



Urban Regeneration: European Network of Towns

MANIFESTO FOR INCLUSIVE CITIES

**INTERCULTURALITY, SOCIO-SPATIAL INCLUSION OF
INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS**



Urban Regeneration: European Network of Towns

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INTRODUCTION

European cities are reaching alarming levels of urban fragmentation, inequality and structural socio-spatial division. The most vulnerable part of the population is often given no choice but to concentrate on disadvantaged areas or neighbourhoods. Here social exclusion and deprivation usually overlap with a level of cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, which further challenges an already weak social cohesion. The URGENT project aims to promote raising awareness for the need to establish new intercultural connections among inhabitants of marginalised multi-ethnic neighbourhoods and the population of central areas on a local and city level through a bottom-up approach. In addition, the project specifically hopes to tackle the growing fear of immigration and overcome the misleading stereotypes which feed into Euroscepticism and undermine European cohesion.

This manifesto which aims for the development of more inclusive European cities and towns is the product of the work of 13 organisations which form the consortium of the URGENT project. As such, the following statements are expressed by the partner organisations of the URGENT project as commitments to uphold in their work and recommendations for local governments and stakeholders to follow.

During the implementation of the URGENT project, the partner organisations shared their experiences and opinions. This allowed for 4 areas to emerge as topics to focus on. These topics are viewed as a priority in order to improve the quality of life of marginalised neighbourhoods, increase socio-spatial inclusion, fight stereotypes and facilitate intercultural dialogue:

- Building spaces for intercultural dialogue;
- Combating socio-spatial stigmatisation;
- Creating conditions for active participation;
- Ensuring access to basic services.

Additionally, for each focus area, the URGENT project partner organisations have agreed on a set of statements that they will abide by:

Principles:

- The context in which the project partners understand each topic and its stakes;

We recognise:

- How the principles of the issue at hand impact the work of the project partners;

We commit:

- The principles of the project partners are currently committed to in their work;

We will seek:

- The principles and lines of actions the project partners will strive to uphold in the future;

We recommend:

- What local governments and stakeholders need to do in order to help tackle the issue at hand.

BUILDING SPACES FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Principles

We understand intercultural dialogue as “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect” (UNESCO, 2018). As such, we believe that intercultural dialogue is needed to manage diversity. This is especially true in urban environments where the concentration of population is the highest and the most varied. We believe that diversity is one of the most powerful strengths of European cities today. However, having a diverse population residing in a city does not necessarily mean that there is social cohesion.

The project believes that an intersectoral approach to intercultural dialogue is the best tool to foster mutual understanding among the inhabitants of a city. It is necessary to take into consideration the gender, race, sexual orientation, religions of an individual when trying to establish a framework for intercultural dialogue. Dialogue is the cornerstone of social cohesion as it creates an opportunity to foster mutual understanding, tolerance and empathy. Those who participate in mutual dialogues are less likely to discriminate and marginalised those who are different from them. Moreover, the project supports the idea of establishing and promoting public spaces dedicated to intercultural dialogue as a necessary tool to reach large and inclusive audiences.

We recognise

- We recognise the importance of informal educational approaches in fostering intercultural dialogue and empathy between people from the ‘host’ community and their urban newcomer.
- We recognise the importance of using culture and sports as a bridge to promote intercultural dialogue and will support all efforts to use tools such as food, music and sport for this purpose.

We commit

- We commit to promoting and giving access to community spaces for cultural and intercultural groups to promote intercultural interaction.
- We commit to enhancing the intercultural learning of public officials in order for them to better relate to the different communities within their city.
- We commit to actively supporting intercultural activities at the local level and ensuring the communication and dissemination of activities among target groups.
- We commit to the active implementation of existing strategies on intercultural dialogue.

We will seek

- We will seek to ensure that all places within the community can be accessed as spaces for intercultural learning and dialogue such as public parks, schools etc.
- We will seek to promote different cultures through different communication means under our capacity.
- We will seek to promote further intercultural exchange and the promotion of intercultural activities, valuing individual cultures whilst avoiding the ghettoization of culture.
- We will seek to promote respect and empathy for others among citizens of the city.
- We will seek to ensure better joint planning and implementation of activities.
- We will seek to provide opportunities for young people from all cultures and nationalities to interact in informal settings.

We recommend

- We recommend local governments to provide more spaces for cultural exchange so citizens see beyond communities' boundaries by learning about other cultures.
- We recommend and push for better representation of different cultures within mainstream media and ensure there is a space for the promotion of culture.
- We recommend that different communities are actively involved in decision making on intercultural and heritage planning and that dedicated spaces are provided for this.
- We recommend for the better inclusion of intercultural education and learning on intersectionality (diversity in gender, race, religion, age etc) as a whole within the school curriculum as a means to ensure young people and children are exposed to and made aware at a young age of the positive aspects of diversity.
- We recommend the promotion of Lifelong Learning on intercultural dialogue in micro-public spaces.
- We recommend the creation and strengthening of mediators, both professional and informal ones, to facilitate dialogue between native residents and urban newcomers.



