



# Gender and Interculturalism:

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND INSPIRATION

### SUPPORTS

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# Gender and Interculturalism

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND INSPIRATION

The [Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network \(RPCI\)](#) exists since 2012 and is part of the International Intercultural Cities Programme, promoted by the Council of Europe, which brings together more than 150 cities around the world. It aims to be a space for sharing and learning among peers, with a view to developing more inclusive societies where all people can thrive.

In 2021, the cooperative **RPCI - Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities, CRL. (RPCI Coop)** was created to support the growth and sustainability of this national network, providing the existence of more and more projects and initiatives relevant to our context.



## Gender and Interculturalism

This guide has been prepared in the framework of the Project “Gender and Interculturalism” carried out by RPCI and RPCI Coop, with the cities of Lisbon, Oeiras, and Vila Verde and financed by the Intercultural Cities Programme (Council of Europe). This project arises from the desire of RPCI member cities to study the intersectionality between gender and interculturality, as a means for developing public policies and practices that are better adjusted to different realities.

### CONTEXT

During the course of the project, three webinars were held with various guests who presented their work in this field, and their perspectives. This guide brings together their proposals, inspiration, and recommendations. It is not intended to be a scientific and academic document, but rather a synthesis of perspectives resulting from a listening process carried out with Portuguese women from diverse socioeconomic and ethnocultural backgrounds, with different visions, and experiences.

We purposely do not call this document a “Best Practices” guide because, on the one hand, all practices may bring learning, even if they do not achieve the expected results. On the other hand, according to **Beatriz Padilla**, an integrated researcher at CIES-ISCTE, for good practices to be considered “good”, it is fundamental that their construction is thought out in a horizontal manner, engaging the populations concerned. This means applying practices that take into consideration the specificities of situations and using measurement indicators that are not only interested in highlighting cases of success, but essentially the processes.

It is also essential that services have continuity, even when the source of funding runs out. Also, to validate a practice as ‘good’ it is necessary that it has been subject to a process of impact evaluation, preferably in the long term, and we know that this (although desirable) is not always possible. For this reason, we focused on sharing case studies, perspectives, and experiences, and promoted a climate of dialogue and mutual listening during the webinars.

According to **Grada Kilomba** (2019), citing Collins (2000): “We have long spoken and produced independent knowledge, but when groups have unequal power, they also have unequal access to the resources needed to implement their own voices”, which has resulted in an under-representation of people from different ethnocultural groups, notably black people and especially women, in academia and its agendas. The very definition of what is or is not “true knowledge”, thus what is or is not considered valid as science, is dominated by ethnocentric and Eurocentric perspectives that reproduce inequalities and power relations, including gender and intercultural relations.

“We have long spoken and produced independent knowledge, but when groups have unequal power, they also have unequal access to the resources needed to implement their own voices”

**Grada Kilomba**

**Cátia Ramos**, wellness coach and amateur athlete, one of our guests, reinforced the importance of events and debates that involve “ordinary people”. She took the opportunity to share with us an event held to commemorate Cape Verdean women’s day in 2022, in which the community decided to propose a debate in which all people participated.

The result was a very rich and frank discussion on the difficulties faced by Cape Verdean women in the diaspora, among other issues, with significant male participation, in which it was possible to discuss gender differences healthily and respectfully. The success of this approach can be seen in the fact that the men themselves asked for another meeting of this type, showing an openness to building new cultural perspectives.

«The importance of events and debates that involve “ordinary people”»

**Cátia Ramos**

**Thus, we believe that participation, as a fundamental element of these listening processes, should increasingly have a privileged space both in science and in the strategic planning of cities, helping to understand diverse realities and validating these perspectives as essential for the construction of public policies and consequent strategies and action plans that are truly intercultural.**

## What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality aims to help us take account of **both identity and contextual factors** in our analysis of social inclusion. It allows us to look in a non-simplified way at complex realities related to each person's belonging, their previous contexts, and the contexts in which they find themselves.

According to Symington (2004, cited by Dissens e.V., Berlin Germany, 2011), people's actual life experiences can be affected by a multitude of interacting and intersecting factors in a way that can represent either advantages or disadvantages for their well-being and development. The list of factors can be endless and their level of complexity is high. For example, the definition of a racialised group can be ambiguous as this 'group' can be very heterogeneous due to factors such as religion, language and skin tone. The concept of race has been debated (and replaced by racialised people) as it is a socially constructed concept that relates to a particular power structure.

