parks, etc.) and facilities (public buildings, day centres, schools, health centres, etc.) are places which most citizens are obliged to use. They offer the possibility of meeting people of different nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups. For encounters between diverse people to actually occur, such spaces and facilities should be designed and animated in a way that all residents feel comfortable when using them. Conversely badly-managed spaces can become places of suspicion and fear of the "other". When this is the case, the intercultural city actively engages with all the people concerned, firstly to understand the local context from their perspective, and secondly to identify solutions largely support by them.

Reykjavik's score in the field of public space is 62, lower than the city sample result of 67. The public realm is valued in Reykjavik and public space is open to all and the city may wish to move further fostering it as a rich shared domain.



The city protects and maintains public space as precisely that — a space for all of the residents. Thus, it ensures sexual violence and any other hate crime is tackled and that individuals with disabilities can enjoy access. The city highlights they take action to encourage meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction in for examples public libraries, museums, playgrounds, parks and in squares. The city for example lends books in many languages and has outdoor areas with benches, tables, fitness equipment, in-ground trampolines, grills and swings for all age-groups. The City Library organises the Reykjavik Safari every summer where immigrants are invited to attend a culture walk and get-together. Further, participatory budgeting gives residents the opportunity to say what kind of public spaces they want, with the website giving residents the option to vote or participate in Icelandic, English and Polish².

In some new buildings and public spaces, the city reports to take into account the diversity of the population in the design, renovation and management. For instance, all new building must be accessible, and the city aims to have all spaces and neighbourhoods as diverse as possible. The motto is “Reykjavik has all kinds of places for all kinds of people”. When designing an extension to the city library, the city council raise they passed a resolution that the architect should design for an information services for immigrants in the building. The city however reports, that when they decide to reconstruct an area, they do not use different methods and places for consultation to ensure the meaningful involvement of people with different migrant/minority backgrounds.

The city reports there are no spaces or areas in the city that are dominated by one ethnic group (majority or minority) and where other people feel unwelcome or unsafe. Finally, the city highlights when there are certain

² <https://reykjavik.is/en/better-districts-e-elections> and <https://reykjavik.is/hverfid-mitt-2019>

spaces or areas of the city which are dominated by one (majority or minority) ethnic group and are considered unwelcoming or unsafe, the city has a multi-sectoral policy combining policing, social work and communication to deal with this. Namely, the city, the Metropolitan Police, Fire Department and the Iceland Travel Industry Association have an ongoing treaty on safer nightlife. The goal is to eradicate violence and make nightlife in Reykjavik safer for everyone. The guiding principle of the project is zero tolerance in all cases of violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, human trafficking and prostitution, and violence based on prejudice and hate.

Recommendations

One way to celebrate public space as a shared asset is by staging an annual intercultural festival, as in [Lisbon](#), Portugal or [Patras](#), Greece. The Todos (Everyone) festival in Lisbon was originally organised in the city's most multiethnic neighbourhood of Mouraria but the aspiration has been to rotate its presence throughout. The carnival in Patras provides an opportunity similarly to show rather than tell — to demonstrate interculturalism works by manifesting it on the street. In [Cascais](#), Portugal, the Muraliza festival puts art on the walls of the historic city centre.

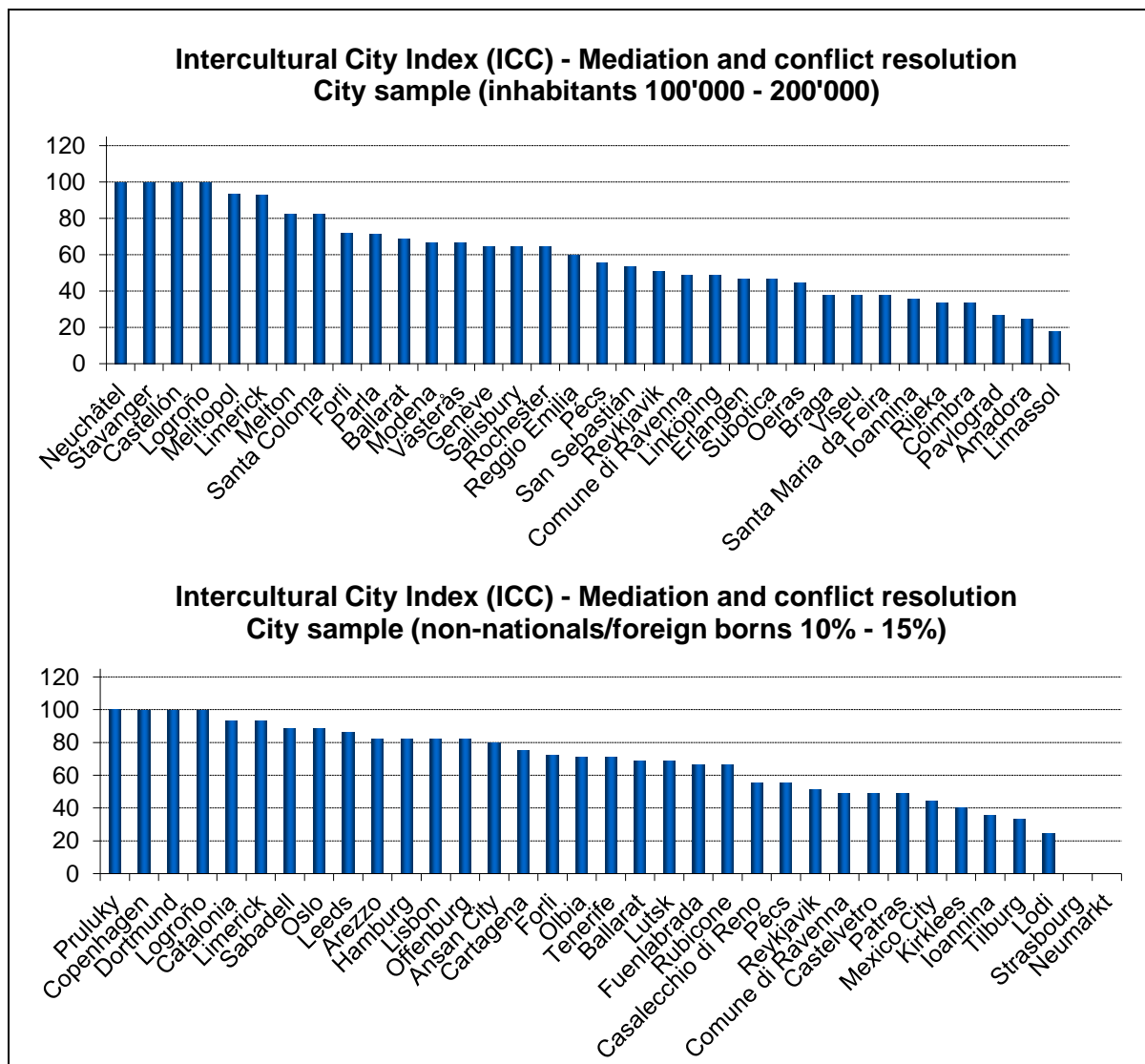
A multi-ethnic market can help refresh an anonymous or insecure public space, as with Afrikaanderplein in [Rotterdam](#), the Netherlands. And an old tobacco factory in [Donostia – San Sebastian](#), Spain, has been turned into a centre, including for use by young migrants involved in various arts projects.

These are all examples of how public spaces which are already available for free, or which can be renovated at low cost to the municipality, can be turned into major intercultural assets with a little imagination and the involvement of arts and cultural practitioners. And this is where real benefits could flow from rethinking the municipal plan—as it stands, a classic document of public-space management—as a resource for intercultural integration.

MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In diverse societies there is always the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over values, behaviour or resources. In cities, where people with different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses live together in close proximity, such tensions are natural and indeed part of everyday life. Instead of denying, ignoring, or repressing conflict, the intercultural city seeks to anticipate, identify, address and resolve issues to the satisfaction of all protagonists without compromising the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The intercultural city views conflict as a normal feature of free, dynamic and communicative communities and sees the very process of conflict mediation and resolution as an opportunity for innovation and sustainable social cohesion.

Reykjavik's score in the field of mediation and conflict resolution is 51, lower than the city sample result of 59. This is essentially as the city's Human Rights and Democracy Office has had a 'vertical' focus on relations via the citizen and public authority, rather than 'horizontally' among residents themselves.



The city has an ombudsman to deal with complaints against the municipality. The Human Rights and Democracy Office meets with religious groups and is exploring the promotion of inter-religious dialogue.

Recommendations

Various members of the ICCs network have addressed the 'horizontal' dimension to social relationships among diverse cities by developing cultural-mediation services, which use experienced individuals to address frictions. [Bergen](#), Norway is an example of one such ICC member.