COMBATING SOCIO-SPATIAL STIGMATISATION

Principles

European cities are currently experiencing an alarming level of urban fragmentation, inequality and structural socio-spatial divisions which feeds into extremism and radicalisation. Socio-spatial stigmatisation is both an outcome of social marginalisation and exclusion and can be seen as a medium through which marginalisation and exclusion are performed. We believe that in disadvantaged areas or neighbourhoods, social exclusion and deprivation usually overlap with a high level of cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. Stigmatisation often plays a role in affecting the lives and practices of individuals and groups within the addressed regions, cities and communities. Eventually they influence the way an individual or a community makes sense of their surroundings.

In order to effectively address this issue, the project believes in using an intersectionality approach as it is necessary to take into consideration the gender, race, sexual orientation, religions of an individual when analysing their experience. Moreover, we believe that social cohesion in European cities is threatened by new physical and symbolic boundaries emerging from xenophobia, intolerance and discriminations. The development of socio-spatial stigmatisation in cities is one of the main obstacles for local authorities who are willing to ensure sustainable development and fair opportunities to all their citizens.

We recognise

- We recognise the need to avoid spatial ghettoization by adopting strategies to spread social mix.

We commit

- We commit to increase the positive perception of stigmatised communities.
- We commit to developing a sense of pride within stigmatised communities.
- We commit to raising awareness of the wider community on stigmas and their impact on community cohesion overall.

We will seek

- We will seek to organise activities and events (cultural, sports etc.) in areas of the city which are marginalised from mainstream activities. These areas may be where urban newcomers and disadvantaged people live; promoting interacting in these areas could thus help break down prejudices.
- We will seek to provide specific programmes that enhance skills and knowledge for the unemployed, these programmes will also be tailored towards people of different cultures, so that marginalised groups can access the labour market on more equal terms.
- We will seek to encourage the use of storytelling and the collection of stories as resources to feed the media with positive representations of stigmatised groups.

We recommend

- We recommend States and local authorities to provide funding for positive discrimination and actions encouraging empowerment that targeting stigmatised communities, such as Roma people and Gypsies.
- We recommend promoting collaboration between schools and extra-curricular intercultural activities targeting stigmatised communities to support leadership skills among young generations.
- We recommend support for the production of evidence-based research on projects which impact positively on stigmatised communities.
- We recommend to promote and value projects fighting stigmatisation, involving multi-stakeholder consortia, through the use of “multi-purpose” funding.

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Principles

Active participation implies the involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking or social activities, through measures and institutional arrangements. The increase in citizens influences on public policies and social programme results in a positive impact on their social and economic lives. Adequate representation within policymaking and social activities ensures that the community needs are addressed, create more public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighbourhoods.

We believe that active participation entails the inclusion in neighbourhood decisions and inclusion in the decision-making process at a city level. Participation is something which should start from the moment a new resident arrives in a city or neighbourhood, not only during specific projects or actions. Participation should be made easily accessible in order to ensure that real needs are being addressed. Moreover, when discussing the need for active participation it is vital to also highlight and encourage the concept of urban citizenship as a means to strengthen the sense of belonging and commitment to the city. There is a need to use both an intersectionality approach and other dynamic approaches and tools when addressing active participation in order to ensure that it is accessible to all. The URGENT project believes in the importance of involving urban citizens in the political life of their cities and in ensuring their ability to participate politically. The right to vote at local elections is an absolute right which should be granted and promoted regardless of the nationality of the voter.

We recognise

- We recognise that participation should be a matter tackled at an urban or city level.
- We recognise the need to treat citizens as bearers of rights and that human rights must be respected.
- We recognise the need to understand what draws people to the city and what makes them belong to a city.
- We recognise the importance of involving residents of the city regardless of their length of stay or status.
- We recognise that local civil societies and stakeholders can be a bridge between institutions and migrants in transition.

We commit

- We commit to supporting local voluntary organisations that work at a neighbourhood level in addressing multicultural and socially divided areas.
- We commit to opening a dialogue with migrant communities and activists of different cultural backgrounds.
- We commit to adopting an intersectional perspective in order to find cross-cutting points of entry to mobilise local citizens.



