



# INNOVATIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & INCLUSION IN EUROPEAN TOWNS



## POLICY LESSONS from good practice exchange



Europe  
for Citizens

# European Network of Towns



**INNOVATIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT  
& INCLUSION STRATEGIES  
IN EUROPEAN TOWNS**

Involving a wide range of citizens from different social and professional backgrounds, the INDIMAE Network fosters a dialogue between public bodies, citizens & CSOs, acting to develop sustainable public-private partnerships to counter discrimination and promote cultural diversity via a series of joint towns-citizens' actions for inclusive strategies and further development & implementation of local policies for innovative diversity management in European towns.

[www.inclusivocities.eu](http://www.inclusivocities.eu)



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# INTRODUCTION

To support European towns and regions to design and implement successful diversity management and inclusion strategies at the local level, the INDIMAE project launched a series of partnership debates within the project activities, aimed at promoting open and regular dialogue, increasing capacity and fostering know-how exchanges between local communities in the partner countries.

The INDIMAE Network idea to provide a platform for exchange of good practices and learning from each other was inspired by the launching a EU partnership with the Committee of the Regions to start a political dialogue and promote learning and exchanges on integration for local and regional authorities. The partnership builds on well-established cooperation between the Commission and the Committee of the Regions in the field of integration. In particular, the Cities and Regions for Integration initiative, launched in 2019, provides a political platform for European mayors and regional leaders to share information and showcase positive examples of integration of migrants and refugees.

The "Innovative Diversity Management and Inclusive Strategies in European Towns" project provided a discussion platform for European local authority representatives; regional leaders, members of academia and civil society organizations to showcase positive examples of integration, inclusion and diversity management, share relevant information and promote diversity as an added value to building inclusive European towns and ensuring social cohesion.

Building capacity and promoting exchange of experiences for local and regional authorities on different aspects of integration and on community sponsorship via an open and regular dialogue between the citizens, private organizations and institutions, and local and regional authorities on innovative diversity management practice and adopt creative inclusive strategies is essential to ensuring a better quality of life for all citizens in the their local communities - towards peace, prosperity and inclusion for all.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF POLICY LESSONS FROM GOOD PRACTICE EXCHANGE BETWEEN EUROPEAN TOWNS

Cooperation and knowledge exchanges between European towns can play a key role in integrating newcomers, experts say, adding that their inclusion strategies can also serve as a model for larger European cities.

The INDIMAE Network of Towns has developed a set of Policy Lessons from an intense and very rewarding good practice exchange between ten European towns within the INDIMAE Network. The INDIMAE project "Innovative Diversity Management and Inclusion Strategies in European towns" has been funded by the "Europe for Citizens" program of the European Commission, strand 2.2. "Networks between towns.

In the continuous process of exchange of good practices took part all eleven INDIMAE Network members from ten European countries - eight EU members and 2 neighboring countries: Municipality of Simitl and Rodopes Center for Community Development, Bulgaria; Municipality of Mogila and EYACT, Republic of North Macedonia; Municipality of Alexandrow Lodzki, Poland; CEIPES, Italy, Cafebabel, France; ESPA, Portugal, Human Rights in Action, Ireland, Albanian Association of Municipalities; Gain and Sustain, Austria and Kaunas Regional Development Agency, Lithuania.

The importance of policy lessons from good practice exchange between European towns is highlighted by the INDIMAE Network members in their effort to 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 European town management.

The joint efforts of the INDIMAE network members sought to establish a learning process that would be based on productive exchange of ideas and good practices on successful and innovative diversity management and inclusion.

The local communities are where integration happens. Therefore the INDIMAE Network members take very seriously the need to focus on all vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation local groups; putting individual rights at the center of local public policies and empowering local communities to take the lead and challenge the European municipalities in fulfilling their responsibilities.

## About the INDIMAE Policy Lessons, based on exchange of good practices

The INDIMAE Policy lessons are based on a long-term process of learning and debating together, while search for tailor-made inclusive solutions suitable for the specific context of for each local European town.

Knowledge exchanges are particularly important for smaller towns, which often do not have the same capacity and means to welcome migrants as large cities, according to experts.

This exchange allows large and medium-sized European cities to not just share good practices on inclusion but also mentor smaller towns on diversity management , inclusion and integration practices.

