REPORT

Rete Città del Dialogo

Intercultural Cities Network - Intercultural Cities Programme of the Council of Europe

Ravenna

22 and 23 October 2025

ICEI – Coordinatore Rete Italiana Città del Dialogo
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LOCATION: Ravenna, - Piazza Duomo 4

DATE: 21-23 October 2025

MEETING AGENDA

21 October 2025	
8.30	Welcome dinner
22 October 2025	
09:00-09:15	Registration
09:15	Greetings and introduction to the meeting • ***Municipality of Ravenna**, Fabio Sbaraglia - Councillor for Cultural and Multicultural Policies, Tourism, Afam, University, Mosaic, Economic Development, Trade, Crafts, Industry* • ***Council of Europe – Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)**, Célia Charre, Intercultural Cities Programme - Intercultural Inclusion Unit* • ***ICEI,** Simone Pettorruso – Coordinator for Italy/Europe*
10.00	Local Plans to Combat Discrimination: Objectives and Experiences of the Municipalities of the Cities of Dialogue Network, organised by ICEI
11.00	*Coffee break*
11:20	Plans and strategies to combat discrimination: a comparison between national, regional and local levels *Speakers:* • ***UNAR,** Mattia Peradotto, Director* • ***Emilia-Romagna Region,** Luca Rizzo Nervo, Delegate for Immigration and International Cooperation* • ***Municipality of Reggio Emilia,** Marwa Mahmoud, Councillor for Education Policy, with responsibility for Interculturalism and Human Rights* • ***Municipality of Ravenna,** Paolo Fasano, Head of the Immigration and Citizenship Policy Unit of the Municipality of Ravenna* Questions and debate with the cities
13.00-14.15	*Lunch*

2.15pm-3.15pm **15:15-17:00** **17:00**	How to apply the intersectional approach to the development of local plans and local policies to combat discrimination - *Dr Marco Mondello, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia* How to tell your story to the public? Narratives and words that unite and divide - *curated by ICEI* Summary and closing remarks
17.30	Guided tour: Basilica of San Vitale and monumental complex
8:30 p.m.	*Dinner*
23 October 2025	
09:15-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:00	The CITIES project experience - *organised by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia*
10:30	Comparison between cities on local plans: experiences, critical issues and challenges. Prospects for the work of the Intercultural Cities Programme and the Cities of Dialogue Network.
12.30	Conclusions and farewells
13:00-14:30	*Lunch*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Organisation	First name and surname	Position
Council of Europe (ICC programme)	Celia Charre	Policy officer in cooperation and external relations
UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination	Mattia Peradotto	Director
Emilia-Romagna Region	Luca Rizzo Nervo	Delegate for Immigration and International Cooperation
Emilia-Romagna Region	Sara Roubi	Regional Official, Social Planning, Integration, Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Department
Emilia-Romagna Region	Denisa Vizitiu	Curricular Intern
Municipality of Ravenna	Benedetta Rivalti	Executive instructor - AMIF projects
Municipality of Ravenna	Chiara Turci	Intercultural Operator - House of Cultures
Municipality of Ravenna	Giampaolo Gentilucci	Instructor
Municipality of Ravenna	Michele Petta	Civil Service Volunteer
Municipality of Ravenna	Paolo Fasano	Head of the Immigration and Citizenship Policy Unit Municipality of Ravenna
Municipality of Ravenna	Nadia Lamhoud	Operator and Project Coordinator
Municipality of Reggio Emilia	Marwa Mahmoud	Councillor for Education Policy
Municipality of Reggio Emilia	Luca Colombo	Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Cities representative, Projects Office
Municipality of Montesilvano	Federica Zorzi	Head of the Planning Office - Special Agency for Social Services of the Municipality of Montesilvano
Municipality of Zagarolo	Antonella Caspoli	Councillor for Social Policies of the Municipality of Zagarolo

Municipality of Zagarolo	Alberto Iacovacci	Municipal Councillor
Municipality of Casalecchio di Reno	Milli Ruggiero	Intercultural and Equal Opportunities Officer
Municipality of Casalecchio di Reno	Annalisa Collina	European Affairs Officer
Municipality of Olbia	Giuseppina Biosa	Project Manager for the Municipality of Olbia
Municipality of Olbia	Monica Piccotti	Animator and operator of the Olbia Community Hub municipal service
Municipality of Olbia	Alessandra Feola	Project Manager, Municipality of Olbia
Municipality of Milan	Silvia Ragazzi	City to City Cooperation Office, Foreign Affairs Department
Municipality of Milan	Elena Buzzi	Rights and Inclusion Area - House of Rights
Municipality of Pontedera	Elena Franconi	Administrative Instructor Social Policies and Interculturalism
Municipality of Portomaggiore	Saverio Saccà	Head of Social Services
Municipality of Portomaggiore	Dario Bernardi	Mayor
Municipality of Modena	Irene Baraldi	Assistant to the Mayor with responsibility for Peace, Europe, International Cooperation, Human Rights, Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue
Municipality of Parma	Fabrizia Dalcò	Head of the Active Citizenship, Participation and Interculturalism Operational Unit, Municipality of Parma
Municipality of Forlì	Livia Gazzoni	Officer, International Relations Office
Municipality of Forlì	Monica Piraccini	Head of International Relations Office
Municipality of Turin	Chiara Gionco	EQ Rights, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Office of the City of Turin
Municipality of Novellara	Simone Zarantonello	Mayor
Mondinsieme Foundation	Elena Torreggiani	Operator, Mondinsieme Foundation of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia

