



Municipality of Patras
Vice-Municipality of «Support of
Citizens, Volunteerism, Gender Equality
& Integration of Migrants»



An Intercultural Cities Milestone Event Making Diversity work for Cities 6th - 8th February 2013, Dublin, Ireland

Intercultural Strategy of the Municipality of Patras

Speech by the Vice-Mayor of “Support of Citizens, Volunteerism, Gender Equality & Integration of Migrants” of the Municipality of Patras
Mrs Maria ANDRIKOPOULOU-ROUVALI

The intercultural character of Patras is a fact. Within the last 20 years, Patras has become a living place for many people coming from Europe such as Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians as well as people from Africa and the East such as Nigerians, Chinese, Syrians and Indians.

Being a member of the “**Intercultural Cities**” network, a joint action of the **Council of Europe-CoE and the European Commission, is of valuable importance** to our city.

The management of intercultural issues is supervised by the **Vice-Municipality of “Support of Citizens, Volunteerism, Gender Equality & Integration of Migrants”** and is supported by “**Patras Municipal Enterprise for Planning & Development-ADEP SA**”.

Special emphasis is put on the formation of the intercultural strategy of the city of Patras. Mr Robin Wilson, expert of the CoE, provided us with his know-how and after a thorough exchange, the initial version of the intercultural strategy of the city of Patras was formed. On behalf of the city of Patras, I would like to deeply thank you Mr Wilson for the constructive dialogue and the transfer of know-how.

The aim of our strategy is:

‘To develop Patras as an intercultural meeting point, imbued with a spirit of openness, as a co-creation of the municipality, civil society and the residents of the city

It is noteworthy that the key-objectives of the intercultural strategy of Patras are:

1. To foster the social inclusion of all those who wish to make Patras their home and address the humanitarian needs of those only temporarily resident in the city.
2. To model intercultural life in public spaces through festivals, theatre, exhibitions and more generally the performing and visual arts, as well as the internet.
3. To socialize especially young people in Patras into intercultural norms and experiences, via formal and non-formal education and creative use of social media.
4. To address the challenges of on-the-ground diversity through a network of cultural mediators and local partners respecting the diversity advantage.



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5. To improve economic security by fostering intercultural innovation and labour-market integration, working with the social partners.
6. To press on the national and European levels for support for Patras in addressing its intercultural commitments

For the accomplishment of these goals, various actions have been identified on recurring themes such as: the inclusion of an intercultural dimension in the management of everyday life issues, for example in the cultural mediators' network; gender equality, recognizing the potential for intercultural commonalities among women; formal and non-formal education through co-creation as a central “vehicle” to tackle stereotypes; animating the many networks in which Patras is implicated, within the municipality, locally and internationally.

The consultation on the development of the strategy was intensive, with the involvement of many non-governmental organisations engaged by the municipality, as well as public officials and political figures from the City Council. These included migrant and other relevant NGOs even national and international ones and representatives of the social partners (Universities included), as well as officials in Athens. This is a strong partnership that has been flourishing through the years by exploiting Patras experience from ICC network activation.

The exchange within the network is based on co-creation of actions to tackle identified **challenges** that the city faces:

- To think “out of the box” to find innovative ways to overcome the barriers of financial issues
- To cultivate an anti-stereotype behavior, putting emphasis on awareness of children and youth
- To reveal the diversity advantage by identifying real stories of success
- To involve the business sector in the intercultural approach
- To establish a permanent and coherent basis for diffusing ongoing information
- To intervene for the certification of the professional qualifications of the intercultural mediators
- To apply co-creation and synergy in practice

However, it is also a fact that because of their geographical location, there exist sub-regions in Europe which by default are gateways for illegal migration. Patras is one such example and the list of related cities is long. This issue affect public opinion, and in parallel complicate the considerable work and effort put into the integration of legal migrants who are inhabitants. To distinguish and clarify the two different situations into the minds of citizens, can also be regarded as a challenge.

The municipality's Intercultural Strategy will shortly go before Patras “Council for the Integration of Migrants-CIM” and Patras City Council itself.



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The wider Greek crisis makes it impossible to release new revenues for the strategy at this time. But the municipality will privilege intercultural programmes and projects within its budgeting, continue to draw down EU programmes (mainly through ADEP) and, in parallel, utilize the developing human resources represented by the Office of Volunteerism that has been operating since 2008 and various active NGOs.

The activation is a very live process with strengths and weaknesses and lessons learnt so as to become better. More specifically, we may note:

- The role of intercultural mediators in the social inclusion of migrants is of vital importance – invest in them
- Co-creation is necessary, from the design throughout the implementation and monitoring
- A municipality cannot substitute the state – there is always a framework that you need to respect which at the same time may present obstacles and delays
- Concrete numbers and indicators are necessary– in this way, you have the data to monitor your actions, to measure the performance and to persuade others of the importance of continuing them
- A smile and openness construct an excellent “bridge” to start with ...

Within our emphasis on intercultural diversity, we are aware that we are not alone. Because of the experience gained, as a result of actions at local and European level, we want to be a very active partner contributing to effective networking. For this reason, we remain “open” for collaboration and constructive exchange.

In order to conclude, I would like to thank

-the Council of Europe for such a successful implementation of the ICC network as well as DG of Education and Culture of European Commission that has recognized the importance of the concept

- Mrs Irena GUIDIKOVA, the coordinator of the network and her team for the excellent cooperation and support we have sharing for years

- the Mayor of Dublin and his team (especially Mr Declan Hayden)

- all those who have worked hard for this three-day conference

- the ICC members with whom we have shared concerns, worries and our common vision to improve as Intercultural Cities

- the interpreters for their help

-and of course all of you for your attention

Thank you deeply!