These Policy Lessons are very concrete and specifically drawn from our INDIMAE local communities in all network partner countries, taking into account the shared local and national good practices, searching to influence local, national and European policy debates.

The INDIMAE Network members agreed that the long-term goal of process of exchange of good diversity management and inclusion practices in European towns is to develop custom-made and adequately working inclusive strategies which could be replicated across one or more countries for the benefit of all local communities. in Europe.

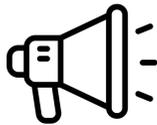
In search to improve diversity management, social integration and inclusion of all communities; increase the effectiveness of public services and public policy, the European towns in the INDIMAE Network shared and debated their experiences of success and failures, learning from each other, borrowing ideas, getting inspired from good practices and solutions .

Networking amongst European towns is the best way to exchange good practices and find solutions to their challenges.

The INDIMAE partners aimed at enhancing the capacities of European towns to better deliver policies on integration but also to strengthen the role of civil society organisations and associations of disadvantaged groups to act as partners of local authorities and foster civic participation and active knowledge exchange.

**These Policy Lessons are a result of the active exchange of good practices between European towns within INDIMAE Network.**

## OUTCOMES



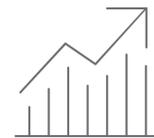
### PROMOTE DIVERSITY&INCLUSION

The INDIMAE Policy Lessons promotes policies and practices of making sure that everyone in society has equal access to resources and opportunities, with no exclusion; that everyone is well-integrated, valued and recognized in European towns.



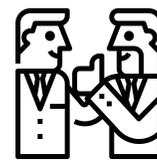
### STRENGTHEN TOWNS

**Town-to-town cooperation is best way to strengthen European towns' capacity, facilitate exchange, adaptation, implementation and upscaling of good practices all over Europe, while bottom-up, participatory policy-making brings long-lasting results, transparency and increased trust in our local governments.**



### INCREASE INVOLVEMENT

Increasing citizens' involvement in the decision-making process and policy-making in European towns is a key pillar of participatory democratic process, ensuring inclusion for all citizens in the community.



### ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

Encouraging and restoring active civic participation of all communities in European towns is no quick fix to the dangers European democratic systems are facing, but it is certainly the way to building an open and inclusive society. It takes consolidated efforts of all stakeholders to restore and boost civic participation and promote social and intercultural dialogue.

## Key Areas of INDIMAE Policy Lessons

1. Capacity-building and expert support in European towns for successful diversity management and inclusion.
2. Capitalisation and communication of relevant knowledge.
3. Participatory approach to local decision-making and policy design in European towns. Forested cooperation with civil society and academia.
4. Design and implementation of inclusive strategies. Diversity Charters and Equality Plans.
5. Sustainable European networking for intercultural dialogue and inclusion.

The INDIMAE Policy Lessons are looking at the design and implementation of adequate and beneficial local Inclusion strategies in European towns following a networking process and active involvement of all relevant local stakeholders.

This is a co-production process resulting from the exchange of good practices and ideas with European partner towns and from INDIMAE debates to take up these practices and adapt them in their towns.

A innovative way to reach prosperity, well-being and growth in a city is by rethinking the governance model that the local administrations have previously adopted and by moving away from a command and control role to the role of facilitator. This requires trusted relationships between local elected representatives, city staff and citizens and an empowerment of local stakeholders in the co-design and implementation of local policies.



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## 1. Lessons on capacity-building and expert support in European towns for successful diversity management and inclusion

- The exchange of good practices from partners across Europe showed that the training and learning programs for both local authorities and civil sector is giving very positive results, especially when it comes to human rights education and learning for democratic citizenship. Such educational programs should be designed or adopted in all European towns. It is highly recommended to foster intercultural learning and democracy education in schools, starting from pre-school level to university.
- INDIMAE Network joint experiences pointed out that European towns' capacity-building process is benefiting from expert support, cooperation and learning from academia, research centers, members of migrant and minority organizations, civil society and think-thanks, who can provide valuable inputs and advise on crucial issues such as diversity challenges, non-discrimination; inclusive strategies and intercultural dialogue.
- Sharing and debating the good practices of the European Capitals of Culture served as great policy-making lessons to all INDIMAE partners who are seeking to design and implement strategies for intercultural dialogue and foster inclusion of all marginalized groups; those lessons are valuable and applicable in most multicultural societies in Europe.