UNIMORE	Marco Mondello	PhD student, Collaborator at CRID - Interdepartmental Research Centre on Discrimination and Vulnerability
ICEI	Simone Pettorruso	Coordinator for Italy/Europe
ICEI	Claudio Tocchi	Educational Advisor
ICEI	Gabriella Patriziano	Project Manager Italy/Europe
ICEI	Maria De Pasquale	Project Manager Italy/Europe
ICEI	Chiara Annunziata	Junior Project Manager Italy/Europe
ICEI	Marco Giusta	Cultural and social planner and consultant

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 40

- 14 cities: Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Modena, Casalecchio di Reno, Olbia, Turin, Forlì, Novellara, Portomaggiore, Milan, Pontedera, Zagarolo, Montesilvano, Parma
- Council of Europe - Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)
- Emilia Romagna Region (online connection)
- UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination (online connection)
- University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
- ICEI
- Mondinsieme Foundation

INTRODUCTION

From 21 to 23 October 2025, the city of Ravenna hosted the annual meeting of **the Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue**, transforming itself for three days into a veritable national laboratory dedicated to reflection, discussion and co-design on intercultural policies. The event brought together not only local administrations, but also academic institutions, third sector organisations, regional bodies and technical structures involved in the protection of rights and the prevention of discrimination, offering a rich and articulated picture of the different skills present in the country.

The work programme alternated between theoretical analysis and practical sessions, encouraging discussion and the exchange of experiences between different areas. The common objective of the three days was to outline areas of work for the current and future development of **Local Plans against discrimination**, promoting models of inclusive governance capable of responding to the social transformations underway in different urban contexts.

The meeting provided an opportunity to extend the reflection and work initiated on the development of **local anti-discrimination plans** to the cities of **the Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue,** facilitating a broad and pluralistic debate. The joint presence of municipal administrations, academia, local operators and representatives of the Council of Europe made it possible to highlight the results, discuss their practical application in different contexts and, through direct dialogue, to explore the innovative practices that are emerging in the territories.

At the same time, the Ravenna conference provided a strategic opportunity to **strengthen the follow-up to the project and** to initiate a dialogue on **the scalability of the experience at national level**. Thanks to the presence of UNAR and the Emilia-Romagna Region, an operational synergy was created between local initiatives and structural policies. This interaction becomes a key element in avoiding fragmentation and promoting overall future consistency between municipal actions, regional policies and national strategies.

The value of the initiative was enriched by the presence – either in person or online – of a diverse network of stakeholders, including:

- **The Council of Europe – Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)**
- **UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination**
- **The Emilia-Romagna Region**
- **The University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE)**
- **The Mondinsieme Foundation**,

Alongside institutional stakeholders, **14 Italian cities** belonging to the Cities of Dialogue Network participated in the event: Ravenna, Parma, Montesilvano, Reggio Emilia, Zagarolo, Casalecchio di Reno, Olbia, Milan, Pontedera, Portomaggiore, Modena, Forlì, Novellara and Turin. The territorial diversity of these cities – in terms of size, geographical location and administrative history – made for a particularly rich and varied discussion, highlighting a plurality of approaches, practices and local needs.

Overall, the initiative represented a crucial moment for consolidating alliances, strengthening skills and initiating a structured reflection on local anti-discrimination plans, with a strong focus on the adoption of shared tools, the dissemination of innovative models and the construction of collaborative networks between territories, institutions and communities.

Wednesday 22 October

The day began with institutional greetings from the Municipality of Ravenna, represented by **Fabio Sbaraglia, *Councillor for Cultural and Multicultural Policies,*** who greeted all those present, emphasising how strategic it is for the city of Ravenna to be part of **the Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue, highlighting how** this membership represents not only recognition of Ravenna's long-standing commitment to issues of coexistence and social cohesion, but also a valuable opportunity to develop innovative practices through the CITIES project.

Next, **Célia Charre, *project officer at the Council of Europe,*** gave an update on **the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)**, which now involves 46 member states and over 700 million European citizens. The work carried out in 2025 was illustrated, with the accession of new cities such as Shizuoka (Japan), Iztapalapa (Mexico) and Vila Nova de Gaia (Portugal). The entry of these territories confirms the global nature of the programme and the growing relevance of the intercultural model.

Among the main activities in 2025, the following are highlighted:

- **Expert visits and reports on the Intercultural Cities Index**: The programme conducted numerous evaluation and peer exchange missions, with visits to: Reggio Emilia and Pontedera (Italy); Manlleu (Spain); Asan (South Korea); Oeiras (Portugal — visit scheduled for December). At the same time, reports on the Index have been published on: Arandjelovac, Prijepolje and Sjenica (Serbia); Famagusta, Larnaca, Limassol, Nicosia and Paphos (Cyprus); Tenerife (Spain). These tools support local authorities in evaluating their intercultural policies and identifying areas for improvement.

