INNOVATIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & INCLUSION IN EUROPEAN TOWNS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
for diverse, inclusive, and fair European towns

INTRODUCTION

The European Union is based on fundamental rights: dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizenship, justice. It is also an original institutional formation which for the first time in human history conceives its development and unification process taking into account the defense and enhancement of its diversity! These values guide EU legislation and policies to promote equality, non-discrimination and integration in the Union.

While the reality of freedom of movement within the EU was shaping up, the destabilization of countries through internal conflicts bordering with the EU led to a large influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers within the Union. The EU has for several factors witnessed a large influx of third country nationals within its borders. This has led the EU to devise new strategies for the labour market integration of these third country nationals via various programs and policies. It also created a need for the EU to be flexible and dynamic both to survive as well as to strengthen itself through its diverse population.

"Unity in diversity" was proclaimed as the official motto of the European Union on 4th May 2000. The European Union (EU) is an ongoing project in diversity management.

Member states bring their own histories, languages, economies, and political cultures to a common table in Brussels, and the individual citizens of the European Union exhibit the full cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the world.

Diversity management in the European Union requires confronting and reconciling not only the diversity among states, but also the increasingly diverse populations within those states. Equality and inclusiveness are two of the six main core values of the European Union. The European Charter of Fundamental Rights presents a list of social areas where diversity is strongly observed and the need for inclusion is therefore deeply felt. Among other factors it highlights diversity experienced through age difference, race and ethnicity, forms of ability and disability, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender and cultural differences. These differences, that often lead to discrimination, exclusion and conflict also offered an opportunity to see diversity as a resource rather than a problem.

In INDIMAE Network, we believe that European towns have a great potential to implement innovative diversity management practice and adopt creative inclusive strategies in order to ensure a better quality of the lives of all citizens in the their local communities. Therefore we network for change, because we believe we can make a positive impact on European towns` journey to peace, prosperity and inclusion for all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE AND FAIR EUROPEAN TOWNS

The European Union through its 27 member states shares a set of common values in which inclusion, tolerance, non-discrimination, justice, and solidarity prevail. Having a union formed by several countries, that have agreed by various treaties to share their sovereignty through the institutions of the European Union, has led to increasingly diverse societies. This, in turn, highlights the value of the principles of equality and inclusiveness that are essential for the building of a more cohesive European society.

The INDIMAE Network of Towns has developed a set of Policy Recommendations in order to add to the practical guidance on how to become and function as a town, adopting participatory democracy principles and human rights as a guiding norm of local governance - fostering a culture of inclusivity locally, assisting mayors and local administrations in integrating innovative diversity management strategies in their work.

The aim of the INDIMAE is a Network of Towns is to adopt human rights as a guiding norm of local governance in European towns in light of international human rights standards and based on the EU Charter of fundamental rights in order to encourage participatory democracy and social justice in town management.

The INDIMAE network members work together on promoting a culture of inclusion that celebrates diversity in European societies, using participatory democracy principles as a foundation. The Policy Recommendations address the need to focus on vulnerable groups; putting individual rights at the center of public policies and empowering local communities to take the lead and challenge the local municipalities in their responsibilities.

The Policy Recommendations of the Network of Towns for innovative diversity management and inclusion advocates that local authorities across Europe should be seen as essential to protecting and promoting democracy and human rights as they set laws, policies, and program that most directly impact people's lives.

The INDIMAE members believe that it is crucial that the local governments in Europe have a clear understanding of their diversity management and human rights protection duties, to increase participation of all citizens as rights-holders, and encourage networking and cooperation for inclusion with all stakeholders - civil society, academia, and actors of the private sector.

About the INDIMAE Policy Recommendations

The INDIMAE Policy Recommendations are based on a series of citizen debates and a broad consultative process on local diversity management and inclusion strategies. Each Network member engaged and gave voice to marginalized communities, seeking to strengthen public demand for reform in our towns. These processes opened up dialogue and debate between citizens and European towns, where a wide range of diversity management and inclusion concerns emerged as local community development priorities, seeking to result in awareness of the need to challenge vested interests.

These Policy Recommendations are genuine and drawn from the local debates in each INDIMAE partner country, addressing the specific needs of the local communities, searching to influence local, national and European policy debates.