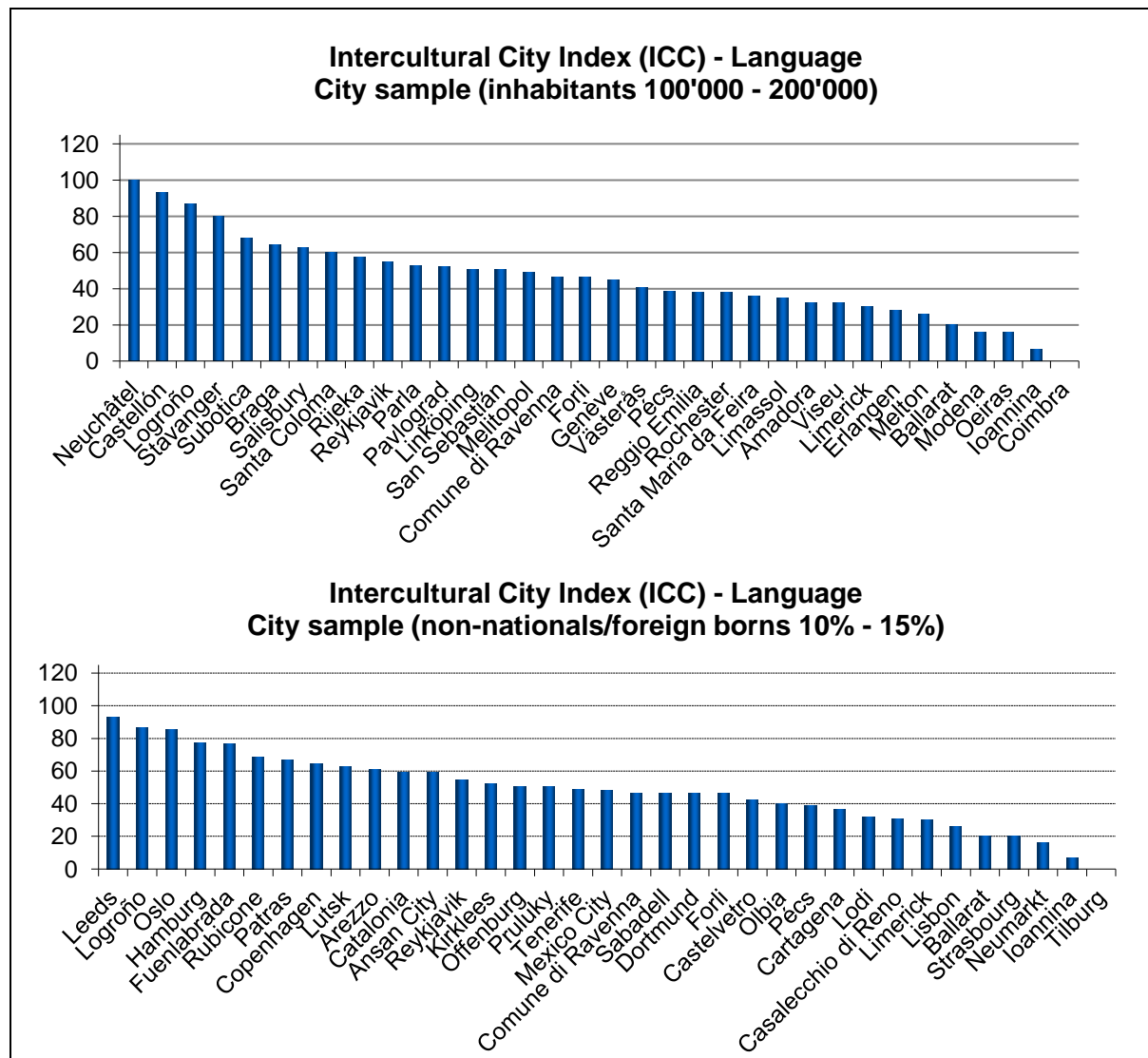
The need for cultural mediation often arises from misunderstandings, misinterpretations and stereotypes. Challenging these, women's organisations are often able to mediate cultural connections through a common set of gender-related concerns. [Haifa](#), Israel and [Neukölln](#), Germany facilitate such women-led intercultural relationships and the W.O.M.E.N in Iceland network could be a partner for Reykjavik in this regard.

LANGUAGE

The provision of courses and other facilities for people with migrant backgrounds to learn the receiving country's language(s) is important to ensure social and economic integration. It does however need to be supplemented with activities which highlight the value of other languages, and enable people with migrant origins not only to preserve and transmit their languages to their children and other members of the community, but also to take pride in them as a heritage enriching the local community. An intercultural city promotes multilingualism as a resource for education, business, tourism, cultural life, etc. It underlines the value of all languages present in the city, for instance by giving opportunities to diverse language speakers to express themselves in their mother tongue in

public and at cultural events and by promoting all events that offer opportunities for linguistic exchanges and mixing.

Reykjavik's score in the field of language is 55, which is higher than the city sample result of 47. Here the city has developed an infrastructure for multilingualism which can be built upon.



Reykjavik has developed a [specific approach](#) to language development through its Centre of Language and Literacy. The support for language pluralism in the school includes involvement of parents (and non-teaching staff), including in pre-school and after-school settings. It also supports a Mother Tongue Teaching Association and a bilingual association, as well as 'Café Lingua' events in places such as the city library.

The approach hence includes specific language training in the official language for hard-to-reach groups as well as support for private/civil sector organisations providing language training in migrant/minority languages. Further, employees of the city who do not speak Icelandic are offered Icelandic lessons during working hours.

The city also raises awareness on migrant/minority languages by providing logistical or financial support to local minority radio programmes in migrant/minority languages. The Reykjavik City Library and RÚV, The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service are currently cooperating on a project titled, The Week in Iceland. RÚV's English presenter leads a group through the latest news of what's going on in Iceland with many pauses for discussion and analysis. The discussion is then used for a radio program.

Suggestions

Multilingualism at firm level can help to 'shorten' distances in making network connections abroad. Finland faces not dissimilar challenges to Iceland in this regard and its 2016-19 integration programme [included](#), as one of its

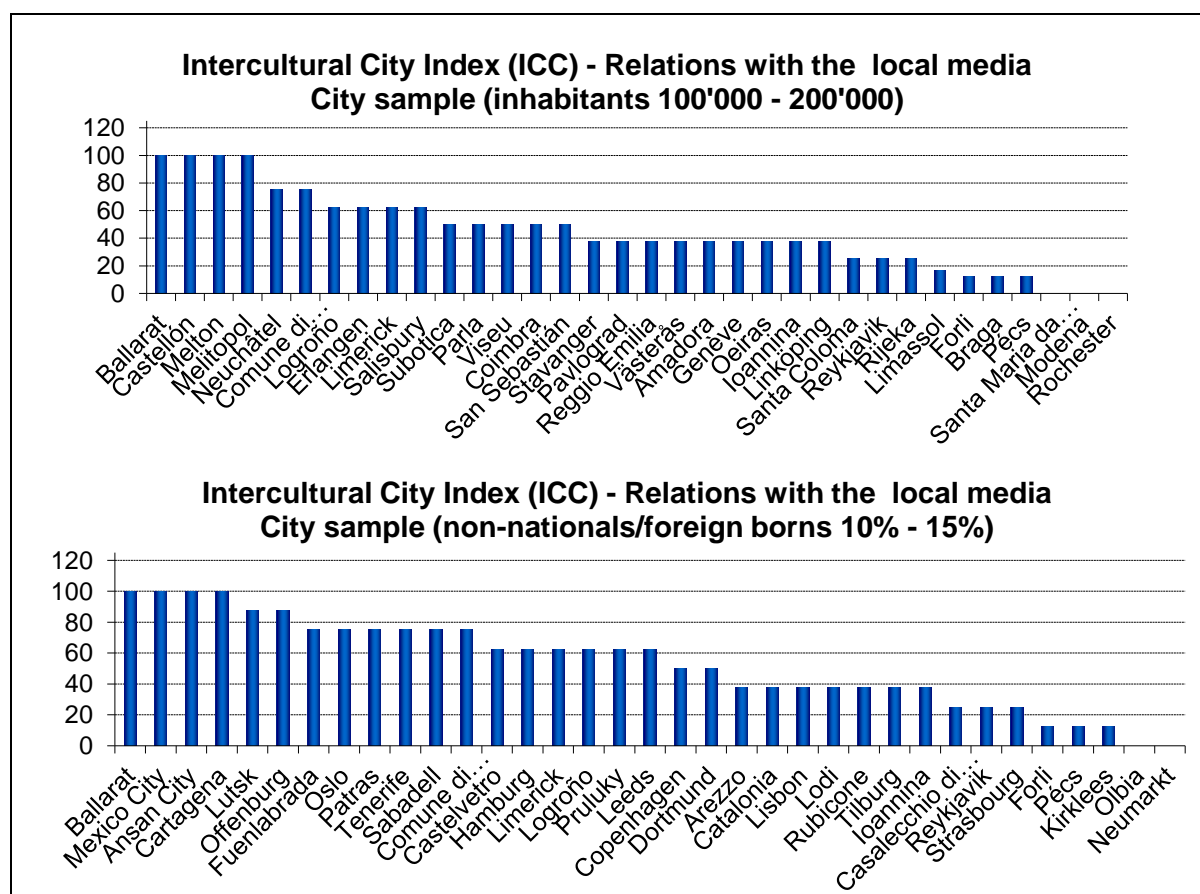
four priorities, 'Using immigrants' cultural strengths to enhance Finnish innovation capacity'. Reykjavik already supports language development in private-sector and civil-society organisations and this could be perhaps usefully be given greater prominence.

Montreal, Canada have involved the [city's libraries in the language training](#), under a project called "Liaison agents" in co-operation with community organisations, schools (reception classes, French for adults) and the health sector, various mediation activities are conducted in order to help non-native speaker newcomers or people with migration backgrounds to learn French. At the same time, the libraries are currently working on a research project on multilingual albums that should enable children to learn French more easily while boosting their skills in their mother tongues.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Traditional and social media have a very powerful influence on attitudes towards cultural diversity and other diversities. Much of the information people access is generated by international newsgroups, national media, or by private persons in the case of social media. Nevertheless, there is still much the city authorities can do to achieve a climate of public opinion more conducive to positive intercultural relations. In its communication, an intercultural city constantly highlights the positive contribution of people with migrant/minority backgrounds to the social, cultural and economic development of the city. More importantly, the city partners with local media agencies so that they purvey a similar message and cover events occurring in the city in an objective and unbiased way.

Reykjavik's score in the field of media and communication is 25, considerably lower than the city sample result of 47. The municipality takes seriously its own responsibility to promote messages about diversity but has not hitherto sought to sensitise the media in the city themselves in this regard.



This is a prime area where the relatively recent nature of Reykjavik's demographic shift has not yet been fully reflected, as indicated by the city's negative responses in this section of the questionnaire beyond its own commitment to communicating diversity. The municipality of course does not and should not seek to constrain freedom of the press. But it can legitimately seek to raise the awareness of journalists and media organisations

operating in the city as to their potential in this regard. [Donostia – San Sebastian](#), Spain provides financial support to *SOS Racismo* to monitor how the media in the city portray migration and diversity issues.