- **Projects funded by inter-city grants**: 2025 saw the launch of three innovative pilot projects focusing on data, participation and rights:
  - ◊ **Project 1 – Reggio Emilia/Modena (Italy)**
    - Creation of interactive thematic maps to understand local diversity.
    - Access to data to support inclusive policies
    - Improvement of civic inclusion of residents
  - ◊ **Project 2 – Lutsk / Pavlohrad / Lublin (Ukraine – Poland)**
    - Support for the integration of internally displaced persons in Ukraine
    - Strengthening intercultural dialogue
    - Capacity building for local administrations
  - ◊ **Project 3 – Leeds / Oeiras (United Kingdom – Portugal)**
    - Development of a bilingual training kit for understanding the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ communities
    - Sharing of good practices between cities
    - Support for volunteers from LGBT+ communities
- **Translations and new publications:** In 2025, new language versions of key tools were produced:
  - ◊ Step-by-step guide manual – Serbian version
  - ◊ "Community policing in intercultural cities" handbook – Finnish version

- **Priority topics and future activities:** The main areas of work identified for the coming period include:
  - ◊ **Disinformation** as a risk factor for social cohesion and security

◊ **Placemaking** as an approach to creating inclusive public spaces

The following are planned for the period 2025-2026:

- Annual meeting of ICC coordinators.
- Series of webinars on anti-discrimination in collaboration with the CITIES project.

The activities of **the Committee of Experts on Intercultural Inclusion (ADI-INT)** were also presented, which is committed to strengthening multi-level cooperation and developing tools for the self-assessment of inclusion strategies. In closing, the celebration of **the 20th anniversary of the ICC Programme in 2027** was announced**,** an opportunity to further strengthen the network and enhance the impact of the joint work of European cities for inclusion and social cohesion.

Commentato [gp1]: In my opinion, this can be summarised, but you tell me, since it's part of ICC.

Commentato [SP2R1]: since it's already included, I would leave it in.

Simone Pettorruso, ***Head of the Italy and Europe Department of ICEI, the coordinating body of the Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue***, then took the floor, offering a broad and structured overview of the strategic lines on which the Network has focused its work over the last year. Attention was drawn to ICEI's role as technical coordinator of the network since 2019, emphasising how this function has made it possible to develop a solid, shared methodological framework capable of enhancing the contribution of member cities.

In his speech, he outlined some areas of intervention considered central to the entire Network. Firstly, training**,** understood as a priority investment to strengthen the skills of local administrations involved in inclusion processes and the prevention of discrimination. In 2025, thanks in part to the CITIES project, this work led to the launch of training courses for over 250 participants**,** including municipal officials, social workers, educators and representatives of the third sector.

A second key area concerns **the development of local anti-discrimination plans**, governance tools that help local areas to define structured, measurable and participatory policies. The intervention highlighted how a growing number of cities are beginning to adopt these plans, strengthening a systemic and non-episodic commitment to the promotion of rights.

Reference was then made to the work that ICEI is doing **on public narratives and disinformation**, recognised as determining factors in building a social climate conducive to coexistence. The Cities of Dialogue Network has invested in the creation of an inter-municipal community of practice, as well as in courses dedicated to the production of alternative narratives and diversity-sensitive communication strategies.

Another key point of the intervention concerned **the involvement of young people and the educational community**, considered key players in processes of cultural change. This focus has resulted in capacity building initiatives, thematic meetings and collaborations with schools, youth centres and educational institutions throughout the country.

The launch of **a working group dedicated to the issue of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities**, one of the most sensitive and relevant areas on the national scene, was also announced. This initiative, together with the webinars and initiatives already underway, represents an important step towards a more structured and continuous approach to social inclusion for those communities most at risk of discrimination.

Among the emerging priorities, **sport** was also highlighted **as a tool for social inclusion**, recognising its educational and relational potential and its ability to generate positive meeting spaces. The Network has

already launched specific initiatives in this area, opening up new possibilities for collaboration with sports associations and local organisations.

The presentation also provided an overview of the development of the Network, which reached **32 member cities** in 2025. This expansion testifies, on the one hand, to the growing sensitivity of local administrations towards intercultural inclusion and, on the other, to the effectiveness of the support work carried out by ICEI. It was emphasised that the Network maintains a constant relationship with the Council of Europe's ICC Programme, which allows Italian cities to participate in international exchanges, access advanced methodological tools and compare experiences at European level.

The presentation concluded by highlighting the approach that characterises the entire work structure of the network: a **collaborative, multi-level and participatory method**, in which co-design with cities, the involvement of local communities and constant dialogue with national and European institutions are the key elements for building inclusive policies capable of generating real and lasting change.

The opening introductions to the event strongly reiterated the strategic importance of **cooperation between the different levels of governance – European, national and local** – highlighting how only continuous and structured dialogue between institutions, local communities and civil society actors can generate truly effective policies to combat discrimination and promote inclusion. In particular, the central role of **cities** was emphasised**,** as they are increasingly recognised as true **laboratories of social innovation,** where new approaches, operational tools and participatory models can be tested in order to respond in a concrete and timely manner to the needs of communities. In this context, the role of local administrations emerges as fundamental in translating national and European regulatory frameworks and guidelines into everyday practices, creating collaborative ecosystems that promote social cohesion, equal opportunities and collective well-being.

After the introductory greetings, the session dedicated to **local plans to combat discrimination** was opened by Marco Giusta*, cultural and social planner and consultant to ICEI,* who offered a detailed and innovative reflection on the political, methodological and operational nature of these tools. His speech had the merit of offering the Cities of Dialogue Network a clear vision of the role that local plans can play in contemporary public policy, promoting them as tools for multi-level governance and integrated policy.