From the perspective of intersectionality, all social categories and markers of difference are socially constructed and not based on universal or natural typologies, which leads to very different views and enormous complexity.

An **intersectional perspective** thus allows us to take into account the multiple affiliations and contexts of each person as a way to understand their reality and generate more adjusted and appropriate solutions to the challenges they face, allowing us to support the deconstruction of myths related to different "groups". Without it, we run the risk of homogenising and stereotyping both those who oppress and those who feel oppressed, into supposed "groups" (so-called "labeling").

Some logics of social intervention are contrary to this principle of action, promoting, for example, funding lines or support systems that only work on one dimension of the person, namely by creating false "groups" such as the ones of unemployed people or of women survivors of violence, which, because they are based on generalisations about the groups in question, lead to the creation of responses that are not very flexible and adjustable to the very different realities of the people that make them up. This kind of logic cancels out and makes invisible other layers of people's identity that play a central role in their situation and can be decisive in their inclusion (Dissens e.V., Berlin Germany, 2011).



## What do we mean when we talk about gender and interculturality?

We are essentially talking about the intersection between two factors of human diversity: identity regarding ethnic and cultural belonging and gender - understood here as each person's gender identity and socially perceived gender (since these may not coincide) and not the sex assigned at birth -, knowing that this, both sociologically and historically, influences human interactions.

**The prevailing power relations reveal asymmetries in terms of opportunities between Men and all people who identify themselves as Women, asymmetries that have been identified and addressed in European societies with various legislative and social advances.**

These initiatives recognise that there are social and economic inequalities between these different expressions of gender, arising from different cultural perceptions of different gender roles, which in turn arise from existing power relations, and that this is a human rights problem that must be overcome. They also recognise that collective and concerted action is needed to deal with this issue that is expressed in the most different facets of the life of societies. Therefore, the intervention plans, both at the European and national levels, invite all sectors to review policies and practices and enhance intersectoral collaboration as a privileged means to achieve **gender equity**.

It has become increasingly evident that this challenge is multi-sectoral and complex, with women's needs being expressed very differently and revealing a diversity of priorities, values, and wills. These variations open the door to a profound reflection on ethnic identity belonging and its impact on the reality of each Woman and, consequently, of her living and experiences. We cannot find single and quick answers to such complex social issues, and

this flexibility and adaptability can be achieved by adopting an intercultural approach.

The creation of truly just societies relies on their ability to reflect the diversity of identities within them. An **intercultural vision** not only recognises this diversity but actively values it, seeing it as a social and economic asset, promoting horizontal and respectful interaction between different groups, full integration, and a sense of belonging and participation of all people present in the territory.

An intercultural and intersectional stance implies a participatory approach to social issues, as it assumes that only through the direct involvement of all people can this full integration be achieved. It differs from the multicultural approach in that it is not satisfied with the mere coexistence of different people in a given territory, but aims at a real generation of meaningful relationships between groups and people. It differs from assimilation in that it recognises that each person has the right to maintain diverse cultural references and identities and still fully feel belonging to the society in which he or she lives.

Developing critical thinking on these topics starts with a simple reflection: we recognize differences because we are different from each other. This difference is evident in the relationships between different people. These relationships can be built based on

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ethnocentrism (a way of thinking and acting that considers cultural belonging as the basis of all other forms of belonging); based on tolerance (a way of thinking and acting that allows one the power to “tolerate” and the other the status of “tolerated”); or based on assuming the importance of building a relationship between different people, in which our difference is as vulnerable and exposed as everyone else’s difference (cf. Stoer & Magalhaes 2005 cited by Casa-Nova. M.J. 2014).

According to the report **Migra Myths, by the Casa do Brasil of Lisbon** (2021) “The experiences of discrimination, racism and xenophobia negatively mark the lives of immigrant and racialised people. This is because they affect the guarantee of equal opportunities, equal treatment, and equal rights when, for example, a lease or a job is denied just because the person is of a certain nationality. Moreover, discrimination, racism, and xenophobia have impacts on mental health, and compromise the quality of life and dignity of migrant people. Therefore, listening to these experiences, and collecting data from civil society and social movements, is an important standard combating all forms of discrimination. The numbers brought by this report have faces, dreams, and life trajectories of immigrant people in Portugal.