Recommendations

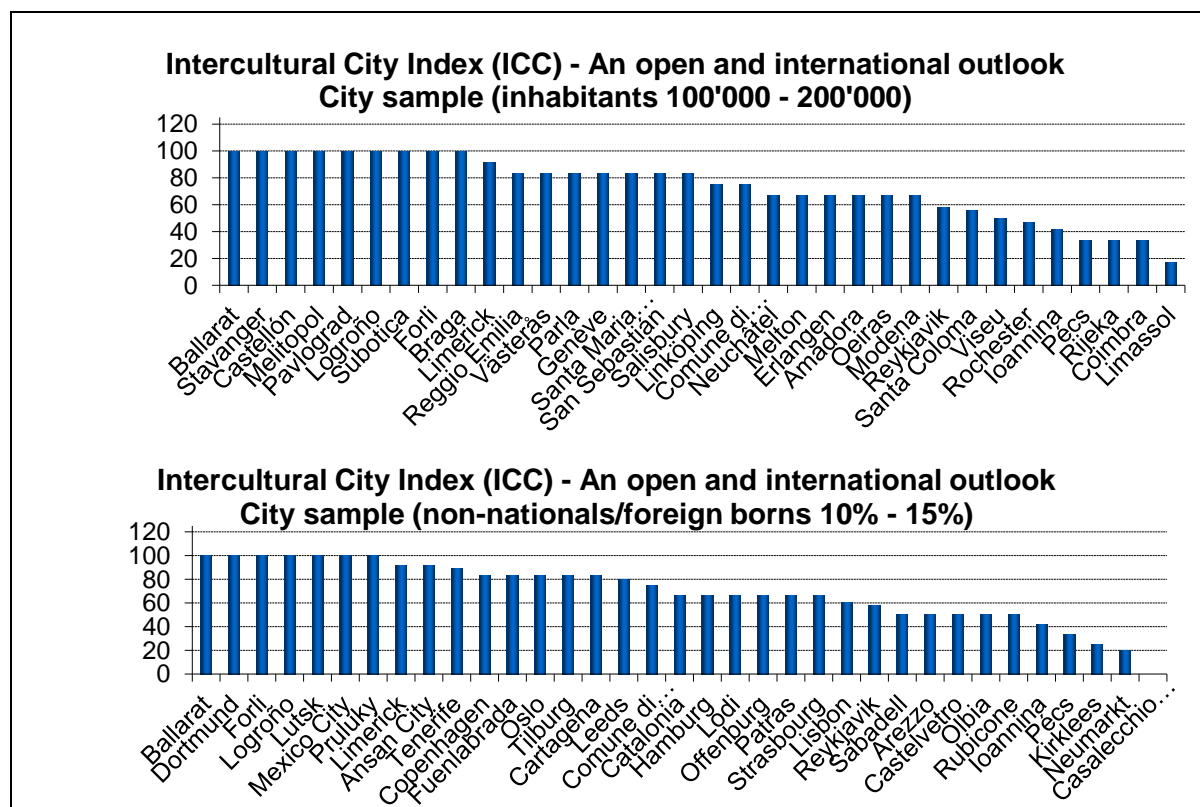
As part of its awareness-raising efforts in this regard—including monitoring local media and organising training sessions—[Sabadell](#), Spain mounted a round-table to ventilate these issues with media professionals. Reykjavik could usefully replicate such an event and see if there would be an appetite for a continuing forum for discussion in the city—engaging the principal media organisations and the Union of Icelandic Journalists—on the new, diverse urban social map on which they are now reporting, analysing and commenting.

Another good example is the Geneva’s, Switzerland, [anti-racism campaign where the city tackles hurtful words](#). At a time when social networks and digital communication have a major impact on the everyday interaction, raising awareness of discriminatory remarks and speech is a real challenge for public authorities. The amount of information and the speed at which it flashes across the screens mean that it is effectively impossible to control. Meanwhile, insufficiently robust legislation increases the powerlessness to deal with defamation and incitement to hatred. In this context, the topic of the 2018 anti-racism week was “hurtful words”. In order to identify, deconstruct and condemn them. The idea was also to highlight, through poetry slam, storytelling, films, workshops and talks/lectures, positive use of language that promotes diversity and celebrates the plural identity.

INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

Although cities have little or no competence in foreign policy, they can actively seek to make connections in other countries to develop business relations, exchange knowledge and know-how, encourage tourism, or simply acknowledge the ties the city may have elsewhere. An intercultural city actively encourages interactions with the outside world and in particular with the cities, regions or countries of origin of its inhabitants.

Reykjavik’s score in the field of international outlook is 58, lower than the city sample result of 69.



It is worth recalling that Reykjavik is not only a relatively small city but is also geographically isolated from major transnational networks. It has however had a policy on international co-operation since 2005, currently under review. It also has an international-affairs officer in the mayor’s office.

The city cooperates with both universities located in Reykjavik: University of Iceland and University of Reykjavik. The city closely cooperates with International Offices in many events such as Equality Days and the International Days. Other cooperation projects include Café Lingua in cooperation with the City Library. The city also cooperates with the university project Mobilities and Transnational Iceland that aims to bring together researchers studying recent changes in Iceland from the perspective on mobility and transnational connections.

Finally, Reykjavik is twinned with Winnipeg, Canada where many Icelandic Canadians are descendants of people who fled an eruption of the volcano Askja. The sister city agreement with Seattle was signed in 1986 which has the largest Icelandic community in the US. Reykjavik also twinned with Wrocław, Poland as majority of migrants in Reykjavik are from Poland. The cooperation with Winnipeg and Seattle has mostly been of political and cultural (heritage) nature, whereas the cooperation with Wrocław has centred around urban development, exchange of knowledge/practices and culture.

Recommendations

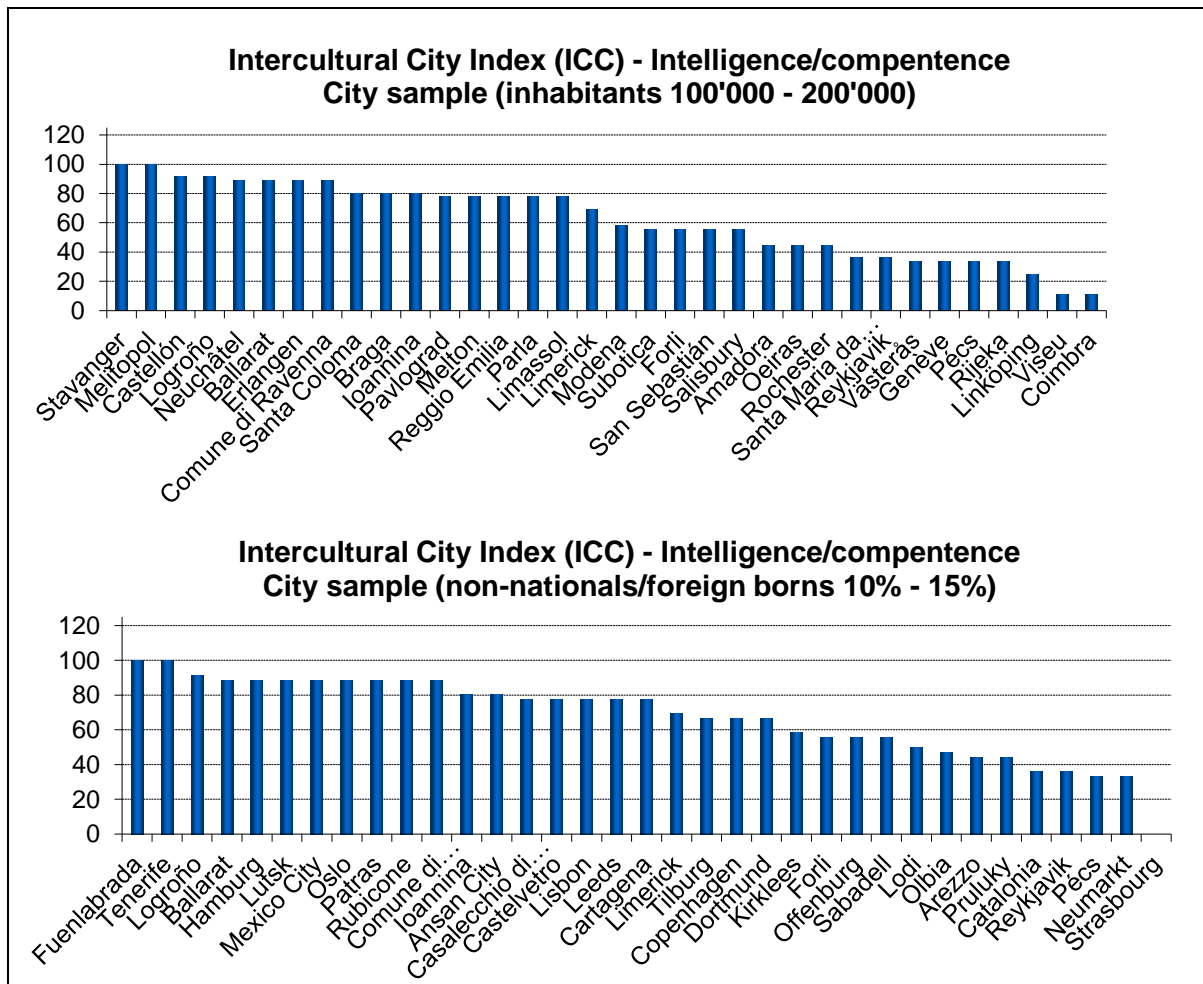
Reykjavik should consider developing strategically its twinning relationships. New partners could usefully be found in countries from which Reykjavik draws significant populations (as already with Wrocław) and fellow intercultural cities in the region—such as maybe Stavanger and Botkyrka (as already with Copenhagen and Oslo)—which have experiences on which to draw.