Marco Giusta introduced his analysis through the metaphor of the chimera, a fantastical creature composed of heterogeneous elements, chosen to represent the complexity inherent in the construction of an effective Local Plan. From this metaphor, he derived three guiding principles, fuelled by powerful philosophical references: the capacity for political imagination, referred to by Aristotle , necessary for conceiving new scenarios and new forms of coexistence; adherence to reality and the centrality of data as an antidote to approximations and common sense; and finally, methodological consistency between rights, principles and administrative practices, evoked by Croce, as an essential requirement for translating values into concrete actions.

Starting from these three interpretative axes, Marco Giusta described the **local plan** as a **political act rather than a technical one**. Developing it means recognising the existence of discrimination – including institutional discrimination – and adopting an intersectional perspective capable of grasping the intertwining of gender, sexual orientation, origin, disability, age and socio-economic status. The speech referred to some exemplary cases in Italy: Reggio Emilia**,** which defines anti-racism as a duty of local government, and Bologna**,** which has chosen the path of linguistic transparency by openly naming racism as a systemic phenomenon. These are examples that show how cities can break new ground in terms of institutional responsibility and political courage.

It was also explained that a local plan must transform objectives into measurable and verifiable **impact indicators**. Among the operational priorities indicated were: reducing **under-reporting**, equitable access to services and rights, increasing civic participation, and the systematic integration of anti-discrimination actions into ordinary municipal planning (DUP, PIAO, PEG).

A key part of the intervention concerned the issue of **active involvement**, defined as the definitive overcoming of the distinction between 'users' and 'beneficiaries' of public policies. People must become co-protagonists**,** participating in the definition of priorities, languages, tools and implementation methods. In this context, the CITIES project was promoted as a privileged platform for inter-institutional learning, capable of connecting five pilot municipalities in a shared process of experimentation and exchange.

A significant part of the discussion was devoted to **public communication**, understood not as a simple promotional activity, but as a form of **civic education** and a strategic lever for social change. Inclusive narratives, conscious linguistic choices, combating disinformation and valuing differences were identified as fundamental elements of a well-structured local plan.

The last part of the morning was devoted to reflection on ***plans and strategies to combat discrimination: a comparison between national, regional and local levels, through four institutional interventions:***

Multi-level governance and participation

Mattia Peradotto, ***director of UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination***, speaking online, presented the evolution of UNAR's work, starting from the role it now plays on the national and European scene: a real **point of contact** with the Council of Europe and the European Union and, in fact, the Italian **Equality Body**, a function that has been consolidated over the years and that the new European directives of May 2024 will help to further strengthen, imposing higher standards of autonomy, independence and capacity for intervention.

The long process that led to the adoption of **the new National Plan against Discrimination**, approved on 12 June 2025, was then described. This process began in 2021 with an expression of interest addressed to third sector organisations, continued with thematic focus groups and in-depth discussions with NGOs, and was finally extended to central administrations – ministries, regions, ANCI – under the guidance of a steering committee chaired by the Minister for the Family. The Plan is part of an evolving national framework, which in recent years has already seen the publication of **strategies dedicated to the Roma and Sinti communities** (2022) and the **LGBTQ+ population** (2022).

The new Plan is built around **six priority areas of intervention**, accompanied by two cross-cutting themes that run throughout the document: on the one hand**, communication, training and awareness-raising**, and on the other, the **creation and consolidation of local networks**, considered essential for ensuring stable and widespread anti-discrimination action. The aim, explained UNAR, is to rebuild a stable territorial presence by reactivating networks of municipalities and local entities that had played an important role in the past but had gradually weakened due to a lack of resources.

In its concluding remarks, UNAR shared a clear proposal: **more direct and facilitated channels** are needed for dialogue with municipalities, particularly those that are not part of established networks such as ANCI or Metropolitan Cities. Above all, it is necessary to establish a **stable exchange** with the **Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue,** so as to capitalise on the experiences of the territories, support municipalities in the implementation of local plans and jointly strengthen the national anti-discrimination infrastructure.

The regional approach: Fair and Inclusive Emilia-Romagna

Luca Rizzo Nervo, *Delegate for Immigration and International Cooperation for the Emilia-Romagna Region,* speaking online, gave a detailed presentation of the Region's commitment to interculturalism and the fight against discrimination, emphasising how these issues are **at the heart of regional action** and cut across all public policies. The Region pointed out that its model is based on **shared and participatory governance,** enshrined in **the Regional Law on Immigration,** which introduced a structured three-year programme – now known as the *'Emilia-Romagna Plurale, Equa e Inclusiva' (Plural, Fair and Inclusive Emilia-Romagna)* programme. This strategic framework promotes policies of proximity and opportunity, recognising cultural diversity as **a lever for social cohesion** and an essential factor for the participation of people with a migrant background.

Within this framework, **interculturalism and non-discrimination** are considered fundamental pillars: not as sectoral areas, but as guiding principles that shape the quality of coexistence, policy design and the ability of institutions to respond equitably to the needs of local areas.

A key role is played by **the Network of Intercultural Centres**, for which a **monitoring report** is due to be published in December 2025. This document will provide an up-to-date snapshot of activities, their impact on local areas and ongoing developments, providing an important knowledge base for future planning.

At the same time, the Region coordinates the **Territorial Network of Anti-Discrimination Helpdesks**, consisting of **nine** active **nodes** across the territory. The helpdesks perform crucial functions in **identifying, preventing, removing and monitoring** discrimination and are contributing to the construction of an **up-to-date regional data framework**, which is essential for accurately assessing phenomena and guiding policies.

