



EUROPEAN CAPITALS of INCLUSION and DIVERSITY AWARD

COLLECTION of
best practices

#DiversityCapitals

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Become a Capital Of Inclusion and Diversity in 5+1 steps

How can a town, city or region promote diversity and inclusion, advance equality, and combat discrimination? The journey to end all forms of discrimination can be long and complex, but there are clear and strategic steps authorities can take to initiate this process. The positive impact of such initiatives on people's lives can be significant and transformative.

'This recognition as a European Capital of Inclusion and Diversity is not just an accolade, but a commitment to values that define our urban identity. We believe that inclusion is not merely a buzzword, but a guiding principle that shapes our policies and actions.'

City of Zagreb



City of Zagreb receiving the Gold Award in the category for local authorities with more than 50 000 inhabitants at the 2024 European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award ceremony. © European Union, 2024.

STEP 1: Identify the specific challenges and societal needs

Every society has unique contexts and dynamics that require targeted responses, actions and solutions. It is essential to research and develop methods to understand the specific forms of discrimination that are prevalent in your town, city or region before trying to address them. Basing this research on existing studies and data ensures that the approach is evidence-based and comprehensive. To gather representative and comprehensive information, the experiences and needs of all populations and groups must be considered in this process, with particular focus on the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination people might experience.

‘Feeling included is much more than feeling tolerated or accepted. That is not enough. Inclusion means feeling safe and free to participate in the whole spectrum of the community that is a city. Inclusion is the open choice to take on any possible role, from a passive citizen to a proactive agent. An inclusive city does not see your (gender) identity, background or disability as a barrier, but as enriching the community with diverse experiences.’

City of Leuven

STEP 2: Engage the public and affected groups in the process

It has many benefits to involve the public and those directly affected in the process of identifying challenges and developing policies and initiatives. Firstly, it ensures that the conclusions about the prevalent forms of discrimination and most pressing challenges are well informed. Secondly, it empowers target

groups, making them feel valued, seen and respected. Finally, it fosters a sense of social responsibility within the community, as the public gets to take a role – from early education through adulthood – in the process of designing policies and strategies that will benefit them.



Kids drawing. Photo provided by the city of Leuven.

This participatory process helps spread and promote the values of diversity, inclusion, equality and solidarity throughout society. It is crucial to take

a structural and long-term approach, rather than taking sporadic action, to ensure sustained impact and commitment.

La Laguna's approach

to promoting diversity and inclusion is characterised by comprehensive and collaborative governance, active citizen participation, dedicated budgets, and cross-sectoral cooperation between municipal areas and other public administrations. The aim is to create a city model that is inclusive of all its residents. To this end, La Laguna relies on the active participation of organisations representing various groups. The city has established several dedicated councils and boards that focus on various aspects of diversity and inclusion, including the Council and ombudsman for Persons with Disabilities, the Council for the Older persons, the Children's Council, the Women's Council, the LGBTBIQ Council, the Volunteering Council, the Board of the Roma people, the Board of migrants and the Board of homeless people. These councils and boards play integral roles in planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives to ensure collaborative work in diversity and inclusion. Each council operates with its own budget and increasingly collaborates across sectors to ensure the full inclusion of all community members. The departments with direct responsibility for Diversity and Inclusion (such as the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Accessibility, Works and Infrastructures and the Department of Equality and LGBTBIQ) have their own budgets and staff.



Information point on accessibility. Photo provided by the city of La Laguna.

STEP 3: Design and implement targeted projects and actions

Once priorities are set and challenges identified, it is time to take concrete and strategic action. Based on research, available information, and the input from affected groups, targeted measures and initiatives must be implemented to eliminate

the barriers and discrimination these groups experience in their daily lives. These actions must be clear and coherent, incorporating specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound goals.