The city of Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal shows another interesting practice. Diversity and migration are perceived as a window to explore new opportunities and new markets. The municipality is planning the launch of [an online platform that will link local business owners of all backgrounds with the Portuguese diaspora](#) and with the countries of origin of local immigrants. The launch of this platform is the culmination of a number of initiatives that reach out through business partnerships. The municipality has regular business exchanges with Kenitra, Morocco.

INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE

Nobody can be an expert in all the languages and cultures that coexist in contemporary cities. Yet, in an intercultural city, officials have an intercultural “mind-set” which enables them to detect cultural differences and modulate their responses accordingly. Intercultural intelligence and competence require a specific know-how when dealing with unfamiliar situations and not an in-depth and often elusive knowledge of all cultures. Such sensitivity and self-confidence is not commonly-seen. It is a technical skill which can be acquired through training and practice. In an intercultural city, the authorities view such skills as equally important and essential to the good functioning of the city as the other professional and technical skills usually expected from public employees.

Reykjavik's score in the field of intercultural intelligence and competence is 36, considerably lower than the city sample result of 62, however indicating a significant increase from the score of the city in 2014.



Since 2018 Reykjavik has been working on developing [intercultural competence](#) among its 8,000 or so employees. The credibility of the intercultural commitment of public authorities depends on users' experiences on the other side of the counter or at the other end of the phone (as well as those of diverse staff themselves). Reykjavik's training programme has a practical focus on everyday experiences and situations which can arise, such as of stereotyping or micro-aggression. The Human Rights and Democracy Office concluded from a survey of staff engaged that it has been very successful.

Recommendations

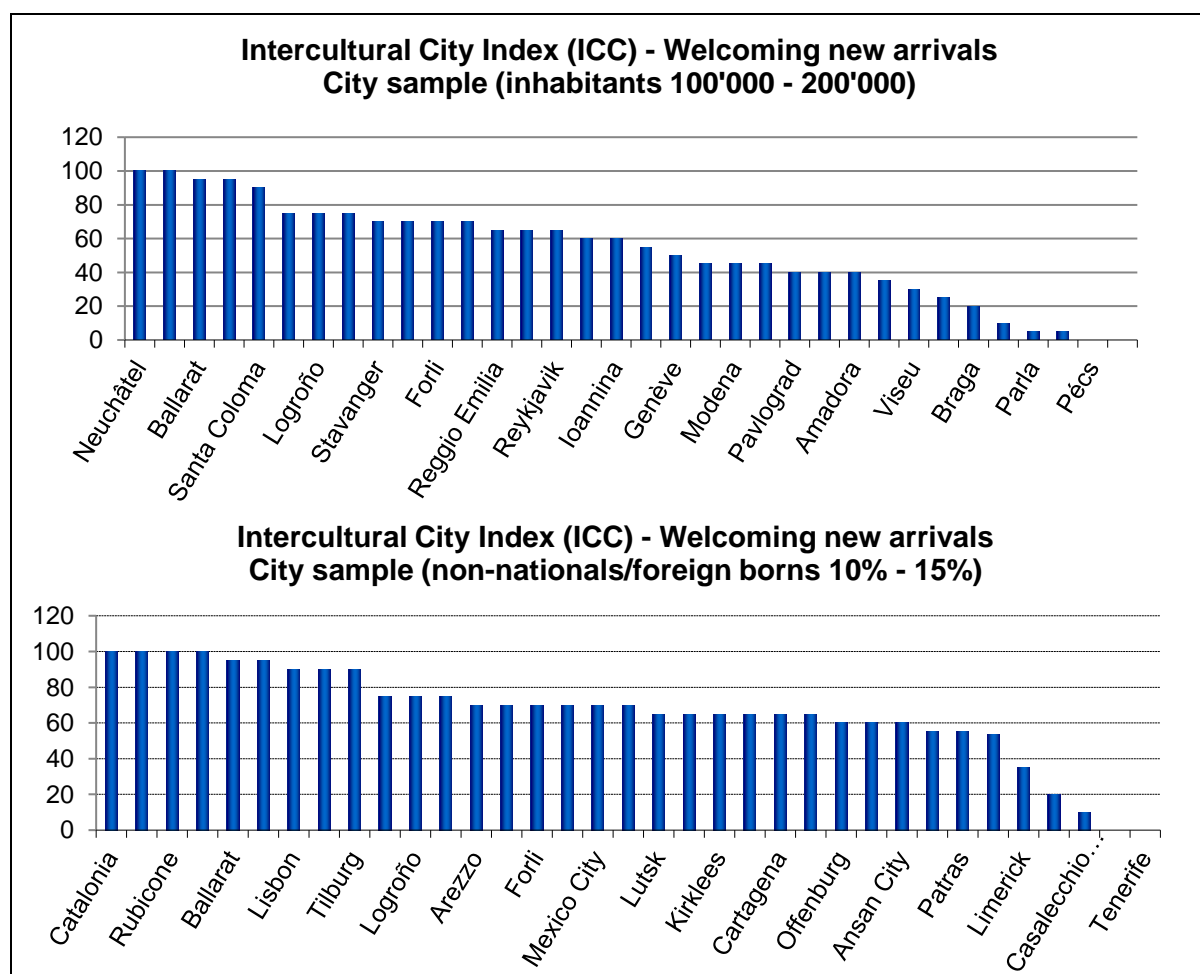
The municipality lacks background evidence of attitudes within the city, which could contextualise its efforts to enhance the intercultural competences of its staff. Quantitative survey research and/or qualitative research based on stakeholder interviews and focus groups could usefully be commissioned, with a view to gauging opinion among the 'host' and the various minority communities. Such research, which could feed into a new intercultural strategy, would specifically be of value in identifying issues and problems, as perceived by residents, which municipal staff needed to have the capacities to address in and through their work. It would also be valuable, ideally, to repeat such work over time to obtain a longitudinal sense of trends in public attitudes. Barcelona, for instance, has found over time a significant decline in xenophobia through recurrent opinion surveys, from 15 per cent identifying 'immigration' as the main problem facing the city at the height of the financial crisis to a negligible proportion latterly.

Montreal, Canada has launched a [major survey](#) in order to determine Montrealers' views of migration and enable it to target the obstacles to migrants' labour market integration. The results feed into the policymaking to ensure an informed response. The city has also involved various stakeholders to map the [views to address in the awareness-raising campaign](#). In the context of a future project, the city wishes to involve its employees, elected representatives and all local people in eliminating the main obstacles to the socio-economic integration of newcomers. This project reaches out to the host society in all its diversity, it is intended to be a fun, positive exercise and will be developed in co-creation with the relevant players.

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

People arriving in a city for an extended stay, whatever their circumstances (expats, migrant workers, spouses, refugees, unaccompanied minors, retired persons, etc.), are likely find themselves disorientated. The less familiar they are with the new environment, the more support they will need to feel comfortable and confident enough to start building a new social and professional network. The way in which the city coordinates and effectively delivers various support measures strongly conditions their capacity to integrate or, conversely, their tendency to remain confined to a cultural “ghetto”. This also depends to a great degree on whether the rest of the city’s population is open to the idea of welcoming newcomers in their capacity as residents and citizens or, on the contrary, is accustomed to viewing newcomers as outsiders who pose a potential threat. Again, it is the message the authorities convey on diversity, in communication or through concrete actions, that determines to a certain degree attitudes towards newcomers.

Reykjavik’s score in the field of welcoming newcomers is 65, higher than the city sample result of 58. The city has developed a message of hospitality.



Newcomers to the city receive a ‘Welcome to Reykjavik’ brochure at their address, with text in Icelandic and English, outlining the services the city offers.

All city districts have a welcome to the city/neighbourhood program for students and their families. This is reported to be a cooperative effort of the Department of Education, Department of Welfare, local service centres, local sports and leisure clubs and other local stakeholders. There is a special team who provide individual and group support and services for refugees and asylum-seekers. In cooperation with the University of Iceland the Reykjavik Human Rights and Democracy Office provides the Welcome to Reykjavik courses for foreign staff members and their spouses.

The city does not however organise a public ceremony to greet all people arriving to live in the city regardless of origin or nationality.

Suggestions

Reykjavik could consider converting its welcoming material into digital—and genuinely multilingual—form. [Braga](#), Portugal, which has a strong focus on attracting and retaining mobile professionals, has developed an app as part of its 'BragaIncoming' programme, which can provide a much more comprehensive and up-to-date guide to the city. [Erlangen](#), Germany has also developed such an app.

[Neuchâtel](#), Switzerland sees this in terms of a significant process. It offers five distinct programmes with ten classes to ensure the orientation of newcomers is fully realised.

Integration has however also an 'affective' dimension. Of value to consider replicating in this regard is the [Copenhagen](#), Denmark 'host' programme. This pairs newcomers with volunteers from the 'host' community to encourage befriending and easy integration. It is run in conjunction with the Danish Refugee Council and an association focusing on educational/vocational aspects of integration. It is a very simple manifestation of the key intercultural claim that integration is a two-way process by which all are enriched.

