

4th European Policy Dialogue Forum

Social Inclusion in Cities:

Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Bring Communities into Dialogue

Location: Barcelona, Spain

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INTRODUCTION

The European Policy Dialogue Forum (EPDF) brings together policymakers, religious leaders and experts to discuss social inclusion in Europe. The 4th EPDF will take place in Barcelona, Spain on 9-10 November 2022 organized by the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and the Network for Dialogue in partnership with the European Council of Religious Leaders / Religions for Peace Europe (ECRL/RfP) as well as the local partners Blanquerna Observatory for Media, Culture and Religion of the Ramon Llull University and the Instituto Superior de Ciencias Religiosas de Barcelona (ISCREB) and the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

2022's theme, **"Social Inclusion in Cities"**, highlights the importance of European cities as key spaces to ensure healthy societal diversity and social inclusion. The sessions at this year's EPDF inquire into the roles that different urban stakeholders – from media and policy makers to religious actors – can play to achieve inclusive societies and how collaboration among them can be better encouraged. In looking at "Social Inclusion in Cities" the EPDF specific looks at:

1. [Creating and strengthening multistakeholder partnerships on migration to allow for joint action and effective support of urban social inclusion processes.](#)
2. [Exploring the power of culture and media initiatives to counter hate-speech in European cities.](#)

THE URBAN CONTEXT

Cities have been facing new and complex issues. As economic centres, cities are more susceptible to rapid changes in diversity due to immigration but are also more prone to deeper divisions between social and ethnic groups than in more rural areas. In the last decade there are growing numbers of efforts in cities to secure the wellbeing of increasingly diverse populations and engage with vulnerable groups and those who face discrimination, including refugees, migrants and religious and cultural minorities. While many social inclusion policies initiated at national level are important, it has been increasingly recognized over the last 15 years that cities hold a crucial and ever-changing role in accompanying people through integration processes and creating pathways to better social inclusion, by operating across a swathe of dimensions from education to culture to politics.

The European Union has come up with several mechanisms to give European cities opportunities to actively shape EU legislation, funding and instruments for knowledge exchange to improve social inclusion. There are many positive examples of smart cities and local initiatives implemented with the support of well-planned urban policies, designed in partnership with other stakeholders. Since potential beneficiary communities' situations vary strongly and an effective practice from one city or community may need to be tailored significantly to work elsewhere, the success of such policies often depends on the breadth of consultation in devising them. Multistakeholder consultations and dialogue, can help to ensure that policies will fit beneficiaries' needs and avoid pitfalls, while establishing an atmosphere of respect and collaboration which can itself drive empowerment. For example, involving leaders from religious communities who understand their adherents' concerns can bring insight into designing a more effective and more accepted policy that benefits both newcomers to cities as well as long-time residents.

THEMATIC FOCUS

“Social Inclusion in Cities” explores promising practices that enable local policymakers, religious leaders, civil society organizations and groups facing discrimination to work together effectively and creatively.

Multistakeholder partnerships on migration: Refugees and migrants have historically faced challenges establishing themselves in communities which may not share their religion, culture, or ethnicity. The [EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#) underlines the importance of supporting local authorities by “strengthening inter-religious dialogue among communities [and] supporting cities [...] by providing funding, guidance and training to practitioners and local actors”. The EPDF examine how diverse actors can strengthen partnerships at urban level, and what these partners can do together to make sure refugees and migrants feel both empowered and at home in European cities, while bearing in mind the needs of the local host community.¹

Cultural and media initiatives to counter hate speech: A particularly divisive force affecting religious and cultural minorities is the prevalence of hate speech and discrimination evident in media, public spaces, and public discourse. Examples of cities’ achievements and potential in tackling these issues, using creative approaches such as through media, sports and culture are present throughout Europe.² According to a recent [Fundamental Rights Agency report](#): “Cities are an ideal starting point to strengthen respect for human rights.” Participants will examine examples of cultural and media initiatives that counter hate speech, and discuss what they need to do to more effectively address fears and break patterns of systemic exclusion, and what and how different actors can contribute to such endeavours.

METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

The EPDF uses interactive methods and invites the active participation of all participants to share their views and ideas. The discussions will build on the inputs from the pre-EPDF workshop that took place with 40 participants on 7-8 June 2022 in Stockholm, Sweden and the two subsequent policy papers about the topics in question and shared with the participants in advance.

OBJECTIVES

Building on the workshop in Stockholm, the 4th EPDF has four objectives:

1. to encourage and strengthen multistakeholder partnerships on migration as well as cultural and media initiatives to counter hate speech for more inclusive societies in European cities;
2. to enhance dialogue between different stakeholders, in particular urban policymakers, religious actors and refugee and migrant-led organizations as well as media and cultural institutions;
3. to identify possible solutions to key challenges at the urban level regarding migration and hate speech and contribute by providing relevant policy recommendations;
4. to include voices from the grassroots, such as religious actors or refugee and migrant communities, in the design of urban policies fostering social inclusion in European cities.

PARTICIPANTS

The 4th EPDF will gather some 80 participants from around Europe. The participants represent actors in European cities that are crucial to building and implementing effective policies that benefit social cohesion in urban centres. Participants include representatives of civil society organizations working on social inclusion and countering hate speech, including migrant and refugee-led organizations, Network for Dialogue members, policymakers from the local level and religious actors and leaders.

¹ The Network for Dialogue published six policy briefs, resulting from previous EPDF discussions ranging from volunteering and trustbuilding to changing the narrative on migration. They are available [here](#).

² As a result of the 3rd EPDF, KAICIID and its partners published two research papers: #1 *Using Education to Counter Anti-Refugee and Migrant Hate Speech in Europe* and #2 *Religious Actors and Countering Hate Speech in Europe*. They can be downloaded [here](#).