The regional work also includes **public communication** initiatives, carried out in collaboration with **ANCI Emilia-Romagna**, including the promotion of **the Manifesto for Intercultural and Anti-Discriminatory Communication**. The aim is to develop communication practices capable of building trust, closeness and inclusive representations, countering stereotypes and distorted narratives.

At European level, the Region has reiterated its participation as a partner in the AMIF-funded European project, **EU-BELONG, an intercultural approach to migrant integration s in Europe's regions**, which has helped to strengthen **multi-level dynamics** and relaunched Emilia-Romagna's involvement in the Council of Europe's **Intercultural Regions Network**. This work has made it possible to promote good regional practices and include them in an international circuit of discussion and innovation.

Looking to the future, the Region has clearly expressed its willingness to **create the conditions for the development of a regional Anti-Racism Plan**, based on **co-design with local authorities** and a shared approach to priorities and operational tools. The idea is to initiate **collaborative planning,** capable of making local anti-discrimination policies more effective and consistent, promoting a common vision and a network of shared responsibility among institutions, territories and communities.

In summary, the intervention showed a Region engaged in a structured, multi-level process, where **proximity**, **participation** and **co-design** become the key elements for building truly inclusive policies capable of generating lasting change.

The experiences of Reggio Emilia and Ravenna

In her speech, **Marwa Mahmoud, *Councillor for Education Policy, with responsibility for Interculturalism and Human Rights for the Municipality of Reggio Emilia*,** shared the experience of the Municipality of **Reggio Emilia**, one of the first Italian cities to adopt a **local anti-discrimination plan**, the result of years of listening to and co-planning with communities. The Councillor described the plan as a truly transformative process for the administration, capable of influencing daily practices and the relationship between institutions and citizens.

Three essential elements were highlighted: the **training of public decision-makers**, which is essential for recognising and addressing discrimination; **communication with social majorities**, which is

which is fundamental for building consensus around inclusive policies; and **constant dialogue with diasporas**, to ensure that policies are born from pluralistic perspectives and rooted in reality.

She then emphasised the importance of **language**, recalling how difficult it is to agree on common definitions even among experts, and how the current political climate normalises forms of hate speech. For this reason, initiatives such as the CITIES project represent a valuable innovation in a national context where the dominant language often does not allow discrimination to be recognised. The framework provided by UNAR is, in this sense, an essential point of reference.

Councillor Mahmoud reviewed the work carried out by Reggio Emilia thanks to European projects such as ITACA**,** SUPER and CITIES, which have fostered the emergence of an inter-service network and an important internalization of the process within the administration, thanks above all to the training of employees, managers and local police. The **Local Action Plan** thus confirms itself as a political and cultural tool capable of clearly positioning the institution and guiding the work of the services.

Among the difficulties that emerged, he mentioned the difficulty of disseminating information and educating a section of the population that perceives diversity as a threat, pointing out that the attitude of 'perhaps it wasn't the right time' is not explicitly racist, but contributes to perpetuating unfair n dynamics. He also highlighted the importance of involving people and groups on cross-cutting issues – such as the environment and education – and not only on those traditionally linked to integration. Some forms of discrimination, he explained, have administrative roots, such as delays in residence permits, which affect work, healthcare and fundamental rights: for this reason, it is also necessary to intervene in the administrative machinery and its procedures.

Among the most significant results, he mentioned:

- The creation of an **informal inter-service group**.
- The **training of local police**.
- Extensive training of employees, managers and policy makers, which has generated a real positive **domino effect**.

The speech concluded by emphasising that one must also be prepared for criticism—and, in the case of Reggio Emilia, even threats—but that it was precisely this path that made it possible to build a stronger network, both within and outside the administration.

The final message was clear and unequivocal: ***'Political positioning is necessary'*.**

Next, **Paolo Fasano**, ***Head of the Immigration and Citizenship Policy Unit of the Municipality of Ravenna***, shared the perspective of a city that has made intercultural dialogue and the fight against discrimination a pillar of its administrative action. Fasano stressed the importance of maintaining **ongoing dialogue** with all local actors – institutions, associations, schools, civic networks – because the fight against inequality cannot be delegated to a single sector or a single office. He highlighted how daily work is only made possible thanks to the existence of **solid local networks** based on mutual trust, shared skills and a stable commitment to cooperation.

Both presentations showed that the development of effective anti-discrimination policies requires political vision, technical expertise and a constant ability to engage citizens. Reggio Emilia and Ravenna, despite their different histories and tools, highlighted a common point: **the belief that anti-discrimination is a collective process, a shared responsibility that is built over time and through lasting relationships**.

The afternoon featured a presentation by **Marco Mondello***, PhD student in Rights and Institutions at the University of Turin and collaborator at CRID – Interdepartmental Research Centre on Discrimination and Vulnerability at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Unimore),* *a key partner in the* ***CITIES*** *project.* He began by presenting CRID, which stands for *Interdepartmental Research Centre on Discrimination and Vulnerability,* established in 2016 within the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

CRID works on various areas of vulnerability through specific observatories and lines of research:

- **Migrant Observatory**, dedicated to the study of migration dynamics and inclusion;
- **Pathways to gender equality**, which include collaborations with local authorities such as the Municipality of Modena in the *Educating about Differences* project;
- **Pathways dedicated to minors**, with particular attention to **Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (MSNA)**, in partnership with the Regional Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents of Emilia-Romagna.