Non-discrimination is one of the EU fundamental principles and a main strand of action, mainstreaming equality and combating all forms of discrimination on any ground.

INDIMAE Network good practice exchange pointed out that European towns need to build their capacity improving their awareness knowledge and skills on non-discrimination policy measures and give particular attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including but not limited to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity.

As European towns seek to promote diversity, inclusion and non-discrimination, their credibility will continue to rely on their ability to 'practice what they preach'.

Intercultural and inclusivity competences of all public and service officials, as well as the recourse to cultural mediators may play a useful role in committing to building an inclusive environment where gender equality and respect for diversity are core values.

The talents, perspectives, insights, links and heritage of a diverse workforce cannot but enhance European towns' effectiveness in outreach and policy development and implementation.

# INDIMAE Partner Testimonies



Vilimir Alexandrov, Bulgaria

★★★★★

Thanks to INDIMAE, we've learned that true integration comes from understanding and embracing differences. The INDIMAE Network members, together, are building more inclusive and harmonious European towns - by fostering intercultural dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect among citizens of diverse backgrounds.

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Oktawia Braniewicz, Poland

★★★★★

At the core of INDIMAE's ethos is its participatory and innovative nature. The project transcends social, economic, and political realms, seeking to address the challenges faced by all European communities, particularly those vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation.

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Pauline McCarthy, Ireland

★★★★★

It was a real pleasure taking part in the international debates and learning about the local situations in other European cities and multicultural communities. We might have different history of diversity management, but we are all sharing the same aim - inclusion of all communities, including migrant and minorities in the social and cultural life of our societies for a more prosperous Europe.

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Žarko Tomaševski, North Macedonia

★★★★★

I am happy to have the chance to take part in the project - to meet and discuss our problems with colleagues from all over Europe. Debates are very stimulating and productive and it is so inspiring to see that there are ways for local authorities to establish successful cooperation with civil society for the well-being and integration of the local communities in Europe. Well done, INDIMAE Network! Together we can make inclusion work out.

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## 2. Lessons on capitalisation and communication of relevant knowledge: focus on minorities; migrant and refugee communities; Intersectionality and gender dimension.

- European towns need to further work on embedding diversity and inclusion in all aspects of education and communication (as a targeted public awareness-raising process), in order to raise collective awareness and foster an institutional cultural change based on human rights standards.
- Capturing, sharing and transferring the generated in exchange knowledge is crucial in European towns' networking. Proving an understanding of what worked in the implementation of the innovative diversity management solutions and what did not work, in order to draw lessons, capture the knowledge on inclusion and share it with urban policymakers and practitioners across Europe.
- Following the implementation of the innovative strategies on inclusion and gender equality, the INDIMAE partners collected and shared the results from their local actions. This fed into transfer of policies, with the aim of fostering innovation capacities and knowledge building for all European towns and to mainstream innovative solutions in designing and implementing innovative diversity management in the local communities, taking into consideration intersectionality and gender dimension.

A lesson learned is that European towns need to further work on embedding diversity and inclusion in all aspects of education and communication, in order to raise collective awareness and foster an institutional cultural change.

The good practice exchange among INDIMAE Network partners pointed out the importance of raising public awareness 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.

Another important lesson learned was that local authorities should provide and disseminate information and critical analyses on reliable European data that provides an opportunity for a realistic understanding of cross-border mobility and benefits of migration and its impact; to promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration; as well as on the human, social and economic cost of gender-based violence, exclusion and marginalisation in the local societies across Europe.

# INDIMAE Partner Testimonies



## Anton Georgiev, Bulgaria

★★★★★

The INDIMAE Network is a great European platform for debate and exchange of knowledge, experiences, ideas... I am impressed by the capacity of all partners; their motivation to learn and grow and their dedication to the local communities for inclusion and integration in the European towns.

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## Alessia Di Francesca, Italy

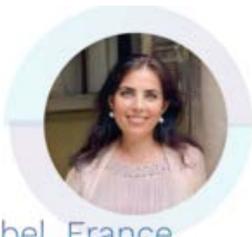
★★★★★

It is inspiring to see how involving citizens from diverse backgrounds, underrepresented minorities and migrant communities, the INDIMAE Network fosters dialogue among public bodies, twinning committees, and civil society organizations seeking together for strategies to cultivate sustainable public-private partnerships that counter discrimination and champion cultural diversity.