They need to be part of the identification of the problems that directly affect them, as well as to participate in the construction of proposals for social transformation, in the elaboration and implementation of affirmative public policies. Finally, it is crucial to understand that experiences of discrimination are aligned with social markers such as gender, “race”, class and nationality, so discrimination be multiple and variant to the extent that structures of oppression intersect. Thus, it is substantial to rethink our intervention practices to ensure responses from an intersectional perspective”.

We believe that this approach is necessary to achieve fairer cities, which is why we took on the challenge of bringing together dozens of women with much to say and share about their and other experiences, their work, and contributions to this vision: a society with truly intercultural gender equity.



MARIA JOSÉ  
CASA-NOVA

**Maria José Casa-Nova, professor and researcher at the University of Minho, coordinator of the Nucleus of Education for Human Rights in**

**the same institution, and coordinator of the Observatory of Roma Communities in Portugal,** was invited as moderator of the webinar on “Education, Gender and Interculturality”, says that any society is internally heterogeneous, coexisting different “belongings”, namely: of a certain class, gender, regional and linguistic identities, among others. To this internal heterogeneity, Portugal adds an external heterogeneity resulting from migration processes.

The latest data from SEF - Serviço Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Foreigners and Borders Service), published in the SEF 2021 Report, tells us that in Portuguese society there are 698,887 legally residing immigrant people, of which 359,862 (51.5%) are men and 339,000 are women (48.5%). It is also worth noting that there are 98,000 children and young people between 0 and 19 years old, of which 47,552 are girls, representing 14% of immigrant people (SEF, 2021).

She also considered it pertinent to draw attention to the fact that this population is concentrated in certain regions of the country, with approximately 70% of them living in Lisbon, Setúbal, and Faro. Immigrant groups, much like the Portuguese population, settle more in the coastal areas than in the interior.

Maria José Casa-Nova reminds us that the incorporation of the various social classes and women into education was phased over time.

According to Helena Araújo (1996), “it was in 1772, with the Marquis of Pombal, that we had the first schools that taught how to read, write and count” for the male children of urban craftsmen, with the teaching of the (also male) children of the peasants being the responsibility of the parish priests.

The schools for girls are created 18 years later, in 1790, only starting operating in 1815, i.e., 43 years later and under the exclusive teaching of the so-called “mestras”, where





## What do we mean when we talk about gender and interculturality?

the concern was not with the teaching of academic knowledge, but with the teaching of tasks which were considered necessary for a woman to know how to perform in the household. There was therefore a differentiated and phased incorporation over time of the popular classes, of women and certain minorities, in the public school, namely black people in the United States of America and Roma people in Portugal and Spain, with differentiated results with regards to effective attendance and levels of school achievement (Casa-Nova, 2011).

She underlined that in Portugal, there is a comprehensive school, which includes all social actors. However, an inclusive school is still being built. Within the school universe, children and young people of Cape Verdean origin and Roma ethnicity are those who show the greatest difficulties in terms of school success rates, which points to structural problems.

Maria José Casa-Nova also stressed that there is a structural subordinate role in society, visible in the greater burden of women in the domestic sphere and the use of language, for example. Language is deeply important, language is not neutral, and it structures ways of thinking that condition action. There are several issues naturalised in society that contribute to the structural subalternity of women. Women access minor powers (subordinate powers) in society and men

access major powers (dominant powers) and this is also evident in the forms and contents of language (Casa-Nova, 2006).

**Societies are not abstract and exempt entities, which leads us to the need for feminism, defined here as the struggle for equal rights, duties, and opportunities between men and women.** Our guest stated that it is necessary to take a clear stand against everything that contributes to building an unequal society. It is necessary to build practices in which all people are on an equal footing, in which access to power is equal because societies often naturalise inequalities. For this reason, it is important to democratise access to power.

There is a current discourse that states that there are no longer gender inequalities, that it is an issue that needs to be overcome, Maria Casa-Nova states. However, in the university sphere, for example, it was found that during the pandemic, the number of articles written by men increased exponentially, and the opposite happened with women. As schools and daycare centres closed, children and elderly people were left in the care of women and there was a setback in their careers from a scientific point of view compared to men.

This phenomenon was similar in other areas - 80% of all leave requested for family care during the pandemic in Portugal was done by women. It has also been studied that more invitations are made to men than to women to give lectures (Ferreira, V. 2022). There are still inequalities in the management and performance of domestic tasks and, as long as this is the case, the assumption of power in the public sphere will always be constrained for women.

She adds that “the freedom to choose is fundamental, but to have this freedom there must be a level playing field.


