



Brokering migrants participation in cultural activities

ITALY

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Introduction

Brokering migrants' cultural participation is a two-year project (2013-2015) funded by the European Commission-Directorate General Home Affairs.

The general aim of the project is to enhance and stimulate the cultural participation of migrants by improving the capacity of their local cultural public institutions to interact with them. Public cultural institutions are part of the receiving society, which has to live up to the challenge of managing cultural diversity and ensuring intercultural integration. Central to these tasks is the enhancement of the intercultural capacity of public cultural institutions by diversifying their staff and governance bodies. The project has the following specific objectives: a) to promote the engagement of the receiving communities in interacting with the migrants, based on the mutual respect of their rights, obligations and different cultures; b) to ensure equal treatment and improve diversity management in the public and private work places, service provision, education systems, media and other important arenas. Indeed, public cultural institutions are "important arenas" in which to promote equal treatment and improve diversity management.

Partners of the project are:

- Interarts Foundation (ES) – Co-ordinator
- Intercult (SE)
- Educult (AT)
- CAE-Culture Action Europe (BE)
- Ecom-European Centre for Cultural Organisation and Management (IT)

The project is based on 4 phases:

1. Realisation of a benchmarking tool in order to analyse diversity management in cultural institutions;
2. A pilot research exercise in order to analyse the sector's needs on how to promote integration;
3. The identification of public cultural institutions (PCIs), to which an accompanied Learning Partnership (LPs) will be offered in order to equip the sector on how to promote integration;
4. Benchmarking tool and LPs outcomes will be disseminated broadly for use and emulation

This document refers to phases 1, 2 and 3 of the project, i.e. the pilot research activity, the use of the benchmarking tool and the learning partnerships realised in Rome and Milan.



The research¹

In order to analyse diversity management in cultural institutions the working group has implemented a benchmarking tool, which tracks the potential journey of a cultural institution from a basic level where the institutions recognise the need to reflect society's diversity by adapting rules and making statements, through two intermediate levels to an advanced level, where the cultural institutions as organisations fully reflects society's diversity and promotes participation. Benchmarks for each level are defined in six different areas: (a) audience/visitor relations, (b) programme/repertoire/collections, (c) partners/collaborators for programming and profiling, (d) employees, (e) board members, and (f) suppliers.

A draft of this benchmarking tool has already been developed by Platform for Intercultural Europe together with Migration Policy Group. A first step in the project has been to put the benchmarking tool to the scrutiny of a group of experts from cultural institutions and from migrants' self-organisations in order to refine it in the framework of a workshop designed and organised to this end. The 2-day workshop took place in Brussels at the end of 2013. The concrete output of the workshop was the final version of the benchmarking tool.

Each partner has then identified 10-15 cultural institutions with a diversified cultural sector and a strong set of public cultural institutions that have had to face important challenges regarding the integration of Third Country Nationals. Relevant key functionaries within the selected institutions have been interviewed in order to establish the stage these have reached in the journey of diversity management, to establish critical hurdles and to identify needs. Participating institutions have then been ranked on the basis of the outcome of the pilot research.

The selected cultural institutions are public-funded ones and are museums, libraries and theatres/opera houses (table 1).

The analysis shows that in some cases there are some interesting and innovative initiatives which take place thanks to single departments or even individuals, but which are not supported by the institutional and political contexts. There are other cases or very significant cultural institutions – in terms of dimensions and numbers of visitors/spectators – where the issue is not at all tackled.

¹ The Italian partner, Eccom –European Centre for Cultural Organisation and Management, has realised the research in Italy: the research team was directed by Cristina Da Milano and Simona Bodo in co-operation with Roberta Agnese and Maria Guida.



Table 1. Results of the analysis according to the benchmarking tool

	Name	Typology	Benchmarking level
1	Brera National Gallery, Milan	State owned museum	Lower intermediate
2	Museum of Peoples and Cultures, Milan	Private museum	Lower intermediate
3	MAXXI, Rome	Private/public museum	Basic/Lower intermediate
4	City Museum of Zoology, Rome	City museum	Lower intermediate
5	Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, Montebelluna (Treviso)	City museum	Upper intermediate
6	Opera Theatre, Rome*	Theatre/Opera house	Basic
7	Auditorium Music Park, Rome*	Theatre/Opera house	Basic
8	Teatro dell'Argine, S. Lazzaro di Savena (Bologna)	Theatre/Opera house	Upper intermediate
9	City Libraries of Genoa	Library	Lower intermediate
10	Libraries of Rome Institution	Library	Lower intermediate

Source: Eccom

*Analysis based only on available documents

Particularly, some of the most common pitfalls identified during the research in terms of approach towards the issue of migrants participation are:

- The scarce involvement of the higher levels of the cultural institutions and of their political references in considering the issue as a priority;
- The lack of training of the cultural professionals, who very often feel themselves inadequate to tackle the issue;
- The low level of communication/dissemination of good practices, which is strongly required by cultural institutions, also in terms of sharing of methodologies and approaches.



