



The Cities of Dialogue: Challenges and renewed goals for the 2nd semester of 2020

We may all agree that during the first semester of 2020 a lot of things changed in our lives. **At the beginning of March Italy entered one of the most severe crisis ever experienced.** The Covid-19 outbreak threw us all (and with us the rest of the world, shortly after) into an uncertain and dramatic scenario.

Now the health emergency has turned into a severe economic crisis and the Cities of Dialogue, on the front line throughout all the lockdown period, will have to face an unpredictable scenario for the upcoming months.

The impact of the Covid19 emergency on the Italian Network of the Cities of Dialogue was quite big even before the national lockdown: the thematic event on the Anti-rumours Strategy, planned for the end of February and to be hosted by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, was cancelled due to the outbreak of the crisis.

Looking back at that moment, none of us could have ever foreseen what was going to happen.

In the following weeks, the north of Italy was hit by a dramatic crisis, the healthcare system was on the edge of collapsing and citizens suddenly experienced an unbelievable situation that led to more than 34.700 deaths in less than 5 months, with a severe increase on death rate in many provinces and up to 950+ deaths in one day, at the end of March.

Anyway, the more the situation was getting severe the more the Cities of Dialogue enhanced their efforts to ensure one basic principle: the so-called “social distancing” could not erase social solidarity.

In fact, during this difficult phase, many Cities of the Network reaffirmed the **centrality of the intercultural approach to face the crisis**. The pandemic turned out to be a crucial moment to shape and test new practices **to promote interculturality as a fundamental value to create more inclusive communities and societies.**

The analysis of the intercultural policies promoted by the Cities of Dialogue during the Covid-19 crisis was one of the core topic we discussed in a recent **coordination meeting of the Network.**

This online meeting took place on the 18th June.



The meeting was divided into three main parts:

1. Analysis of intercultural policies
2. Work plan & next steps for the Cities (2nd semester of 2020)
3. Communication activities of the Network

As said, the first part of the meeting was dedicated to an analysis of intercultural policies that emerged during the Covid-19 emergency. This part was introduced by **Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi**, professor of City Diplomacy at Sciences Po and the Polytechnic University of Paris and president of the think-tank [Urban Flag](#). Thanks to his intervention, some particularly effective initiatives boosted at European level were reviewed, as inspiring practices for the Cities to transform the current crisis into opportunities and relaunch the theme of interculturality at local level.

After this first introduction, each City started to share projects and initiatives activated to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. **All the attending Cities underlined firmly that during this difficult phase the promotion of more inclusive communities and societies remained a central value.**

Many Cities also underlined the fundamental contribution that all the various communities of citizens have made to activate immediate responses in the management of the crisis. Some of them can be considered good practices to be improved even now that the most serious part of the health crisis is turning into an announced economic crisis.

Furthermore, during the online meeting, **the Cities of Dialogue also discussed the work plan envisaged by the network and the prospects which will be outlined in the months to come.**

To this end, after the meeting all the Cities have been invited to share their thoughts about the second half of the year, evaluating in particular:

1. Their interest in reprogramming the thematic event on Anti-rumours strategy and its feasibility (according to the current scenario and the ongoing Covi-19 restrictions)
2. Their preferences regarding new activities to be done in the 2nd semester of 2020 (eg. a National Communication Campaign of the Network, trainings on Intercultural Competences for municipal staff, etc.)

Finally, the latest session of the meeting was dedicated to the internal **communication among the Network** to innovate, in a strategic sense, the way to disseminate information and contents, thus enhancing the visibility and the intercultural commitment of each City of the Network. To this end, the Network has decided to explore new solutions and tools that will be set up in the coming months to systematize contents and smoothen the communication process among the Network from now on.

The online meeting registration (in Italian) is available [here](#).