Intersectionality: a necessary approach to understanding contemporary discrimination

The central part of the presentation was devoted to the concept of **intersectionality**, introduced by African-American jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw. Mondello explained that intersectionality allows us to understand how discrimination does not affect people for a single reason (e.g. gender, ethnic origin, religion), but often for a **simultaneous combination** of multiple identity factors.

The speaker proposed a working definition: *Intersectionality describes the qualitatively different condition experienced by individuals situated at the intersection of multiple identity categories, who experience discrimination that cannot be reduced to the sum of the individual factors.*

He then referred to the protected characteristics recognised by European anti-discrimination law (Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC): Ethnic or racial origin; Nationality; Gender; Religion or belief; Age; Disability; Sexual orientation and gender identity.

Intersectional discrimination occurs when forms of discrimination **interact synergistically**, generating specific outcomes that cannot be attributed to each factor in isolation.

Intersectionality in local anti-discrimination plans: why it is essential

Local anti-discrimination plans must integrate the intersectional lens in a structured way. 'Neutral' policies, in fact, risk excluding precisely those who experience multiple vulnerabilities.

A clear method has been proposed:

1. **Collection of disaggregated data** to identify the services or sectors in which specific inequalities arise.
2. **Analysis of intersections**, moving beyond uniform 'one-size-fits-all' approaches.
3. **Structured dialogue with different stakeholders**, including migrant communities, schools, social services and health authorities.
4. **Adoption of targeted measures**, tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable people.

The intersectional approach thus becomes an operational tool, useful for improving the effectiveness of public policies.

The last working session of the afternoon was devoted to a workshop focusing on a crucial issue for the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies: **public communication of Local Anti-Discrimination Plans**. The objective was twofold: on the one hand, to promote a shared awareness of the difficulties that administrations and operators encounter when presenting an anti-discrimination plan to citizens; on the other, to imagine together some possible communication solutions to increase understanding, acceptance and participation.

To achieve this goal, the participants were divided into **small mixed groups** and asked to work on drafting a **press release** announcing the approval of a Local Anti-Discrimination Plan. After an initial drafting phase, during the plenary session, the facilitation team simulated a situation that is very common in institutional communication: the arrival of typical and recurring **social criticism** ('you only think about them', 'these are not the real priorities', 'there are more important problems'). This interruption served to confront the groups with real challenges, prompting them to reflect on how to reformulate or integrate their communication strategy. A second phase of work allowed the groups to rework their messages, which were then shared and discussed collectively.

1. Main points that emerged – Key messages to convey

The discussion produced a set of guidelines and messages considered particularly effective in communicating **anti-discrimination plans**:

- **Emphasise the nature of the Plan as a starting point:** An Anti-Discrimination Plan is not a goal, but the beginning of a journey. It should be communicated as a tool for **building a welcoming city for all**, not as an emergency or exceptional measure.
- **Focus on the participatory process:** It is essential to emphasise that the Plan is the result **of listening to citizens**, not just one category. Discrimination affects everyone, in different ways and at different times in their lives: this awareness must be clearly conveyed.
- **Emphasise that the Plan does not create obligations for citizens:** The responsibility lies with the administration, not the population. Furthermore, preventing discrimination brings **economic and social benefits** by reducing the long-term costs of exclusion.
- **Communicate concrete actions linked to existing services:** Communication must be practical and results-oriented: clarifying how the Plan integrates with existing services strengthens credibility and trust.

- **Do not start from the 'fight against discrimination':** more effective language focuses on **empowering citizens** and building a stronger community. Bringing the Plan into everyday places (hospitals, neighbourhoods, schools) helps to normalise the issue.
- **More rights for some does not mean fewer rights for others:** A powerful message – 'rights are like sunshine' – evokes the concept of **fairness**: rights cannot be divided, they multiply.
- **Use local data:** Local data makes the message credible and relevant to people's real-life experiences.

2. Channels and tools – From individual communication to integrated campaigns

It has become clear that a press release is not enough: a broad, coordinated and multi-channel **dissemination campaign** is needed.

Among the tools suggested:

- Posters and visual materials displayed in public places.
- Social media, using accessible language.
- Meetings in neighbourhoods, schools and civic centres ('brave spaces', based on the Camden model in London).
- Institutional press releases which, while maintaining seriousness and authority, can adopt language that is closer to citizens.

A critical point concerns municipal communication channels, which are often perceived as **too generalist**: they alternate between very different topics, with the risk of diluting the message. Communication on **the Anti-Discrimination Plan** must find a dedicated, recognisable and continuous space.

3. Spokespersons and allies – Who should communicate the Plan

Effective communication also depends on who conveys it:

- **Politics must be at the forefront:** the Mayor and councillors have a fundamental role in terms of legitimacy and public responsibility.
- **Local actors**, especially those closest to the community, must be involved as allies: associations, intercultural centres, schools, neighbourhood representatives.
- **Be careful with testimonials:** External or highly visible figures are not always welcomed favourably; credibility depends on proximity and trust built up over time.

4. Conclusions and final reflections

A number of strategic considerations emerged from the discussion:

- The key word is **responsibility**: that of decision-makers towards those who experience discrimination and those who should benefit from the Plan.
- It is important **to defend the path taken and the work done**, asserting the value of anti-discrimination policies.

