



## European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR)

### Regional Perspective Paper

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#### ECCAR

The European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR) is a network of European Cities interested in sharing experience and expertise in order to improve their policies to fight racism, discrimination and xenophobia. This initiative was launched by UNESCO in 2004 and established the same year in Nuremberg to target city administrations as key actors in ensuring that everyone, regardless of their national, ethnic, cultural, religious or social origin, can live in dignity, security and justice. Local administrations are, in this regard, the connecting point between national and international legislation on human rights and discrimination and the daily lives of the final target of the legislation – citizens themselves –, guaranteeing that these international and national tools are applied and respond to concrete problems. At present, 129 cities from 24 European Countries have joined ECCAR.

The mission of the Coalition is embodied in the 10 Points Action Plan, a document that identifies ECCAR's priorities and sets out guidance for its member cities across the following areas:

- greater vigilance against racism
- assessing racism and discrimination and monitoring municipal policies
- better support for victims of racism and discriminations
- more participation and better informed city dwellers
- the city as an active supporter of equal opportunity practices
- the city as an equal opportunity employer and service provider
- fair access to housing
- challenging racism and discrimination through education
- promoting cultural diversity
- hate crimes and conflict management

#### Global action and advocacy

In recent years, ECCAR has made a specific effort to enhance its efforts in collaboration, networking and advocacy at regional and global level, with a specific view to fostering greater cooperation with the other regional and national coalitions of ICCAR and to participate in transnational and global events to advocate for the importance of promoting inclusion and combating all forms of discrimination in global development agendas.

As Coalition members, cities can enhance the impact of their actions and amplify their message of global solidarity. Last year, the European Coalition President Benedetto Zacchiroli was present at the General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Coalition of Cities against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia, laying the foundations for a strong and sustainable partnership to promote global action.

The signing of a cooperation agreement between Mayor Daniel Martinez of Montevideo, Uruguay, and the European Coalition, led by Bologna, Italy, represents a major step in strengthening the International Coalition as a platform for global action.

Building on this momentum towards enhanced global action through the Coalition, ECCAR's lead city Bologna hosted the First Meeting of the Global Steering Committee for ICCAR in April 2016, bringing together the lead cities of all seven regional and national Coalitions of ICCAR for the first time since the creation of the platform by UNESCO in 2004.

As a further symbol of the Coalition's commitment to inter-regional and global leadership, ECCAR has participated in a number of high-profile international events in 2015-2016, including the participation of the ECCAR President in an ICCAR panel at the 7th Africities Summit (Johannesburg, South Africa, December 2015), together with the Social Cohesion and Liveable Cities International Conference organized within the framework of ICCAR, in Bangkok (Thailand) in June 2016. ECCAR Vice President, Ms Lucienne Redercher, Deputy Mayor of Nancy, France, participated in the roundtable "Changing the discourse: the positive face of migration" organized by UNESCO in Paris, in December 2015.

In the context of the Habitat III process, the issues and priorities of ECCAR were also presented to the Habitat III Regional Meeting Europe in Prague (Czech Republic) in March 2016, further contributing to the mobilization of ICCAR as a platform for advocacy in the development of the *New Urban Agenda*.

### **Urban and demographic development in Europe**

Urbanisation in Europe is an established phenomenon that began before the Second World War and brought more than 50% of European people to live in urban areas by the 1950s. At present 73% of the population of the continent resides in cities<sup>1</sup> and the European urban population will grow slowly and steadily in the next decades. In the European Union, Cities have proven to be key to economic development, producing 85% of the GDP while consuming 80% of economic resources<sup>2</sup>.

The European continent is not facing the fast paced urban growth that is currently being experienced by many countries in Africa and Asia. Along with North America and Oceania, Europe is facing a different relevant demographic change that is directly impacting urban societies: a radical decrease in fertility and child-birth (with a slight recent increase in Western Europe, especially in the Northern countries which is balanced by a strong and continuous decrease in Eastern Europe and the Balkan region) which will bring rapid population ageing and, in the mid-term to a potential decrease in the general population. This phenomenon has been matched by relevant migration flows that have considerably changed the composition of European societies and European cities.

Besides the new challenges for European cities that stem from demographic changes, along with persisting economic crises and decline in public spending, some old challenges remain that cities must face to ensure inclusiveness and equality.

### **Why an inclusive city?**

The fight against discrimination and social exclusion is at its core an exercise in promoting the full enjoyment of human rights. It's cities that are called to act, because they are the level of government closest to citizens, where legislation must be transformed into policies and practices that have an actual impact on the lives of people<sup>3</sup>.