Communicating the INDIMAE project findings and results is a crucial part of maximizing this impact and writing Policy Recommendations based on these findings offers to the European decision-makers and everyone in positions of influence the opportunity to use the findings to enact real change to policy and society at local, national and European level.

IDIMAE Network calls for inclusiveness as a driving notion in European towns, with regard to making towns and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and with regard to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, debating strategies to tackle social exclusion and marginalisation; and building effective, accountable and inclusive governance, organizations and institutions at all levels.

Drafting those Recommendations, the INDIMAE Network members hope to have a beneficial impact on the lives of the societies and the citizens, both locally and at European level - in search to improve diversity management, social integration and inclusion of all communities; increase the effectiveness of public services and public policy; and enhance quality of life and outcomes in areas such as intercultural dialogue, inclusion and human rights protection for all citizens across Europe.

These Policy Recommendations are a result of the local and European collaborative processes involving all INDIMAE Network members.
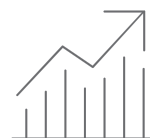
KEY POINTS

SHARED EUROPEAN VALUES

The INDIMAE Policy Recommendations are a set of policy advices that have been drafted by the eleven members of INDIMAE Network of Towns in order to support local and European policy-makers in drafting adequate and up to date policies for innovative diversity management and inclusion in European towns.

INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In response to growing interrelated threats, European towns are recommended to get more engaged in an inclusive governance to increase their resilience and sustainability; to provide opportunities for inclusive growth and active participation for all citizens in Europe.

COLLABORATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Alternative models of knowledge production and decision-making are required for building good governance systems in European town via diversity management, social inclusion and innovation - towards resilient urban strategies and policymaking.

SUSTAINABLE NETWORKING

Citizen participation in the co-governance often tends to be limited in a number of European towns. Civic technology networking should be encouraged for citizen mobilization and strengthening in-person engagement. Collaborative processes should be fostered as an innovative political and democratic practice that promotes citizen participation and input on public policies.

The INDIMAE Policy Recommendations are focused on local, national and European recommendations in five general areas

1. Promoting intercultural dialogue in European towns based on the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council "Living Together As Equals in Dignity".

2. Addressing the challenges to diversity management in European towns: focus on minorities; migrant and refugee communities; Intersectionality and gender dimension.

3. Sustaining local, national and European partnerships and cross-sectoral synergies in prevention of discrimination and exclusion and protection of human rights at the local level.

4. Fostering participatory democracy and civic tech innovations: make democracy more participatory, inclusive, and responsive by enhancing citizen involvement through new digital tools and processes.

5. Empowering local authorities for inclusive strategies implementation based on the The European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The INDIMAE Policy Recommendations are based on the common understanding that the European democracies are expected to provide all the necessary conditions for the growth of political awareness and activism.

The European states and local authorities are expected to support the representatives of civil society in their invaluable role to strengthen the growth of civil participation for intercultural dialogue and in this way - to influence the decision-making process for inclusion of migrants and minorities in European societies.

The INDIMAE Network members agreed that the active European citizens don't want the government to provide standard solutions for everything. They prefer a tailor-made approach and authorities that think along with them.

The European citizens can tell which local, national and European policies are working, spot emerging problems early and set out new ideas to improve local policy and delivery for all.

In this context, the INDIMAE Policy Recommendations are the result of the local events held in each partner country within the INDIMAE project pillar "Inclusive Strategy Development and Decision-making with and for European Citizens".

Those local debates with citizens, academia, businesses, local and regional authorities; and civil society organizations brought to the European towns of INDIMAE Network a closer idea and understanding of the problems that European citizens experience than any other initiative.

1. Promoting intercultural dialogue in European towns based on the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue of the Council of Europe

➢ Focus on Innovative intercultural dialogue local and national strategy development and implementation. The politicised nature of intercultural dialogue needs to be acknowledged. Intercultural dialogue has to be defined as a crosscutting policy objective.

➢ Identify intercultural innovators and bridge-builders and engage them in an innovative policy-making , fostering of intercultural relations, trust and cooperation with an emphasis on structures, action and resources which bring people together across cultural boundaries.

➢ Establish processes for encouraging inter-cultural decision making and policy-drafting, following the good practices of the European Capitals of Culture.