- We must avoid communication that 'responds blow for blow': this risks replicating oppressive models and fuelling conflict.
- It is useful **to map potentially hostile groups** and understand which channels, figures or languages they use in order to adopt more effective strategies.
- Anti-discrimination policies involve deep emotional aspects: communication must be sensitive to the impact on vulnerable people, operators and political representatives.
- Good storytelling must reflect and accompany a **vision of an inclusive city**: communication cannot be neutral, but must convey the model of society we want to build.
- Finally, great attention must be paid to **language**: some words are so polarised that they compromise dialogue. It is necessary to choose a vocabulary that unites, not divides.

Thursday 23 October – the CITIES Project and co-design workshop

The second day of work began with a presentation of the European **CITIES project – *Cities Initiative Towards Inclusive and Equitable Societies*** by Luca Colombo, project manager for the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, who clearly illustrated the vision, objectives and operational structure of a European initiative that aims to strengthen the capacity of five Italian cities to prevent and combat discrimination, while promoting a local culture of equity and participation.

CITIES involves a highly structured partnership, the practical embodiment of the multi-level approach promoted by the European Union. Five Italian cities are participating – Reggio Emilia, Modena, Ravenna, Olbia and Casalecchio di Reno – together with the Emilia-Romagna Region and the Sardinia Region, and institutional and scientific partners such as UNAR, the Council of Europe (Intercultural Cities programme), the Mondinsieme Intercultural Centre, the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and ICEI.

The project also involves collaboration with two European cities – Leuven and Strasbourg – and three national networks of Intercultural Cities (Spain, Portugal and Sweden), confirming the transnational dimension of the work and creating the conditions for ongoing discussion on emerging practices and the most effective models of governance.

The presentation clearly outlined the main objectives of the project, which will run from March 2024 to March 2026:

1. **Develop local plans and strategies against discrimination**, built with an intersectional perspective and based on the active participation of institutions, services and communities.
2. **Strengthen the role of cities** in the fight against discrimination by promoting a participatory and multi-level governance model.
3. **Collect and analyse equality data** at the local level, which is considered essential for monitoring discrimination and guiding public policy.

These objectives, closely aligned with European priorities, are supported by a methodological framework that combines multi-stakeholder participation, an intercultural approach and an intersectional perspective.

The project activities are numerous and varied, and contribute to defining CITIES as a true programme of institutional transformation:

- **Multi-stakeholder participatory processes** to develop local anti-discrimination strategies.
- **Training** for municipal staff, public administrators and civil society on intercultural skills and anti-discrimination legislation.
- **Help desks and support spaces** for people who experience discrimination.
- **Local observatories** dedicated to monitoring discriminatory phenomena.
- **Qualitative and quantitative research** for the collection and analysis of *equality data*.
- **Communities of practice** to facilitate the exchange of experiences between cities.
- **Communication campaigns** and public initiatives at national and international level.
- **Mentoring and study visits** with European partner cities to consolidate the transnational dimension of the project.

A significant part of the presentation was devoted to describing the evolution of Reggio Emilia's intercultural policies, not only as the local context of the project, but as an emblematic example of a **civic vision built up over time**. The process began with the founding of **the Mondinsieme Intercultural Centre** in 2001 and was consolidated in 2008 with membership of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities network.

The presentation concluded with an illustration of the project roadmap in the city of **Reggio Emilia**, divided into several phases ranging from the activation of civil society (January 2025) to the final definition of the local strategy (end of 2025).

The work then continued with an operational comparison between cities on local anti-discrimination plans.

Through the World Café activity, the participants, divided into four groups, took turns addressing four topics closely related to the reflections developed within the CITIES working group concerning the following areas:

1. **How do I build a plan?**
2. **How do I collaborate with the local area**
3. **How do I make the plan sustainable**
4. **How do I communicate the plan**

Summary of the main results of the group work:

- **How to build a local plan against discrimination**

The discussion highlighted that **an effective Plan does not come out of nowhere**, but is the result of a long and structured process, which requires a **clear political choice** from the outset. A formal decision is needed to authorise the start of the process and explicitly link it to the institution's planning: including the drafting of the Plan in the planning documents means making it an institutional commitment that cannot be postponed.

Necessary stages and conditions:

1. **Political mandate and steps in the Council**: A political act is essential to define the administration's position and give legitimacy to managers and offices in dedicating time and resources to the process.
2. **Transformative training as a first step**: Even before writing the Plan, it is necessary to work on internal awareness, creating a common language and a shared basis for recognising discriminatory phenomena. This training should involve managers, technicians and key figures within the organisation.

3. **Activation of offices through formal procedures**: Managers and services must be convened in accordance with institutional practices to prevent the Plan from being perceived as 'someone's' project rather than that of the entire Administration.
4. **Building internal knowledge**: One of the recurring critical issues is the lack of mutual knowledge between offices. The Plan becomes an opportunity to create a **shared mapping** of **services**, existing practices and emerging needs. A real 'information circuit' needs to be created.
5. **Who writes the Plan?** The working group must include: The anti-discrimination desk representative; Figures with specific skills; Those who manage reports in the area; Hopefully, expert external support.
6. **Extended co-design and dedicated calls for proposals**: Some organisations use calls for proposals not only for drafting, but also for **co-managing the Plan**, in order to involve external actors on a permanent basis.
7. **Monitoring indicators and shared responsibilities**: Each Plan should include clear and measurable indicators, assigned not only to the reference office, but distributed among managers and sectors: responsibility must be **collective.**

It was reiterated that the drafting must maintain **a transformative perspective**: the Plan must generate change in services, not impose actions from above.