The learning partnerships

In Italy the Learning Partnerships have been organized by ECCOM in partnerships with cultural institutions (namely museums)² and took place in Rome and in Milan between November 2014 and February 2015.

The choice of realising them in two different cities was linked to the need of involving not only the largest possible number of cultural professionals together with professionals from other sectors but also to open up the participation to people coming from different geographical areas of Italy.

Alongside the issues emerged in the feedback sessions at the end of each day, here are some of the **concepts, key words and outcomes** shared by the group in this final session:

- A new awareness of the nature and implications of integration processes.
- An enhanced knowledge and understanding of best practices in planning and implementing intercultural projects.
- «One audience made of different people» (i.e. the importance not to segregate audiences according to their ethnicity, but rather to address a diverse audience in which all are equal participants).
- Cultural inclusion and participation of migrants is built on concrete relationships, based on dialogue, reciprocity and the ability to listen.
- Key words: care, respect, sensitivity, welcoming attitude, dignity.
- The importance of shared practices, the ability to connect; «no one grows up alone”.
- «Self-confidence in one’s own work: to work with migrants by focussing not only on contents/knowledge, but also, and most importantly, on the development of relational competencies and attitudes, is possible, and this was confirmed by the many model case studies we learned about»
- The awareness that «passion is not enough, we need to develop a professional expertise on issues such as the analysis of migrants’ cultural needs and expectations, strategies for involvement (e.g. the issue of diaspora associations’ representativeness), participatory planning, impact evaluation».

During the discussion about the **strategies** to be adopted in order to promote effective activities addressed to migrants, these issues emerged:

- The importance of emotional intelligence/competence;
- The sharing of values and emotions among human beings, which overcomes cultural diversity;
- The importance of the biological basis of social life, which implies care, solidarity and acceptance of diversity;
- The role of language and of its conceptual structures in creating separation and barriers and the need for linguistic mediation;

² City Museum of Zoology of Rome; “Luigi Pigorini” National Prehistoric Ethnographic Museum; Museum of Peoples and Cultures – PIME.



- The use of storytelling as a resource for intercultural communication, since it exists in all cultures and can be expressed in various artistic forms (theatre, dance, literature, music, visual arts). Accepting the different narrative forms is in itself a step forward towards interculture.
- The need for interaction and not only for integration, for trust and listening, for welcoming and attention;
- The provision of the same opportunities and invitations to all individuals, in order to overcome social and cultural barriers;
- The integration of educational competences with the cultural ones.

In terms of **programming and implementing activities** with migrants, some key issues have been identified by participants:

- to create a human relationship;
- to open up to diversity;
- to work with migrants and not for migrants;
- to make use of participative planning methods;
- to train staff (intercultural competences) and to open up positions for migrants within cultural organisations;
- to mainstream and institutionalize activities addressed to migrants;
- to include on a stable basis social activities within cultural institutions;
- to include migrants representatives within cultural institutions;
- to foster networking and partnerships among different sectors;
- to change the trans-missive communication models;
- to change the cultural offer.
- to have the opportunity to keep on working together as an inter-institutional group with a view to developing joint projects.

Conclusion

In a context like the Italian one, where cultural institutions are not strategically addressing the issue of migrants cultural institutions, with the exceptions of some of them, a project like MCP partially represented an answer to all the above mentioned issues, because on the one hand it intended to bring attention to them also at a high institutional and political level, on the other one it offered training opportunities and the chance of knowing and sharing good practices through the learning partnerships and the dissemination of the research report.

There was a very strong request from those involved in the research phase and in the learning partnerships of continuity and sustainability of the activities, since they all felt the need of continuous sharing and brainstorming on these issues, as well as of implementing transversal cultural activities to test new possible models.

From the point of view of ECCOM, there is a strong need of keeping on gathering data and examples of good practices in order to try to involve in the process the political and cultural institutions together with the social and educational ones.