Economists agree that diverse and inclusive cities are more innovative and can, therefore, more easily access new economic, social and cultural opportunities, offer a higher standard of living for citizens and multiply wealth. Inclusiveness is also an essential tool in preventing social conflict and securing a peaceful urban environment, where each individual and community can fully realize their potential. Therefore, inclusion, anti-discrimination and equality are the basis for wealthier and peaceful communities.

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1 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015

2 European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/)

3 Call of Barcelona, Mayor Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development, 2014

The “Toolkit for Equality” initiative, led by the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy - ETC Graz - in collaboration with ECCAR, is a concrete example of this spirit in action. The Toolkit aims to support cities in implementing policies that successfully counteract racism and racial discrimination. It proposes six policy models drawing upon expertise and experience shared by city officials in European cities. It provides experience-based step-by-step instructions for implementing concrete policies, from the conceptualization to measuring impact, following the structure of the ECCAR 10 Points Action Plan. The Toolkit will be expanded and enriched through an EU-funded project, led by ETC Graz in cooperation with ECCAR.

### **New challenges for the European cities**

Unlike urbanisation dynamics in Asia and Africa, future urbanisation in Europe will be a slow and steady process that will not pose structural or sustainability challenges. The challenges that European cities will have to meet deal with integration, inclusiveness and equality for a growingly diverse population along with support strategies for an ageing population.

### **The inclusion of migrants and minority communities**

Most urban areas, especially in Western Europe, are now multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies, owing to past and recent migratory processes. The distribution of migrants across Europe (both national and urban) is not even: because of precarious economic situations and exclusion dynamics (as well as the tendency to value community proximity over integration within the broader population, especially in the initial stages of the migration process), migrants tend to settle in the most economically developed regions, especially in smaller suburban towns around larger cities, or in specific peripheral districts. These are usually deprived neighbourhoods, with fewer services and lower housing prices, where ghettoising dynamics take place. Growing income inequalities, long-term unemployment and social exclusion are serious challenges facing cities across Europe, since it is in the cities that these phenomena are often concentrated, and can easily trigger social conflicts. The risk, in European cities, is for social exclusion to become determined by ethnicity. The segregation of migrants and minority communities in deprived neighbourhoods can boost ghettoising dynamics that can transform ethnicity into a cause for social exclusion and poverty. Such phenomena may, in turn, cause conflictual attitudes, both in migrant/minority and in majority communities, increasing exclusion and segregation in a vicious circle. Preventing the overlap between belonging to migrant communities or deprived national ethnic/social minorities and living in poverty and social exclusion is a growing challenge facing Europe.

European cities can respond to this challenge by investing in an inclusive urban development, through strategies including:

- monitoring services provided in the urban territory, with an eye on comprehensiveness and accessibility;
- preventing the concentration of migrant and minority communities in specific areas, especially in marginal suburban neighbourhoods, by spreading social housing and reception centres evenly across the city’s territory;
- providing efficient and affordable public transportation;
- increasing the safety and security of cities by ensuring the presence and visibility of municipal agents across the city’s territory;
- providing affordable and adequate housing.

Specific attention should also be paid to fostering access to secondary and tertiary education, including adult education and vocational training, since the European labour market will require a growing number of skilled employees<sup>4</sup> while unskilled jobs will continue decreasing, especially in urban areas, making unskilled labourers less employable. Moreover, the wage and stability divide between unskilled and skilled jobs will grow, leaving unskilled workers more exposed to poverty and social exclusion, even while employed. Promoting access to appropriate education and training for new arrivals to cities and other populations facing limited opportunities for gainful and stable employment can therefore play an important role in building an inclusive urban environment.

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4 OECD, 2015

The commitment of European cities to being an inclusive and non-discriminating service provider must be met with their continued engagement to confront discriminatory practices by private employers and service providers. Specific attention should be also placed in preventing and confronting discriminatory harassment, hate speech and hate crimes. This can be achieved by, for instance, providing support and orientation to victims of discrimination, promoting awareness raising and information campaigns, supporting community building initiatives and providing conflict mediation services.

The current humanitarian refugee situation has highlighted the importance of cities, which are the primary destinations for refugees and other migrants, as sites for challenges and tensions, but, most importantly, as key actors for transformative change, uniquely positioned to play a major role in addressing today's most pressing challenges. Now more than ever, this means cities working together – both within and beyond national and regional borders. This was the focus of the 2015 General Conference of the European Coalition, held in Karlsruhe, Germany, which resulted in the signing of the *Karlsruhe Declaration*,<sup>5</sup> with cities committing to an anti-racist welcoming culture and making every effort to accommodate refugees while ensuring their human rights, fundamental freedoms and security.