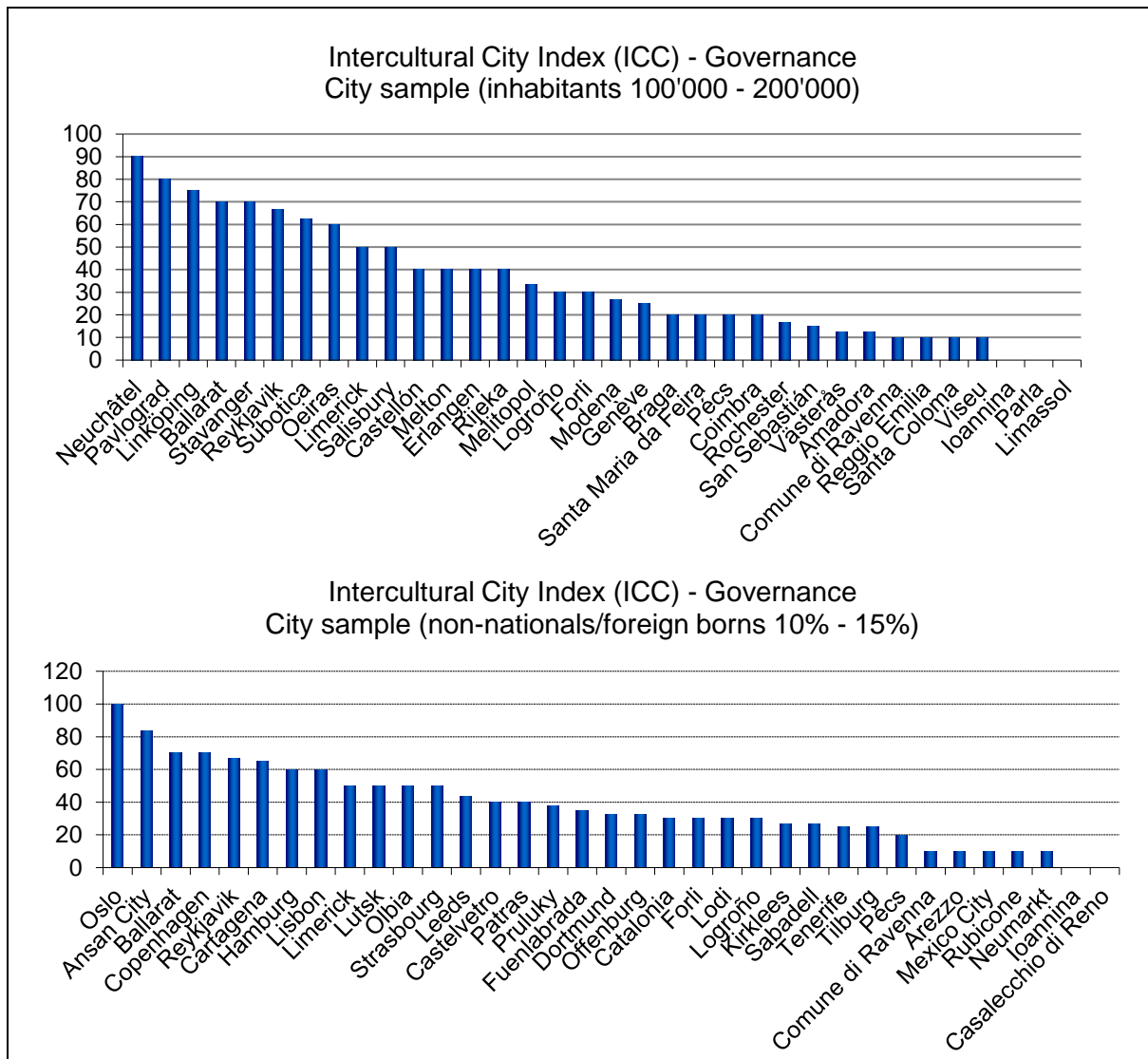
A dedicated service for newcomers is a good practice, such as in Zurich, Switzerland. Zurich has a [specialized agency to welcome newcomers](#) with a dedicated strategy and a complete set of information tools available in 14 languages, as well as specific assistance. Each year, six welcoming events for newcomers are organized. They take place at the City Hall and include multilingual information sessions on the life in Zurich, a multilingual city tour and an aperitif. Finally, the information tools are differentiated on several levels, distinguishing between those aimed at the newly arrived population and those targeting specific language groups. For many years, these tools have included various services such as a welcome desk, welcome events, a database of German courses and multilingual internet portals.

In Montreal, Canada the Diversity and Social Inclusion Department now includes an [Office for the Integration of Newcomers in Montreal \(BINAM\)](#), which enables it to work in partnership and hand in hand with the city's various other departments and directorates to ensure crosscutting, effective and concerted action. The office helps newcomers to familiarise themselves with the way the various institutions operate and with trends in the labour market, while acclimatising with the host society and all areas of life in Montreal. It helps to bring players in the business sector, community sector and social services together to prepare the host society for the arrival of and harmonious coexistence with newcomers, with a view to speeding up the process of their socioeconomic integration and maximising their participation in community life in Montreal. A digital solution called "Montreal, a new beginning" has been launched to inform newcomers about local services and settlement support programmes.

LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

The most powerful and far-reaching action a city can take to be more intercultural is to open up democratic representation and decision-making to all residents of the city irrespective of their origin, nationality or residence status. Formal political rights at the local level are determined nationally or at the regional level in some federal states. Nonetheless, there is much that a city council can do to influence the way in which diverse groups interact and co-operate around the allocation of power and resources. An intercultural city strives to include all residents in the policy-making process and ensures thereby that public services are provided according to their diverse needs and not according to their cultural or political proximity to public decision-makers.

Reykjavik's score in the field of leadership and citizenship is 67, considerably higher than the city sample result of 35. Reykjavik has the advantages of offering (under Icelandic law) relatively early access to the franchise to newcomers to the city and of having an Intercultural Council which can be a vehicle to facilitate migrants and refugees moving from the NGO world to the formal political arena.



Under Icelandic law adults (18+) can vote in local elections if they have lived in the country for three years (of Scandinavian origin) or five years (otherwise). This is a relatively short period of transition, favourable to migrants/refugees becoming involved in local politics. The city also reports there are elected members of the city's municipal council who are foreign-born or dual nationals. This is also facilitated by the existence of the Intercultural Council, which—as elsewhere in Europe—brings together representatives of the municipality and of the NGO world. It has organised meetings between the parties and migrants and, with W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland represented on the council, has made specific connections for women. The city also participates in the Egkys/I vote website. National and local youth associations and immigrants were included in a random selection process to the Citizens Councils in districts and information was translated into Polish and English. However, the city does not have a standard for the representation with people with migrant/minority backgrounds in mandatory boards supervising schools and/or public services.

Suggestions

At the moment, the Intercultural Council is a five-member (plus two observers, with five alternates) advisory body to the Human Rights Democracy and Innovation Council. It could usefully be expanded, on the NGO side, to be inclusive of the diversity of Reykjavik as this evolves. And it should be seen, by the seniority of its political representation, to have a direct line of influence into the elected leadership of the city. It is also useful to have representation, at least in an observer role, of the various other agencies and associations with a stake in intercultural integration, as in [Neukölln](#), Germany.

Thus the Community for Integration and Multicultural Cohesion in [Neuchâtel](#), Switzerland has 25 members (reduced from 41). It also highlights the challenges ahead for Reykjavik in deciding an appropriate selection process for such a body as it enlarges.

A good practice is in [Montreal, Canada](#) where the city has taken steps to ensure the presence of minority ethnic representatives in consultative and decision-making bodies to which the city has the power to make appointments. It has commissioned Concertation Montréal to develop and support innovative and structural regional initiatives to achieve this goal. This includes action to promote successful models, develop a pool of candidates, and increase participation of under-represented groups in decision-making bodies. The Montreal Intercultural Council (CiM) advises, and issues opinions to the City Council and the executive committee on all issues of interest to the cultural communities and on any another matter relating to intercultural relationships. It seeks opinions and receives and hears requests and suggestions from any person or group relating to intercultural relationship issues. It carries out or commissions studies and research that it deems useful or necessary to the exercise of its functions.

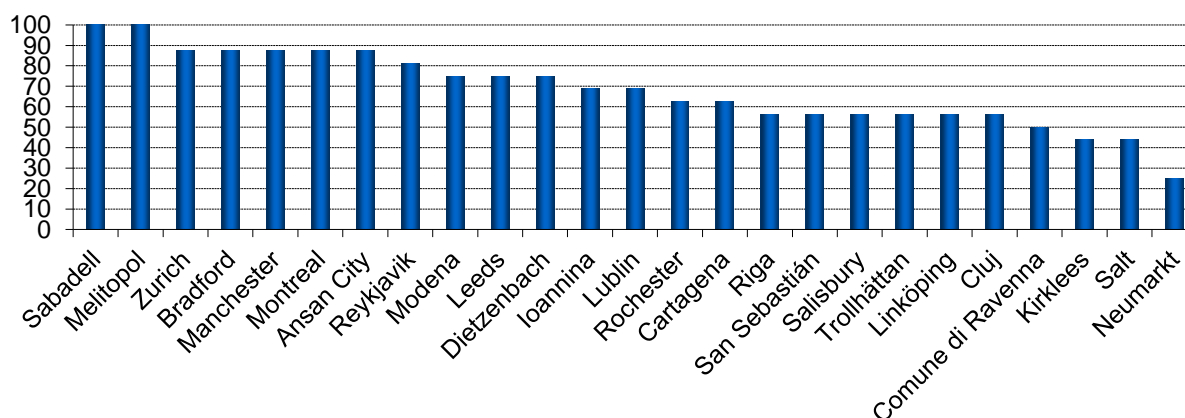
An example to draw inspiration from is the [Young Mayor programme](#) in London Lewisham, United Kingdom. The London Lewisham Young Mayor is an attempt to put real power and responsibility in the hands of young people and treat them seriously. The Young Mayor is elected by direct ballot every year and – along with a cabinet of young advisors – is given a budget of at least £25,000 to initiate a programme of work, as well as to advise the Lewisham Mayor and the city Council on issues relating to young people.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, intolerance against certain religious groups, gender discrimination, prejudice and ethnocentrism, are all conducive to discriminatory attitudes and practices. They often subsist in people's minds despite laws proscribing discrimination against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation. An intercultural city assures every effort is made to ensure non-discrimination in all of its policies, programmes and activities. The city works in partnership with civil society organisations and other institutions that combat discrimination and offer support and reparation to victims. It also communicates widely on the risks discrimination presents for social cohesion, quality of life and the local economy.

Reykjavik's score in the field of anti-discrimination is 81, higher than the city sample result of 68. As elsewhere in terms of the Nordic social model, Reykjavik benefits from a strong anti-discriminatory regime.