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## Ana Tancheva, Cafebabel, France

★★★★★

The INDIMAE Networking is an unforgettable and very touching experience - both professionally and personally. I believe that we grew together to be not only better diversity managers, civil society activists for inclusion or professionals on minority rights and social integration. We also learned how to be better citizens, more empathetic humans, with a deeper understanding of how important are human rights for each and every one of us.

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## Jorge Simões, Portugal

★★★★★

The importance of projects like INDIMAE is very high when it comes to active civic participation and networking - not just at the pan-European level, but also at the local level: promoting the cooperation and exchange of good practices between European towns. Debating together the future of multiculturalism and inclusion is the key to addressing the challenges of diversity management and social integration in our societies.

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### 3. Lessons on participatory approaches to local decision-making and policy design in European towns.

- The European towns' practice points out that while the push for civic participatory process can be top-down (by the local government initiating participatory approaches to policy-making), it is much more efficient when a bottom-up approach is introduced - creating the right conditions, and setting up the necessary structures and processes to enable participatory policy-making, civil society organizations have an important role to play -raising awareness about the issues at stake, helping citizens and communities organize themselves, and advocating for more participatory policy-making.
- Participatory policy-making should involve real, meaningful participation based on contribution: voluntary or other forms of input; information sharing: stakeholders are informed about their rights, responsibilities and options; consultation: stakeholders are given the opportunity to interact and provide feedback; cooperation and consensus building: stakeholders negotiate positions and help determine priorities, but the process is directed by outsiders.
- Participatory decision making should ensure that stakeholders have a role in making decisions on policy, project design and implementation; that there is an effective partnership, involving stakeholders as equals towards mutual goals; as well as empowerment by transferring control over decision-making and resources to stakeholders.

INDIMAE Network members agreed that inclusive and participatory town must engage diverse stakeholders: with and by affected citizens, government agencies, academia, and those in the private and not-for-profit sectors. Participatory local policies rely on a range of factors to ensure success. Success of participatory actions is also reliant on capacity building, the collection and use of disaggregated data and statistics for implementation at all levels of government, the allocation of specific budgets, and participatory monitoring by CSOs of migrants, minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

An important lesson from the exchange of good practices was that when designing participatory policies, local authorities should keep in mind that the goal of such policies is to enable active citizenship and participation for all - but in particular - for the marginalized groups - people of migrant and minority origins, ensuring respect for their fundamental rights and the equality and dignity of all members of society, and helping to build European towns which are inclusive, cohesive, and prosperous thanks to the benefits of diversity.

# INDIMAE Partner Testimonies



## Nikola Hamchev, Bulgaria



Empowering citizens to work hand in hand with local institutions, INDIMAE is turning policy into action and making genuine strides in enhancing diversity management across Europe. By actively involving a wide range of stakeholders in the debate, this project is forging a towards creating lasting positive change for the European towns and their communities.

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## Martina Maria Linzer, Austria



Changing perspectives and sharing real life stories to uncover treasures and challenges of European diversity unites citizens and political decision makers through the INDIMAE project allowing us to see the real values and common aspirations needed for an inclusive society.

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## Lina Misiukeviciene, Lithuania



The project is an amazing opportunity for all of us: to learn from each other, to share concerns and challenges, to learn from our mistakes and successes and network as a team with one common aim: inclusion, peace, prosperity for European towns.

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## Konstantinos Sardelis, Ireland



The INDIMAE network is a great European collaboration project on intercultural dialogue and inclusion. We have the chance to exchange good practices and explore opportunities for diversity management and innovative strategies for inclusion of migrant, refugee and minority communities in the multicultural European towns.

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## 4. Lessons on design and implementation of inclusive strategies.