We will seek

- We will seek to find, map and work with community leaders.
- We will seek to include migrants in our organisational boards and to promote diversity in our workforce.
- We will seek to inform and communicate to all persons living in the city regarding the legal frameworks and regulations of the country in which they are in and other countries in the EU where they want to go to, as well as inform migrants about the path to citizenship.
- We will seek to establish open schools and use that space as a tool for participation for young people, children and their parents.
- We will seek to create neutral non-institutional spaces outside the national community of provenance in order to allow for opportunities outside of the community boundaries during the arrival phase of migrants.

We recommend

- We recommend local governments to be pervasive and attentive to the initiatives emerging at the neighbourhood level.
- We encourage local stakeholders to collaborate and mediate on conflicting interests in order to create practical proposals to be brought to the city-level decision-making and budgeting process.
- We encourage decision-makers at the local level to support, monitor and finance the functioning of neighbourhood management and consider it as an important tool to support the participation of the most vulnerable groups
- We encourage local authorities to guarantee non-formal spaces of participation and to support neighbourhood platforms for decision-making, such as local consultations.
- We recommend the creation of structures for participation on different needs.
- We encourage cities to work more in collaboration with local stakeholders that know the real needs of migrant communities and vulnerable populations.
- We want support for local daily practices, such as mediators and facilitators for urban newcomers or local civil society organisations that are working at the grassroots level.
- We encourage local authorities and stakeholders to reach out towards the areas where migrants are living, rather than wait for people to come activities organised in central areas.
- We recommend a greater investment in online participation mechanisms. However, we recognise that online participation cannot substitute face-to-face dialogue, in particular for socially marginalised groups with low ICT skills, imperfect literacy and language skills and low cultural participation.
- We recommend States to commit to providing citizenship to migrants if they meet the criteria.

ENSURING ACCESS TO URBAN SERVICES AND ASSETS

Principles

Local governments play a key role in providing access to urban services and assets as it is their responsibility to guarantee the protection of human rights, dignity and democracy. Every individual has the right to basic services such as water, sanitation, health, education, waste management, and transport. These services are a necessity for the well-functioning of everyday life and play a vital role in the alleviation of poverty and sustainable development. It is for this reason that the improvement and access to such basic services is a key component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We believe that all urban residents, regardless of their background, age, gender, religious beliefs or legal status (regular or irregular) have the right to access, on an equal ground, all urban services and assets available. Moreover, we believe that urban residents should be empowered to have access to universal services, rather than being granted special services. When specifically addressing the needs and issues of various communities at a city level, the equal access to adequate housing and urban public spaces is also a central aspect that must further be addressed by local governments. The access to schools for children should be further emphasised as a fundamental right. Governments should be encouraged to dedicate their focus and resources to ensuring the access to specific target groups and areas of action. The access to these services and assets mentioned are all absolute rights that should be to be ensured, enforced and respected by local governments.

We recognise

- We recognise that all urban residents have the right to the city they live in.
- We recognise that the empowerment of migrants and minorities is of utmost importance for promoting urban socio-spatial inclusion and that cultural and linguistic mediation is crucial to facilitate vulnerable groups' equal access to urban services and assets.
- We recognise that clear multilingual information, maps of existing services and rules on how to access them is crucial to promote inclusivity.
- We recognise that all children have the right to attend the school closest to their home and no child should be refused entry to a public school.

We commit

- We commit to raising awareness of migrants' and minorities' right to access all urban services and assets on an equal basis.
- We commit to organising culture and sports activities open to all in order to foster the integration of vulnerable groups.
- We commit to providing information and advice to help facilitate migrants' access to urban services and assets.

We will seek

- We will seek to campaign for more inclusivity in access to urban services and assets.
- We will seek to collaborate with local authorities in providing information and tools to facilitate migrants' right to the city.
- We will seek to foster the creation of public kitchen in marginalised areas.

We recommend

- We encourage cultural and linguistic mediation to be granted to all people in need, especially the ones not speaking the local language, in order to overcome cultural barriers.
- We encourage local authorities to make information on existing services clear and available in different languages, using a variety of media.
- We encourage cities to make available to both users and operators a clear map of public and private services offered in each sector.
- We encourage local authorities to provide training to service providers in order to equip them with adequate skills necessary to deal with diversity.
- We encourage cities not to restrict access to social housing based on the 'time of residence' of migrants.
- We encourage cities to guarantee the primary and emergency reception and shelter of migrants and the homeless who are not able to afford adequate accommodation.
- We encourage cities to provide migrants and the homeless with dedicated services to help them gain autonomy.
- We encourage local authorities to provide specific support to civil society and grassroots organisations providing services specifically to or facilitating access to migrants and vulnerable groups.
- We recommend for access to cultural opportunities, organised or funded by the city, to be promoted for vulnerable groups by granting them free entrance or reduced rates.
- We encourage local authorities to ensure that schools of all levels have the financial and human resources to enrol all the children living in the neighbourhood.