Intercultural City Index (ICC) - Anti-discrimination



Reykjavik has a comprehensive anti-discriminatory policy, governed by its Human Rights and Democracy Office. It is regularly reviewed, and staff are trained and surveyed on its effectiveness. The policy is based on international human rights treaties, legislation and the principles of equality. The city reports the document aims to ensure that all residents enjoy equality regardless of their origin, nationality, class, language, skin colour, religion, life-stances, political opinions, non-religious convictions, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex characteristics, age, disability, body image or type, health, ability, or other status.

One of the roles assigned to the Reykjavik Human Rights and Democracy Office is to protect citizens from discrimination. Both citizens and workers can direct complaints and ask for assistance if they consider they have faced discrimination through the city actions. The Citizen's Ombudsman is an independent advisor for citizens of Reykjavik where citizens may issue complaints about acts of discrimination for example in municipality processing and performances.

The city also has a service contract with the National Queer Organisation of Iceland (Samtökin 78) who provide support, counselling and legal advice. The organisation provides education courses for school students and service centres. The City also provides grants to W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland who provide peer counselling and also supports the Women's' Shelter.

Various campaigns and projects have been done over the years. For example, a brochure was issued by the Human Rights Office of Reykjavik "Diversity and discrimination – discrimination chain". Recently the city council has agreed to launch a campaign against hate speech and discrimination.

Further, the city reports to annually survey all employees about their experience with discrimination and prejudice in the workplace. The Human Rights and Democracy Office has also been carrying the anti-discrimination trainings for city employees, police forces and the employees of companies owned by the city.

The city has a seat on the national Immigrant Council of the Ministry of Welfare. The Minister responsible for immigration and refugees appoints a six-person Immigration Council to advise him/her on drafting an immigration policy and on encouraging co-ordination and consultation between ministries, local authorities and other areas of public administration. The Minister presents a resolution to the Icelandic parliament Althingi proposing a four-year action programme for immigrants' issues. This is currently going through city government where it is favourably looked upon by all parties and it will be implemented in 2020.

Suggestions

A strong human-rights commitment is a sound basis for intercultural integration, dependent as that is on a climate in which all individuals are treated with equal human dignity. An anti-discrimination regime is also important because it engenders a 'diversity advantage' by ensuring that all individuals are able to develop their talents to the full, without barriers being placed in their way. This is evident, for example, in the intercultural strategy of [Botkyrka](#), Sweden.

The city could consider complementing this 'vertical' emphasis with a 'horizontal', intercultural dimension. So, for example, the anti-discrimination training for staff of the municipality and its companies might sensibly be combined with the training the city has been doing since 2018 *vis-à-vis* intercultural competences.

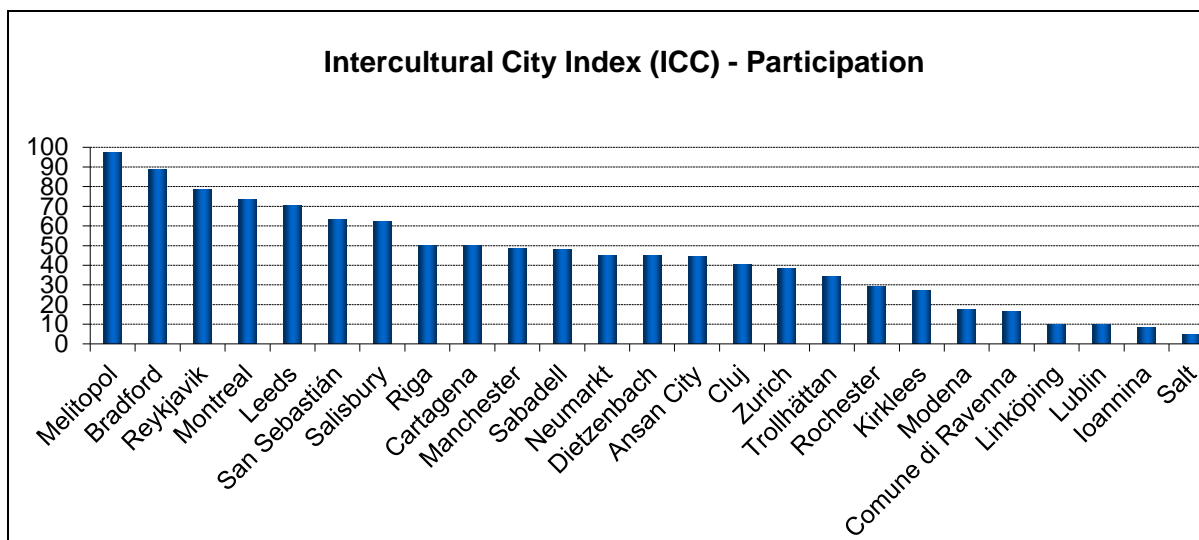
In Donostia/San Sebastián, Spain the [local ombudsman](#) deals with complaints against the public administration; provides a critical assessment of public policy; and promotes human rights. Similarly, in Barcelona, Spain an [office for non-discrimination](#) has been instated. There is also the very practical example of [Netherlands](#), where every municipality is required by law to establish an anti-discrimination service to receive and address complaints, including through local mediation, and, in some instances to advise the municipality on good practice.

Further inspiration for campaigns can be drawn from the cities of Milan, Palermo and Turin, Italy, which launched the project [#iorispetto](#) (I respect). The project promotes civic awareness and active empowerment oriented towards the realization of a more inclusive society. The project methodology combines training for teachers, intercultural mediators and volunteers; workshop and labs in schools; and finally, the launch of initiatives of active citizenship, with the use of participatory methodologies and the involvement of all realities present at local level.

PARTICIPATION

Inclusion, power-sharing and participation are the golden keys of intercultural policy-making. A range of studies have demonstrated that inclusive integration policies produce better outcomes in terms of social cohesion, trust in the administration, safety, quality of services, welfare, good governance and economic growth. People with different backgrounds and experiences can bring innovative solutions to common challenges, as well as anticipate problems that might arise. Conversely, 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.

Reykjavik's score in the field of participation is 78, considerably higher than the city sample result of 44. This relates to the existing culture of participation in the city and prior engagement of migrant associations.



Reykjavik's 'My Neighbourhood' system for 'participatory budgeting' at neighbourhood level and the formation by sortition of neighbourhood councils allow scope generally for city residents' participation in policy and political debate. The municipality also organises a regular Intercultural Congress to link this participatory dynamic to the substance of intercultural issues. The objective is to help improve city services for immigrants and meet the needs of new residents living in an Intercultural city. Each council consists of six representatives and one is chosen at random from the residents of the neighbourhood. Random selection means that each resident over 18 years of age will have an equal probability of participating in the residents' council in his or her neighbourhood. There was also migrant input into the drafting of the existing integration policy.

The city does not monitor the participation of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making process. The city however reports that the city is seriously considering to take action to ensure that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds are fairly represented in key institutions and organisations, on boards or ruling bodies of trade unions, public schools, work councils.

The Human Rights Office is also reported to have developed a checklist to use when considering grants for projects and organisations from their office. Since 2011 the city has used gender budgeting as a mechanism to ensure gender equality in all aspects of its operations. All grant applications and city projects must meet the requirements stated in the Gender Equality Policy and the Human Rights Policy.

Suggestions

The city is considering action to promote more participation by members of minority communities in Reykjavik's associational sphere. This is valuable, as it is important that migrants are not ghettoised into only 'migrant' NGOs but also have a broader presence, including in the political parties. The city might consider this as a key theme of a future Intercultural Congress.

Were the city to conclude that it should supplant its integration policy with a broader intercultural strategy, this would offer a new, bespoke opportunity for migrants and refugees—though, again, not only migrants and refugees—to participate in its preparation. And then further opportunities naturally follow, in its delivery, monitoring, evaluation and review. The more such a strategy involves a widespread sense of ownership, the more traction it will have on the ground. [Barcelona](#) has been a pioneer in the highly consultative way it went about developing its intercultural strategy and Reykjavik already has contacts with a range of relevant organisations which could be readily drawn into this process.

Bradford, United Kingdom has developed its Intercultural Strategy (Together for Stronger Communities 2018-2023) and the corresponding action plan after extensive [consultation with citizens](#). The consultation was both quantitative and qualitative. The Stronger Communities Together strategy's team manages an innovation fund that solicits proposals for innovative and collaborative projects in the area of integration and interculturalism in the broadest sense (i.e., including all forms of social integration - e.g., intergenerational, economic, sexual and disability). These funds will be allocated through participatory budgeting. Additionally, as a way to specifically address the challenge

of representation at the higher level, Bradford launched the initiative “Council’s Future Leaders Experience”. This is a yearlong programme of learning, development, skills, shadowing, mentoring and networking for 20-40 employees at all levels within the organisation and beyond. A significant proportion of the Future Leaders participants have been from a minority background.