The key question of the inclusion of migrants and refugees was further highlighted through the project “Welcoming Cities for Refugees and Migrants: Promoting Inclusion and Protecting Rights”, a collaborative initiative of UNESCO, the Foundation of the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador M.V. Vardinoyannis and ECCAR. ECCAR has mobilised its member cities throughout the research phase to identify city level experiences and strategies for welcoming migrants in preparation for a forthcoming publication, as well as in a high-level panel held at UNESCO in the context of the initiative's launch in May 2016. The project will be concluded by a high-level meeting bringing together mayors, experts and city officials that will take place in November 2016 in Athens.

### **Making cities inclusive for all: senior citizens**

An inclusive city must be inclusive to all members of society, and respond to the constantly evolving dynamics of the composition of cities. The ageing population in many European countries brings with it new challenges and opportunities for cities. With the pushing back of retirement ages across Europe, people are required to work for a longer period of their lives. In parallel, this change in the population structure and the pension plan has been met by shifts in labour market dynamics, where precariousness is more widespread and ageism is pervasive: while the majority of contracts are now short to medium term, employers tend to prefer younger workers<sup>6</sup>. Thus, a growing number of older workers find themselves hardly employable because of their age, yet not old enough to retire. In parallel, the persistent economic crisis and the downsizing of welfare programmes has meant, in many European countries, the decrease of pensions or an increase that does not match inflation, causing a decrease in spending power for senior citizens.

These emerging economic challenges linked to the increasing elderly population across Europe, together with the decline of traditional inter-generational family structures of support and care, have contributed to growing tendencies towards the social exclusion of the elder sections of the population in cities. Cities can confront ageism and the exclusion of senior citizens by promoting vocational training targeted specifically at their employability, by undertaking awareness-raising campaigns targeting employers, and designing and providing specific affordable services and housing.

### **Persisting challenges in European cities**

#### **Anti-Semitism**

Although data on anti-Semitic incidents are scarce and not easily comparable, there's a shared awareness that Europe is experiencing an increase in anti-Semitism (and related incidents)<sup>7</sup>. Alongside the increase of incidents motivated by anti-Semitism, 2015 witnessed the highest number of European Jewish people migrating to Israel due to the perceived lack of safety.

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5 <http://www.eccar.info/news/eccar-final-declaration-adopted>

6 ILO 2008

7 FRA, Antisemitism overview of data available in the European Union 2004 – 2014, 2015

Anti-Semitism in Europe has a long and rooted history and discrimination against Jewish people differs from discrimination against migrants or other minority communities, where racism also stems from and causes poverty and social exclusion. Cities can enhance the safety and dignity of residing Jewish communities by supporting awareness raising campaigns on the history of Jewish communities in Europe and fostering inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue.

### **Promoting the inclusion of people living with disabilities**

The word “disability” covers a diverse range of individual conditions that can vary radically. Despite important progress in addressing discriminatory attitudes and legislation, people living with disabilities are still faced with significant physical and cultural barriers in the labour market, and in Europe are two to three times more likely to be unemployed<sup>8</sup>. Cuts in social spending have further reduced programmes aiming at promoting the full accessibility of for people living with disabilities.

Cities can become more inclusive for people living with disabilities by removing all physical barriers to access and mobility, by providing accessible public transportation, and by equipping traffic lights and public buildings with devices to support visually impaired people. Specific vocational training and employability programmes for people living with disabilities can also be proposed by city authorities. Support and guidance to victims of discriminatory incidents should also be provided.

### **Promoting the inclusion of LGBT people**

The situation of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people varies drastically in different European Countries. While some aspects of discrimination against LGBT people match discrimination against ethnic minorities or against disabled people and should be countered with matching measures, some are specific and demand targeted responses by local administrations. In order to provide a more inclusive environment for LGBT people, cities should take steps to ensure the safety and freedom from discrimination of all communities, including through awareness-raising campaigns and appropriate security measures. As with all communities and populations, city authorities can foster the participation of specific groups, involving them in all relevant advisory and consultation processes.

### **ECCAR and the present challenges of European cities**

As major actors within increasingly diverse societies across Europe, cities have a key role to play in ensuring that all citizens can enjoy a safe, inclusive, fair and respectful urban environment free from all forms of discrimination, in which all city dwellers can fully express their potential. In this spirit, ECCAR’s 10 Points Action Plan provides a structured framework for city authorities to make their policies and actions as inclusive as possible. Participation in the Coalition can help to focus the attention of city authorities on the need to promote inclusion and combat all forms of discrimination, raising awareness of the centrality of these issues to sustainable, equitable and peaceful urban development, while providing experiences, good practices and practical tools that may support local administration in building inclusive cities.

ECCAR represents both a framework for local administrations to strengthen their capacity to prevent and confront discrimination, and a prominent actor in the regional and international spheres, through collaborative action and advocacy for global solidarity as part of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities – ICCAR platform. Mobilising its member cities at local, regional and global levels, ECCAR is fully committed to leveraging action to support the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda*.