➢ Promote intercultural dialogue in the local, national and European education policies – pre-school, primary, middle-, high-school and higher education.

Innovative intercultural dialogue local and national strategy development and implementation.

Intercultural dialogue is an instrument to govern the newly emerging cultural diversity in European towns. Local authorities and communities in general need to work towards acknowledging existing differences, encouraging mutual trust and understanding between diverse citizens and allows for the development of ways to better living together.

INDIMAE Policy Recommendations on local and national Intercultural dialogue strategy development are focusing on **fostering a process of reciprocal and dynamic long-term exchange between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, based on mutual respect, trust and empathy in all European societies.**

Local authorities should be **engaging productively with dialogical strategies that address the difference and and similarities of the local communities,** including the development of common understanding of embedded meanings and dismantling of prejudice and stereotypes. It is very important to be **focusing on self-awareness, learning from multiple perspective and flexible revision of personal views and ideas in the light of knowledge gained on the lifestyle, meanings, traditions, values and norms of others.**

Last but not least, European towns should be **allowing for flexible, fluid and multiple identities, dealing with them constructively on the basis of shared values of universal human rights.**

2. Addressing the challenges to diversity management in European towns: focus on minorities; migrant and refugee communities; Intersectionality and gender dimension.

➤ Local and national diversity management strategies need to be holistic, based on human rights standards, underpinned by a realistic understanding of cross-border mobility and its impact, and aware of the human, social and economic cost of exclusion and marginalisation. They have to draw on the positive results of the local authorities and EU member states that have applied the intercultural integration approach as a means to achieve real inclusion at the local level.

➤ in order to ensure that migrant and minority women, girls and LBTQI+ people become an integral and productive part of the community, emphasis needs to be also put on the assets that they bring, and on harnessing their talents, skills and knowledge (including languages) for their own and the communities' benefit.

➤ Integration policies should create local spaces and occasions for meaningful intercultural interaction as a way to ensure sense of belonging, active participation, and peaceful intercultural coexistence. They should: provide access to basic services; empower societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion; eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration; invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.

Migrant and refugee integration policies pertain to a range of policy areas and levels of government, and their elaboration requires systematic consultation and co-ordination among all relevant stakeholders. Their success depends on embedding them in diversity-management policies which value diversity as a resource, promote diversity in institutions, residential and public spaces, and reduce segregation in social, cultural, economic and political life.

Ultimately, the success of diversity management depends on their ability to achieve effective inclusion by promoting ownership and active engagement of state institutions, regional and local authorities, and civil society; promote diversity in institutions, residential and public spaces and reduce segregation. Migrant and refugee integration policies areas and levels of government should be understood as a complex and delicate process which requires systematic consultation and co-ordination among all relevant stakeholders. Public institutions, regulations, and policies in all areas should be adapting to a context of cultural diversity, they can help build community cohesion and social trust, and maximise the benefits of diversity.

3. Sustaining local, national and European partnerships and cross-sectoral synergies in prevention of discrimination and exclusion and protection of human rights at the local level.

- Applying a multi-level governance approach and build alliances at local, regional, national, and international levels, foster knowledge-sharing, join existing networks, and seek exchanges with peers, regional, national, and international actors and organisations, as well as with civil society, academia, and actors of the private sector, with a view to base local public administration more strongly on human rights standards and principles.
- Creating new public-private partnerships for intercultural dialogue and inclusion: local authorities, citizens, business, NGOs, academia, etc.
- Collaborating with and supporting local migrant activists, minority rights and human rights organizations that work to tackle discrimination.
- Encouraging open and inclusive discussions between the authorities, local community leaders, and citizens to address diversity management and inclusion concerns and find collaborative solutions.
- Networking and cooperation; cross-sectoral synergies; public-private partnerships. Developing additional local policies to empower local civil society organizations and groups, especially in the countries with democracies in transition.

Networking and collaboration for diversity and inclusion in European towns should debate and mainstream research findings that cities which adopt intercultural integration policies give better outcomes in terms of residents' perceptions of cohesion, trust in the administration, safety, quality of services, welfare, good governance and economic growth. Intercultural integration helps national-level policies achieve a shift in a more inclusive direction.