CONCLUSION

The inclusions of migrants and urban newcomers into society has always been a challenging process. There are usually a number of obstacles during the course of integration which need to be identified and addressed by stakeholders such as citizens, public officials, researchers, activists and NGOs. The project recognises that there is a pressing need for new knowledge on the possible experiences and practices which could support a smoother inclusion process. The development in the knowledge production of the different practices and frameworks used around the world in the field of documented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees at a city level is crucial. The project further emphasises that the exchange of pieces of information and mutual learning is imperative for the future of European social cohesion. Moreover, throughout the project an intersectionality approach should be used in order to effectively analyse situation and recommend proposals that are adaptable to real-life context. The four key areas identified by the project consortium are meant not only to benefit the citizens in a deprived situation but also the entire society, creating an inclusive socio-economic and cultural environment.

The first key point on the consortium agenda concerns the use of building spaced for intercultural dialogues. The project acknowledges the important need of urban spaces for intercultural dialogue. The project partners are committed to working in partnership with local stakeholders in order to promote intercultural interaction and giving access to community spaces for cultural and intercultural groups. Combating socio-spatial stigmatisation is the second point on the partners' agenda. The spatial characteristics of communities can have a significant effect on the level of inclusion in a society. There are many regions within a city which suffer from a spatial disadvantage such as being far from cultural and education places and having limited public transportation. Some areas are without access to capital, credit and information, which could help provide socio-economic benefits such as the possibility to engage in the labour market. Although the geographic disadvantage of areas may be difficult for policymakers to address, partners still strongly recommend policy options and strategies to be developed and considered contextually.

The third point is to create and sustain inclusive societies. It is critical that all members of society are able and motivated to participate in civic, social, economic and political activities, both at the local and national levels. A society that best fosters the principles of inclusiveness has three requisites: firstly, most if not all members feel that they have a part to play in society. Secondly, they have access to basic needs and finally, they are provided with the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

The final point project partners are committed is to promoting active participation in a transparent and inclusive manner, by involving in particularly disadvantaged groups. Moreover, the partners will also work towards raising awareness of primary needs such as the access to basic services in urban areas. Local and regional governments with the support of their associations and other levels of government should take the responsibility to ensure its citizens with the universal access to basic services. In pursuit of this goal, the development of a long-term strategic plan on the infrastructure for basic services needs to be further elaborated. In this process, local stakeholders should be closely involved in the decision-making process in order to ensure that citizens needs are addressed.

Social inclusion needs to occur on various dimensions and multiple levels of society. It is a process through which the dignity, needs and concern of each individual regardless of nationality is recognized and addressed. Rights which are stipulated in legislation should be guaranteed and respected in order to ensure that people are able to participate actively in their everyday life.



BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

This manifesto for inclusive cities is part of the URGENT project and is co-financed by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. URGENT is a two-year project led by ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy (France) and 12 other European partners. More specifically, the project brings together three local authorities, four associations of local authorities, four civil society organisations, an academic institution and a foundation.

The main objective of the URGENT project is to improve social cohesion in local communities by promoting migrants' integration through the development of urban policies fostering intercultural dialogue and the use of common spaces. The project which ran from September 2016 to August 2018 focused on "local paths" implemented in one city per partner country (an exception is made in Italy, where activities took place in two cities). During the local paths, the stakeholders of each city became more familiar with migration issues at the local level. This, in turn, helped elaborate and develop pilot project ideas for intercultural dialogue in deprived and conflicting areas. These local pilot projects were then implemented in reality. In between the three phases of the local paths, international events were organised in different countries for partner cities to compare their situation, share problems and potential solutions.

The aim of this manifesto is to propose a set of actions for stakeholders to take in order to improve the quality of life in marginalised neighbourhoods, increase social inclusion, overcome stereotypes and facilitate intercultural dialogue.

There are four main objectives in the URGENT project:

Objective 1: To create spaces of discussion and mutual learning among citizens from different socio-cultural backgrounds and from different countries of Europe.

Objective 2: To foster active citizenship and co-creation of policies and services in local societies, particularly for citizens who are often excluded from the decision-making processes.

Objective 3: To enhance the capacity of local institutions to be "multipliers" in their own communities in order to engage a wide range of stakeholders.

Objective 4: To provide a new impetus to the EU enlargement process, contributing to the establishment of a long-lasting thematic network of cities that are strongly active and committed as key players in Europe.

This manifesto is the result of the European Project URGENT, led by a consortium of 13 partner organisations established in 10 countries, with the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union, from September 2016 to August 2018. The project aims at improving social cohesion in local communities by promoting migrants' integration through the development of urban policies fostering intercultural dialogue and the use of common spaces.

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