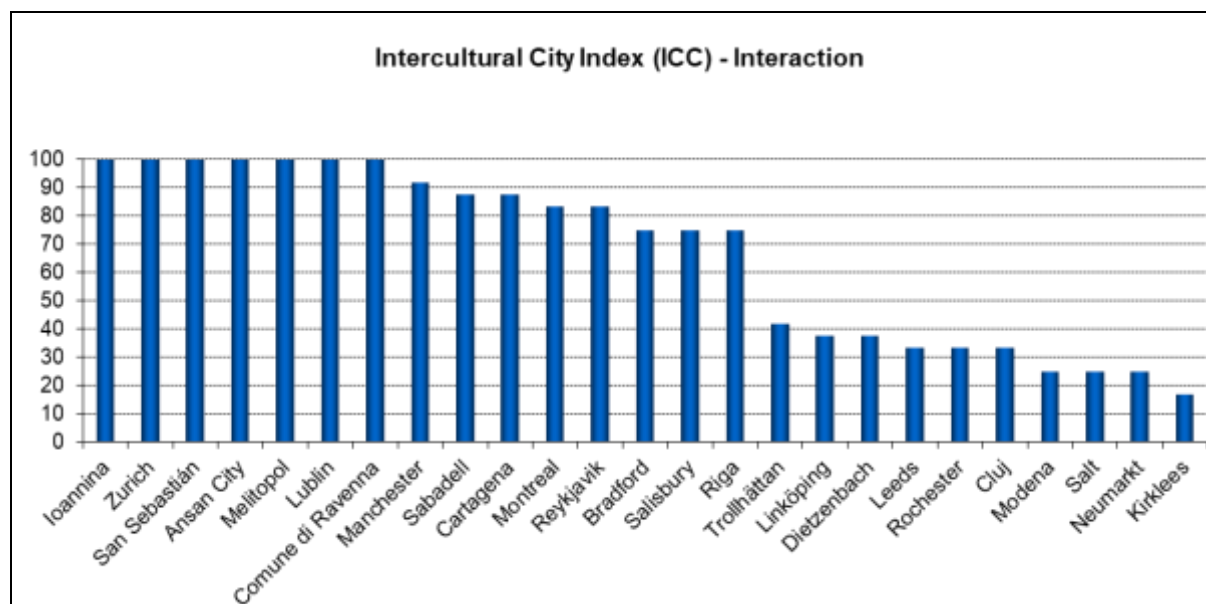
The [Public Participation Network](#) in Dublin is an interesting example of facilitating such engagement. It involves a wide range of civil society organisations and offers them: an opportunity to influence decision-making; access to information; training; opportunities to network; and organised engagement with the City Council.

There is also the example of the [Immigration Council](#) of Berlin-Neukölln which represents the interests of migrants in all areas of life and encourages their participation in civil and political life. It makes recommendations, proposals and declarations to inform the Council in its work. Salisbury, Australia has an [Intercultural Community Alliance](#) with the idea to inform the decision-making. In Sabadell, Spain the [New Citizenship Board](#) is an advisory body that includes different immigrant associations and organisations that work in the migration field as well as representation of the local administration. Its functions are: the transfer of information, to find consensus on lines of work, to detect the interests, concerns and problems of the migrants and ethnic minorities and to address issues in cooperation.

INTERACTION

Interaction between people of all kinds is what gives the intercultural city its distinctive value. Identity is not ‘given’ in a passive sense, but something which is ‘enacted’ and defined through interaction. In spite of protective laws, prejudice and discrimination can thrive where there is segregation or a lack of contact and dialogue between people. There is ample evidence to prove that, under certain conditions, the more contact people with different backgrounds and lifestyles have with each other, the less likely they are to think and behave in prejudicial ways. Therefore, an intercultural city develops, in partnership with other organisations, a range of policies and actions to encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups.

Reykjavik’s score in the field of interaction is 83, considerably higher than the city sample result of 67. This is partly an offshoot of its strong culture of participation, which stands it in good stead—interaction will otherwise always be merely top-down and ‘official’.



The municipality has a database of all the associations relevant to intercultural interaction operating in Reykjavik. Its Human Rights and Democracy Office collaborates on issues of inclusion with organisations such as ProjektPolska and the Muslim Cultural Centre. And, as indicated above, with the University of Iceland it promotes the training of teachers in intercultural education.

Suggestions

















The municipality's database is very useful for it to communicate to the NGO world on a one-to-many basis. It could be beneficial to take that a step further by encouraging more many-to-many network connections among associations, particularly in as far as this crosses potential cultural dividing lines. In addition to the face-to-face Intercultural Congresses it organises, it might make sense to organise smaller online events and/or a well-moderated online forum to which registered organisations had access.

Also, as suggested earlier, intercultural centres which are not themselves in any sense ethnically 'aligned' can provide valuable physical forums for events (as well as performances and exhibitions), such as Mondinsieme in [Reggio-Emilia](#).

In Patras, Greece, the city took steps to [train the teachers in intercultural competence](#). Effective teachers are expected to cultivate students' intercultural competence enabling them to engage in everyday intercultural interactions free of stereotypes or prejudice or diversity-related rumours. In doing so teachers have to design learning experiences which foster reciprocal communication and collaborative intercultural action. In the programme, 250 trainee teachers were engaged in an action research collaborative project as part of their course at the University of Patras. They were asked to design, implement and reflect/evaluate an anti-rumour campaign to combat prejudices, stereotypes and racist attitudes in workplaces of their choice.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Reykjavik has an aggregate intercultural city index of 64 (out of 100 possible points).

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| COMMITMENT |   | <p>In 2019 Reykjavik made a <u>statement</u> asserting its intercultural commitment, the municipality having in 2016 adopted a policy on integration vis-à-vis migrants and refugees which is annually reviewed. The Human Rights and Democracy Office co-ordinates a group of 20 relevant officials across departments</p> |
| EDUCATION |   | <p>In 2014 the Department of Education and Youth published a <u>policy</u> document entitled <i>The World is Here</i>. This encourages diversity in pedagogy to accommodate diverse students, supports bilingualism by encouraging development of the mother tongue (where different) alongside Icelandic and encourages parental engagement.</p> <p>Via the University of Iceland, the department provides courses for teachers in intercultural communication and cultural sensitivity, but these are not yet mandatory.</p> |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD |  | <p>Reykjavik's score on neighbourhoods is 100. This partly relates to the city's <u>My Neighbourhood</u> initiative, which draws citizens into online discussions about how budgets are allocated at the micro-level. It also derives from the outreach efforts of the Department of Culture and Tourism in the city, led by Reykjavik City Library.</p> |
| PUBLIC SERVICE |   | <p>The municipality takes the positive approach that its 8,000-strong workforce should reflect the diversity of the city as a whole. It pursues this through its diversity and equality policy. Reykjavik uses public procurement as a lever to ensure contractors have acceptable policies on human rights and equality.</p> <p>The municipality recognises that its senior levels are not sufficiently diverse.</p> |
| BUSINESS AND LABOUR |  | <p>Reykjavik's score in business and the labour market is 100. A prosperous city, it is committed to ethical business practices, including in its human-rights focused procurement policy and its collaboration with the Icelandic Confederation of Labour.</p> |
| CULTURE AND SOCIAL LIFE |   | <p>Since 2017, the Department of Culture and Tourism has supported a policy, <u>Roots and Wings</u>, encouraging appreciation of wider cultural links as well as local traditions. Grant-giving for cultural activities is also regulated by human-rights considerations.</p> <p>The city admits that it does not encourage cultural organisations to address diversity and interculturalism and it only organises intercultural events 'sometimes'.</p> |
| PUBLIC SPACE |   | <p>The city protects public space as space for all residents. It ensures sexual violence and other hate crime is tackled and individuals with disabilities can enjoy access. The city has a motto that it contains 'all kinds of places for all kinds of people'.</p> <p>The public realm is valued and could be extended beyond defining it as neutral, to fostering it as a rich shared domain.</p> |
| MEDIATION |   | <p>The city has an ombudsman to deal with complaints against the municipality. The Human Rights and Democracy Office meets with religious groups and is exploring the promotion of inter-religious dialogue.</p> <p>The Human Rights and Democracy Office has had a 'vertical' focus on relations via the citizen and public authority, rather than 'horizontally' among residents themselves.</p> |
| LANGUAGE |  | <p>Reykjavik has developed a <u>specific approach</u> to language development in school through its Centre of Language and Literacy, supporting language pluralism and involvement of parents (and non-teaching staff), including in pre-school and after-school settings. It also supports a Mother Tongue Teaching Association and a bilingual association, as well as 'Café Lingua' events in places such as the city library.</p> |
| MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION |  | <p>The municipality takes seriously its own responsibility to promote messages about diversity.</p> |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| | | It has not hitherto sought to sensitise the media in the city themselves in this regard. |
| INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK | | Reykjavik has had a policy on international co-operation since 2005, currently under review. It has an international-affairs officer in the mayor's office. And it has been co-operating with a University of Iceland project, Mobilities and Transnational Iceland. |
| INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE | | Since 2018 Reykjavik has been working on developing <u>intercultural competence</u> among its 8,000 or so employees. Its training programme has a practical focus on everyday experiences and situations. The Human Rights and Democracy Office concluded from a survey of staff engaged that it has been very successful. |
| | | The municipality lacks background evidence of attitudes within the city, which could contextualise its efforts to enhance the intercultural competences of its staff. |
| WELCOMING | | Newcomers receive a 'Welcome to Reykjavik' brochure, with text in Icelandic and English, outlining the services the city offers. There is a specific programme to welcome students and a special team to welcome asylum-seekers/refugees. In conjunction with the University of Iceland, the Human Rights and Democracy Office offers a Welcome to Reykjavik course for newcomer staff and their partners. |
| | | The city does not organise a public ceremony to greet all people arriving to live in the city regardless of origin or nationality. |
| LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP | | Adults can vote in local elections if they have lived in the country for three years (of Scandinavian origin) or five years (otherwise). This is favourable to migrants/refugees becoming involved in local politics. This is also facilitated by the Intercultural Council, which brings together the municipality and the NGO world. It has organised meetings between the parties and migrants and made connections for women. |
| | | The city does not have a standard for the representation with people with migrant/minority backgrounds in mandatory boards supervising schools and/or public services. |
| ANTI-DISCRIMINATION | | Reykjavik has a comprehensive anti-discriminatory policy, governed by its Human Rights and Democracy Office. It is regularly reviewed, and staff are trained and surveyed on its effectiveness. The city liaises with organisations such as the National Queer Organisation of Iceland and W.O.M.E.N in Iceland. It has agreed to run an anti-hate-speech campaign. |
| | | The city does not have in place an anti-rumours strategy nor implements anti-rumours activities following the official Council of Europe methodology. |
| INTERACTION | | The municipality has a database of all the associations relevant to intercultural interaction. Its Human Rights and Democracy Office collaborates on issues of inclusion with organisations such as ProjektPolska and the Muslim Cultural Centre. |
| | | The city does not monitor the participation of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making process. |
| PARTICIPATION | | Reykjavik's 'My Neighbourhood' system for 'participatory budgeting' at neighbourhood level and the formation by sortition of district councils allow scope generally for city residents' participation in policy and political debate. The municipality also organises a regular Intercultural Congress and there was migrant input into the drafting of the existing integration policy. |

Reykjavik can be proud of the achievements it has made so far, from its quite recent engagement with the challenges of intercultural integration. This rapid progress bodes well for further advances in the years ahead, which the recommendations below seek to spur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When it comes to its intercultural efforts, with reference to the index questionnaire, Reykjavik could enhance its work in the different sectors by introducing various initiatives:

Commitment: Reykjavik has an integration strategy, addressing the migrants and refugees who have come to the city in recent years. But this can still suggest that integration is not something which need concern the 'host' community or indeed from which its members can enjoy the benefits of a more dynamically diverse city. The next step should be to elaborate an intercultural strategy which stresses that integration is a two-way process in which all citizens are implicated. This would also allow the intercultural work of the municipality to be interwoven with other policy arenas—as addressed in the [municipal plan](#), with its commitment to a 'creative city'—rather than being seen as distinct. The development of such a strategy would provide a valuable opportunity to encourage broad participation by citizens and their organisations and to engage fully the elected political leadership of the city.

