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Barcelona Intercultural Plan
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We started an ambitious process to define this new and updated intercultural strategy. In January 2000 we had 3.5% of foreign citizens in Barcelona and now we have 18% (300.000 people) so in few years diversity has become a political and social issue. We have a welcoming-city tradition but now with more than 150 nationalities the challenge is different and new for us.

The first principle is to accept that diversity implies more complexity but also more opportunities, and depending on the theoretical approach and the specific policies and actions, we can foster one or another element.

Our main concern is defining a global strategy, so all the policies in the city must include the intercultural perspective: education, culture, urbanism, security, social services, economic promotion, communication etc. all of them have to face the challenge of diversity, adapting services and policies to the new reality. We need to be proactive and we need to have a long-term perspective, because if we don't think in terms of Barcelona of the 2020, we will not be able to face the real challenges and make the right policies.

Our intercultural approach is based on three principles:

Equality: without a strong political compromise to reach a real equality of rights and duties and also of social opportunities, it is not possible to build an intercultural approach. That means global policies towards euqality and fighting against exclusions and discrimination. Without this compromise talking about interculturality is something superficial and culturalist.

A positive approach to diversity: interculturalism requires a positive approach towards diversity, seeing it as an opportunity for society. It does not just mean celebrating diversity, it needs a responsible strategy including all the complexities, but it is essential to emphasize that we can take good advantage of diversity. However, it is important to work hard and to define a global strategy that focuses on the key aspects that must be faced in order to minimize these complexities, to enhance social cohesion and to obtain the benefits of diversity.

Positive interaction: while diversity is seen as something positive and an opportunity, it is also necessary to emphasise the importance of those common elements that we all share. These aspects (values, needs, interests, context etc.) are indispensible for social cohesion in order to guarantee a sense of belonging. However, it is not easy to mantain this common sphere in a more diverse and complex context, for that matter, social interaction is fundamental. Without this positive interaction it is very difficult to face the complexities of diversity and also to strenghten the shared sphere. Without naturally experiencing this diversity in our daily life it is difficult to break the mental barriers that prevent cohesion and to actually benefit from diversity. How do we facilitate this positive interaction through public policies? That is the big question that our plan must address.

We have set two main working areas:

The internal work in the municipality: all departments are evaluating the answers to five given questions: how has diversity affected your political sector (e.g.: education, urbanism, security)? Which are the main challenges from an intercultural perspective? Which are the merits and shortcomings points of the current policies? Which strategies and concrete policies should your department conduct in order to achieve the intercultural goals? And which are the indicators to properly evaluate the intercultural approach? In every department both technical staff and poiticians work on these questions.

The external work: we have encoraged a public debate in the city trying to engange many people from all kind of social areas, actors etc.

- <u>There were 5 questions everybody had to answer:</u>
- What do you think about the increase of diversity in recent years in our city?
- Which elements do you think facilitate the relations between citizens from different cultural backgrounds and which elements make them difficult?
- What would you do to foster these relations?
- What are the common elements all citizens of Barcelona must share in order to guarantee social cohesion and positive "living together"?
- Do you know any specific place or context where intercultural relations are normal? Which one is it?

We have set up a web page to canalise all participation processes on the other hand we worked with different experts to create an intercultural index, in cooperation with other European cities working in this field.