When designing integration policies, national authorities should keep in mind that the goal of such policies is to enable active citizenship and participation in particular for people of migrant origins, ensure respect for their fundamental rights and the equality and dignity of all members of society, and help build societies which are inclusive, cohesive, and prosperous thanks to the benefits of diversity.

4. Fostering participatory democracy and civic tech innovations: make European democracy more participatory, inclusive, and responsive by enhancing citizen involvement through new digital tools and processes.

- ➢ By facilitating the co-creation of strategies and policies, civic tech innovation policies should be designed and implemented in order to foste dynamic shifts in the relationship between citizens and public institutions, revitalizing democratic processes.
- ➢ Local policies should be refined and a diverse array of emerging digital tools should be identified, and process methodologies aimed at amplifying citizen and community participation within the framework of a free and democratic European towns: strengthening the transparency, accountability, and capacity of local governments and augmenting citizen and stakeholder involvement in decision-making and policy implementation processes.
- ➢ Local and national policies should adopt tools such as online petitions, open data portals, citizen evaluation and monitoring platforms, and participatory budgeting systems in order to empower citizens to collectively discuss community needs and priorities, subsequently allocating public funds accordingly.
- ➢ Policies that ensure the provision of digital platforms that coordinate matching of needs and resources, such as in the aftermath of a pandemic or a natural disaster; tools and platforms that aid group decision making through deliberate design decisions to improve the likelihood of desired outcomes, such as consensus; as well as systems to document the legislative process and make it more transparent and participatory.

Fostering participatory democracy and civic tech innovations requires policies that will facilitate the design and implementation of civic tech platforms that invite citizens to contribute, respond to, and even co-develop public policies and projects; provide platforms and tools to facilitate gathering public input and support for local, place-based projects. It is important to invite citizens and residents to contribute their ideas, creativity, and perspectives to public needs, like designing public spaces or developing attractive policies.

Essential to the civic tech innovation are the digital conversation hubs for conversations of civic import to facilitate constructive dialogues; the civic forums to foster civic conversation and debate; as well as the neighborhood forums as digital venues to promote conversation within geographically defined communities.

It is also important to ensure active civic participation in social networks for politics, advocacy, campaigns, or other explicitly civic user bases or use cases; and civic crowdfunding tech facilitates that are distributing resource-gathering campaigns via dedicated platforms.

Empowering local authorities for inclusive strategies implementation based on the The European Charter of Fundamental Rights

- Local authorities must be supported to create networks and platforms to exchange best practices and existing know-how.
- International organizations should sensitise central governments to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive, transparent and accountable local level policy-making, the need to decentralise, where appropriate, decision-making, and to provide local authorities with actual powers and responsibilities.
- National governments and institutions should enact all the necessary measures that are required to empower local governments to support towns` resiliency to pandemics, disasters, and emergencies, by setting in place any normative and regulatory frameworks, awareness-raising and capacity building programs.
- Local authorities should create space for CSOs to engage in local policy-making, and CSOs should share responsibility for local community affairs and be involved in local decision-making through education and raising awareness campaigns.
- Local budgets could be an important entry point to strengthen local democracy. Through involvement in budgetary processes, CSOs should be able to monitor local authorities and public service delivery, and create an enabling environment of engagement with citizens to allow for more accountable, inclusive and transparent processes.
- Local authorities should make relevant provisions in legislation that ensure a regular, established and structured participation of citizens in the local policy-making promoting participatory democracy, and ensuring the inclusion of all excluded and marginalised groups in European towns.

Local and regional governments need to have a supportive environment at all levels of government to be empowered to create inclusive European towns cities for all.

An inclusive and participatory strategy-building must engage diverse stakeholders. Such processes are most effective when developed with and by affected citizens, government agencies, academia, and those in the private and not-for-profit sectors. Inclusive urban policies rely on a range of factors to ensure such as effective plans, legislation, programs, and strategies.

The role of citizens in building sustainable democracy in an inclusive manner at the local level is crucial, and local authorities and CSOs should be empowered with skills and resources to be able to provide the framework for such engagement. Accountable and collaborative local authorities and organizations with a wide range of adequate resources that possess the will to address the needs of citizens, provide an enabling environment to promote democracy and contribute to the sustainable improvement of the life of all citizens in European towns.

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INNOVATIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT
& INCLUSION STRATEGIES
in European towns

European Network of Towns
for diversity and inclusion
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