Education: Anticipating further diversification of the school population, Reykjavik could support a wider range of non-formal education projects which foster greater intercultural competence, following the example of [Sabadell](#). It could look also to develop greater global awareness through curricular elements linked to citizenship education, geography, literature and so on, working with a network of teachers willing to pioneer approaches stretching the conventional curriculum. The municipality could engage in positive-action programmes, working with minority associations, to encourage more individuals from migrant and refugee backgrounds to train as teachers and to promote peer support in so doing. Interculturalism should be woven into the mainstream training of teachers. The resources and assistance of the Council of Europe [Wergeland Centre](#) in Oslo could be drawn on in this regard.

Neighbourhoods: Unlike the school, neighbourhoods do tend to be diverse in the city. The city may wish to consider community policing, a problem-solving approach by officers familiar with issues in the neighbourhoods which they police by consent and in dialogue with neighbourhood associations. The experiences of ICCs members in this regard have been drawn together in a [manual](#) on which Reykjavik could usefully draw.

Public services: The city could consider specific work with senior staff members on encouraging diversification of this cadre over time. Initiatives could include mentoring junior staff who could be encouraged to progress, fast-tracking individuals of minority backgrounds from outside the public service and sensitising managers to the [advantages](#) of diverse teams in fostering creativity via the introduction of fresh perspectives, to discourage the unwitting promotion of 'people like us'. There may be some lessons that can be learned from the experience of [Bergen](#), which, faced with exactly the same problem, agreed an action plan to tackle the issue.

Business: The municipality might develop a more focused linkage between its intercultural and business-development activities. [Oslo](#) is an interesting model. With these domains falling within the same department of the Norwegian capital, it has long linked the two—in particular by promoting since 2013 a diversity charter among firms operating in the city, spotlighting diversity and its advantages through associated events and activities. A number of intercultural cities have also developed expertise in promoting migrant enterprises specifically. These were collated in a 2017 ICC [policy brief](#) which may be found useful in developing a more targeted approach. For example, 'Do it in Barcelona' provides a [personalised service](#) to attract and support newcomer entrepreneurs.

Cultural and social life: Projects in the arts and cultural domains can stimulate in participants and users the key intercultural capacity to put oneself in the shoes of the other. One way to achieve this, within the framework of Roots and Wings, is by encouraging cultural institutions in the city to diversify their programming and make links to diverse communities. Another is to support an intercultural centre, as in [Botkyrka](#). The municipality is reviewing its sport and leisure policy with a view to rendering it more intercultural. [Bergen](#) has a scheme to promote co-operation between sports clubs in a manner to foster intercultural inclusion and migrant involvement. And there is much wider experience across Europe of how multi-ethnic sports tournaments can act as valuable connectors.

Public space: One way to celebrate public space as a shared asset is by staging an annual intercultural festival, as in [Lisbon](#) or [Patras](#). A multi-ethnic market can help refresh an anonymous or insecure public space, as with Afrikaanderplein in [Rotterdam](#). Public spaces which are already available gratis, or which can be renovated at low cost to the municipality, can be turned into major intercultural assets with a little imagination and the involvement of arts and cultural practitioners. And this is where real benefits could flow from rethinking the municipal plan—as it stands, a classic document of public-space management—as a resource for intercultural integration.

Mediation and conflict resolution: Various members of the ICC network have addressed the 'horizontal' dimension to social relationships among diverse cities by developing cultural-mediation services. [Bergen](#) is an example. The need for cultural mediation often arises from misunderstandings, misinterpretations and stereotypes.

Challenging these, women's organisations are often able to mediate cultural connections through a common set of gender-related concerns. [Haifa](#) and [Neukölln](#) facilitate such women-led intercultural relationships and the W.O.M.E.N in Iceland network could be a partner for Reykjavik in this regard.

Language: Reykjavik is geographically remote from many global markets. Multilingualism at firm level can help to 'shorten' such distances in making network connections abroad. Finland faces not dissimilar challenges to Iceland in this regard and its 2016-19 integration programme [included](#), as one of its four priorities, 'Using immigrants' cultural strengths to enhance Finnish innovation capacity'. Reykjavik already supports language development in private-sector and civil-society organisations and this could be given greater prominence.

Media and communication: As part of its awareness-raising efforts in this regard—including monitoring local media and organising training sessions—[Sabadell](#) mounted a round-table to ventilate intercultural issues with media professionals. Reykjavik could usefully replicate such an event and see if there would be an appetite for a continuing forum for discussion in the city—engaging the principal media organisations and the Union of Icelandic Journalists—on the new, diverse urban social map on which they are now reporting, analysing and commenting.

International outlook: Reykjavik should consider developing strategically its twinning relationships. New partners could usefully be found in countries from which the city draws significant populations (as already with Wrocław), as well as fellow intercultural cities in the region—such as for example Stavanger, Bergen and Botkyrka (as already with Copenhagen and Oslo)—which have longer experience on which to draw.

Intercultural intelligence: Quantitative survey research and/or qualitative research based on stakeholder interviews and focus groups could usefully be commissioned, with a view to gauging opinion among the 'host' and the various minority communities. Such research, which could feed into a new intercultural strategy, would specifically be of value in identifying issues and problems, as perceived by residents, which municipal staff need to have the capacities to address in and through their work.

Welcoming: Reykjavik could consider converting its one-off welcoming material into digital—and genuinely multilingual—form, developing an app in the manner of [Braga](#) and [Erlangen](#). It could also recognise that this is a process: [Neuchâtel](#) offers five distinct programmes with ten classes to ensure the orientation of newcomers is fully realised. And it is two-way: [Copenhagen](#)'s 'host' programme pairs newcomers with volunteers from the 'host' community to encourage befriending and easy integration.

Leadership and citizenship: The Intercultural Council could be expanded, on the NGO side, to be inclusive of the diversity of Reykjavik as this evolves. And it should be seen, by the seniority of its political representation, to have a direct line of influence into the elected leadership of the city. It would also be useful to have representation, at least in an observer role, of the various other agencies and associations with a stake in intercultural integration, as in [Neukölln](#). The Community for Integration and Multicultural Cohesion in [Neuchâtel](#) has 25 members.

Anti-discrimination: A strong anti-discrimination regime engenders a 'diversity advantage' by ensuring that all individuals are able to develop their talents to the full, without barriers being placed in their way, as in the intercultural strategy of [Botkyrka](#). It is then relatively easy to complement this 'vertical' emphasis with a 'horizontal', intercultural dimension. The anti-discrimination training for staff of the municipality and its companies might sensibly be combined with the training the city has been doing since 2018 *vis-à-vis* intercultural competences.

Participation: The city is considering action to promote more participation by members of minority communities in Reykjavik's associational sphere. It is important that migrants are not ghettoised into only 'migrant' NGOs but also have a broader presence, including in the political parties. The city might consider this as a key theme of a future Intercultural Congress. Were the city to develop a broader intercultural strategy, this would offer a new opportunity for broad participation in its preparation—as well as its delivery, monitoring, evaluation and review. [Barcelona](#) has been a pioneer in the highly consultative way it went about developing its intercultural strategy.

Interaction: The municipality's database is very useful for it to communicate to the NGO world on a one-to-many basis. But it would be good to encourage more many-to-many network connections among associations, particularly crossing potential cultural dividing lines. In addition to the face-to-face Intercultural Congresses, it might make sense to organise smaller online events and/or a well-moderated online forum. Also intercultural centres which are not themselves in any sense ethnically 'aligned' can provide valuable physical forums for events, (as well as performances and exhibitions), such as Mondinsieme in [Reggio-Emilia](#).

Further examples of good practices trialled by other Intercultural Cities can be found in the ICCs [database](#).

Diversity has become a key feature of societies today and is particularly tangible in urban centres. While people of diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith backgrounds have immensely contributed to post-war prosperity, inequalities related to origin, culture and skin colour persist, and anxiety about pluralism, identity and shared values is often politically instrumentalised. The challenge of fostering equity and cohesion in culturally diverse societies has become more acute. Cities are uniquely placed to imagine and test responses to this challenge.

The Council of Europe and its partner cities have developed and validated an intercultural approach to integration and inclusion which enables cities to reap the benefits and minimise the risks related to human mobility and cultural diversity. A decade after the start of this work, there is growing evidence that diversity, when recognised and managed as a resource, produces positive outcomes in terms of creativity, wellbeing and economic development.

The Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) invites cities in Europe and beyond to explore and apply policies that harness diversity for personal and societal development.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 27 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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