- **How to collaborate with the local area**

The discussion focused on what enables – or prevents – the building of solid partnerships between the Administration and local actors.

The key conditions for effective collaboration:

1. **Trust as a basic infrastructure**: Alliances work when they are based on long-standing relationships and existing networks. Without trust, there can be no real collaboration.
2. **The risk of 'participation fatigue'**: Communities – particularly the most active associations – can become overburdened. Care must be taken to calibrate requests and expectations.
3. **The voice of the local authority is not always perceived as close**: for some communities, the administration remains distant. It is local actors who act as credible mediators.
4. **Formal and informal tools:**
   - Co-design.
   - Membership protocols.
   - Expressions of interest.
   - Informal discussions.

Combining different forms helps to involve individuals with very different organisational cultures.

5. **Keeping motivation alive over time**: Commitment is easily built up and lost: it is necessary to recognise the contribution of the actors and give continuity to the spaces for dialogue.
6. **Concrete actions by the municipality**: Associations expect tangible interventions: services, spaces, administrative or logistical support.
7. **Associations as a bridge to people**: They are often the only way to reach targets that are difficult to reach through institutional channels.
8. **The territorial dimension matters**: Municipalities of different sizes have different capacities: sometimes working for **territorial areas** can be more effective.
9. **Recognising and managing overload**: It is essential to avoid overloading local actors.

10. **How to maintain engagement?** Through continuity, transparency, recognition of work and a clear shared path.

- **How to make the Plan sustainable**

Sustainability is a cross-cutting issue and concerns what happens after the Plan has been approved. However, consideration must be given to this **beforehand**, during the planning stage.

The elements that make the Plan sustainable are:

1. **Training and planning documents**
   Sustainability is built through:
   - Specific and in-depth training for key figures.
   - Widespread training for the entire administrative apparatus.
   - Inclusion of the Plan in planning documents (DUP, PIAO, PEG).
2. **Avoiding the risk of 'top-down' implementation**: measures must be incorporated into citizen services in a participatory manner, not as external impositions.
3. **Performance indicators in services**: Establishing measurable indicators within sectors ensures that the Plan influences daily work.
4. **Role of the CUG**: From project to **permanent service**: a stable monitoring and proposal body.
5. **Periodic updating of the Plan**: Every three years: a cycle that allows for adaptation, monitoring and review.
6. **Ongoing relationship with local networks**: Activating a network and then abandoning it undermines trust. Continuity is part of sustainability.
7. Key **economic resources** such as:
   - Internal resources within municipalities.
   - External funds (European and regional projects, partnerships).

- **How to communicate the Plan**

Communication is a structural element of the Plan, not an additional phase. But communicating it is complex.

1. **'Communicating a Plan is very difficult**': Because the concept of a 'Plan' is abstract. It is necessary **to describe the concrete actions,** not just the document itself.
2. **Internal and external dimensions**: Before communicating externally, the municipal machinery must be informed, trained and aware of its role.
3. **Communication is part of the Plan**: Internal organisation must also be flexible, with clear roles for those who communicate.
4. **Go where the people are**: A press release is not enough. Physical presence is needed in the places where citizens live and interact.
5. **Political strategy and diversified products**: Communication must include different forms and tools.
6. **Who is it aimed at?** It depends on the message. First, define the target audience, then the tool.
7. **How to manage communication crises:** No panic, no endless delays: citizens expect serious, timely and institutional responses.
8. **Institutions not only disseminate, but also defend**: They must protect the process, those involved and vulnerable people.
9. **Necessary skills:** The press office, communications and other services must work together.

At the end of the event, Célia Charre of the Council of Europe presented some of the programme's key tools, including the **ICC Manual for Intercultural Training**, the **guidelines for inclusive strategies** and the **online modules on inclusive narratives and communication**, highlighting how every city can contribute to combating systemic discrimination through coordinated actions of **preparation, identification, prevention and dissemination of good practices**.

Conclusions

The Ravenna conference was much more than just an annual event: it was a genuine shared workspace, where administrations, national institutions, universities, intercultural centres and civil society organisations were able to discuss common visions, tools and responsibilities. The atmosphere throughout the three days was that of a professional community on the move**,** capable of learning from differences, recognising its challenges and building, step by step, new opportunities for collaboration.

One of the strongest messages to emerge from the discussion was that **local anti-discrimination plans are not static documents** or mere administrative formalities: they are **living**, dynamic **processes** that thrive on relationships, participation and institutional care. Their strength lies in their ability to involve different actors, create common languages and translate the principles of equality and rights into concrete, everyday and verifiable actions. This requires **continuous training,** because cultural and organisational change cannot be improvised; **co-design,** because no service or office can tackle the complexity of discrimination on its own; and **constant dialogue,** because public policies only work if they are rooted in the territories and communities they are intended to serve.

Within this process, the **Network of Cities of Dialogue** has proven to be a **laboratory for mutual learning**, a context in which cities can discuss difficulties, promote good practices and experiment with shared approaches. The Italian Network of Cities of Dialogue has proven to be a space capable of generating new languages, more attentive to intersectionality and the value of territorial alliances, and of strengthening the operational work of administrations, building bridges between levels of governance – local, regional and national – and promoting constructive dialogue with European networks and UNAR.