### Diversity Charters and Equality Plans.

- Intercultural integration local policies should be implemented targeting the society as a whole through a multi-level, multi-stakeholder effort of integration of diverse European societies; inclusion is what is intended as the outcome of intercultural integration policies, the recognition of everyone's equal dignity, identity, contribution and access to resources and opportunities.
- European towns should ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
- Public institutions, regulations, and policies in all areas should enable minority, migrant and refugee integration by becoming more inclusive. By adapting to a context of cultural and social diversity, they can help build community cohesion and social trust, and maximise the benefits of diversity for society as a whole.
- European towns should adopt Diversity Charters and Equality Plans the empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- Ethnic, gender and social-class inequalities are often compounded, in an intersectional way, intensifying inequality and missed opportunity. Therefore, bringing equality, nondiscrimination and inclusion at the heart of the intercultural approach is essential in societies which seek to manage well diversity and inclusion.

Inclusive strategies often fail to live up to European human-rights standards, including those related to social cohesion, equality and anti-discrimination, as well as create challenges in relation to the rule of law.

Implementing inclusive policies, European towns should strengthen their leadership in promoting and protecting human rights and support civil society groups, including human rights defenders, women's organisations, LGBTIQ+ communities, indigenous peoples, youth movements, people with disabilities, racial, ethnic and religious minorities; culturally, socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

European towns should stand by these groups in their struggle for rights and freedoms, and for the respect of their dignity.

Lessons from absent or deficient integration policies in the past show that the price to pay in terms of eroded cohesion and wasted talent can be serious if we fail to devise policies and strategies to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants with the right to remain in our societies. It is 'time for Europe to get migrant integration right' by putting it on a solid human rights basis, and making it an integral element of good governance in European towns.

# INDIMAE Partner Testimonies



## Marusya Filatova, Bulgaria

★★★★★

The INDIMAE project is a wonderful chance to expand our European networks; to get to learn about the local realities in other European countries; to debate strategies to address our common challenges and to seek together for innovative pathways to tackle diversity in European towns. As a member of the project coordination team, I felt honoured to be part of the INDIMAE Network management and look forward to new collaboration within our Network.

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## Agron Haxhimali, Albania

★★★★★

The INDIMAE events are an embodiment of solidarity, showcasing how towns and citizens can work as a team to foster positive change and dismantle barriers to inclusion. Through joint efforts, we are fostering an environment where no one feels excluded or marginalized.

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## Anton Beyski, Ireland

★★★★★

Through the INDIMAE project, I've had the privilege to collaborate with individuals and organizations from diverse backgrounds, all dedicated to nurturing a more inclusive Europe. This project has reminded me that by embracing our differences, we will be able to create a stronger and more vibrant community.

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## Gaila Tulusiene, Lithuania

★★★★★

The INDIMAE project, with its roots in collaboration and innovation, embodies the spirit of a united Europe. By addressing challenges in diversity management and minority rights protection, it paves the way for a more inclusive and tolerant European society, emphasizing on ensuring fair and equal treatment for minorities and migrants across Europe.

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## 5. Lessons on the importance of sustainable European networking between towns for intercultural dialogue and inclusion

- Local authorities should be supported to create networks and platforms to exchange good practices and discuss challenges to diversity management and inclusion in European towns.
- Sustainable networking should support European towns in reviewing and adapting their policies through an intercultural lens, and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to manage diversity as an advantage for the whole society.
- European networking between towns should be a platform to connect towns and leaders European-wide into a community where initiatives and practice from one town are debated, analysed and shared to inspire the others.
- Sustainable European networking between towns for intercultural dialogue and inclusion should be based on realising the diversity advantage. This involves a commitment by the public authorities to recognise and preserve diversity as an intrinsic feature of local communities; and to pursue the diversity advantage that accrues from the presence of diversity when coupled with specific policies and strategies that enable diverse contributions to shape the cultural, economic and social fabric of European towns.

Sustainable European networking between towns create a sense of pluralistic identity embracing cultural diversity and the complexity of identities through leadership discourse and appreciation of the local community diversity - mobilising leaders, policy officers, professionals, businesses and civil society behind innovative models of inclusion based on the mixing and interaction between people from different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

Such networking sets up a governance model that promote participation and power-sharing, involving diverse local communities in decision-making in urban institutions, be they political, educational, social, economic or cultural. It opens up spaces and opportunities for deep interaction and co-creation between European citizens of different cultural origins and backgrounds, to build trust, cohesion and solidarity, and thus realise the creative potential of diversity in European towns.

# POLICY LESSONS

## from good practice exchange



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