And there are social constraints. A woman who has never exercised paid work, but has contributed greatly to the reproduction of the domestic sphere, caring for her husband and bringing up the children, does not have the right to a decent pension. And if the husband earns a pension of about 1,000 euros, the woman, not having done any paid work, has no right to a pension and is completely dependent on and subordinate to her husband. Freedom of choice implies equality of condition from a material point of view. She said that when there is no financial autonomy, a subordinate situation is built up.

**She stressed that feminism is not a fight where women want to be equal to men, it is a fight to be considered equal in terms of rights, to achieve parity.**

In Portugal, a study was recently published on women's pensions, which are on average 40% lower than those of men. Women, having generally worked fewer years (on average women work 6 years less, despite retiring later, in general) and earning less, have pensions in 2021 averaging 450 euros per month (below the national minimum wage) and men averaging 746 euros. This brings up other complex issues, with women's average life expectancy being higher than men's, which could mean more women over 65 are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. For this reason, it is important to disaggregate data and understand trends, and there is a recommendation from the Commission for

Citizenship and Equality that [gender-sensitive state budgets](#) should be undertaken.

About interculturality, **Maria José Casa-Nova** stressed that to build interculturality we need dialogue. It is necessary to build intercultural dialogues. We can only become aware of differences when in a relationship. Our reaction to difference is one of strangeness, and this is natural. The question is what we do with this strangeness. And often strangeness is used to segregate rather than to understand. She stated that, “as people in technical professions and education, we end up having a very important mediating role in this process of building interculturality, namely in school.” Education professionals are mediators between the cultural universe of children and young people and academic knowledge. She mentioned that “the work of mediation is being “in-between”: to be between two or more cultural universes,



**“To build  
interculturality  
we need dialogue”**

Maria José Casa-Nova

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but to be within them (it is fundamental to know to mediate) and to show impartiality towards all cultural universes in the presence, it is necessary to establish a dialogue”.

She declared: “We are not born human. We become human through interaction and culture, by establishing a relationship with others. It is not something linear, it is a process.

This means that we can become more human or more inhuman. Development and humanization do not go hand in hand”, since the notion of “development” or of “developed societies” often has an underlying ethnocentric notion of “quality of life”, which leads us to divide the World and Humanity according to their degrees of supposed development, fostering an “Us” versus “Them” perspective. It is, thus, fundamental to build “more humanized societies”.

**LÚCIA  
VICENTE**

**Lúcia Vicente, author, and activist** defines Feminism as the search for equal opportunities and duties for all people. Equality is not the same as equity, without equality there can be no equity. Feminism is synonymous with equality in the face of the individual freedom of each person to achieve what they want, freedom, and the possibility of economic independence. She believes that the media gives a false image of feminism.

“I ask you to dream  
and plan a different world.  
A more just world.  
A world of happier men and women,  
more true to themselves.  
And this is how we must start:  
we need to raise  
our daughters differently.  
We also need to raise our sons  
differently.”

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,**  
*We should all be feminists*



Books *We must all be feminists*,  
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The concept of **Feminism** has emerged gradually in the course of the history of women's struggle. According to the "Infopedia" dictionary, it is "the doctrine which advocates the defense of women's rights, based on the principle of equal rights and opportunities between the sexes" and the corresponding "movement (political, social, cultural, etc.) which seeks to put this doctrine into practice". However, before the feminist movements of the 20th century, the word had other meanings.

Various works carried out in the academic and activist world in the 1960s and 1970s aimed to seek answers to the question: "Why are women oppressed?", "Who oppresses them?", and "What might be possible solutions to their

situation?". One of the conclusions drawn by feminist scholars was that all women, in all corners of the world, suffer in the same way. The concept of patriarchy gained immense popularity within women's studies and was seen as the main element responsible for women's predicament" (Narvaz & Koller, 2006: 51). "Patriarchy is, to explain succinctly, male supremacy in all dimensions of life that relegates women to the marginal position within society in both public and private space." (Telega-Soares, N., 2014).

Even within such an apparently all-embracing concept that was supposed to unify the Women's universe (the term "Sisterhood" was even used), we see that there is diversity in its interpretation, in the way it is expressed,

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and in the vision of necessary action. Although de facto patriarchal societies emerge as a common element of the feminist struggle, their expression and effects differ greatly depending on the groups of women we refer to. Groups of women may also suffer oppression from other women, intensifying its effects.

**NATÁLIA  
TELEGA-SOARES**

According to **Natália Telega-Soares** (2014), «a much-raised issue has been the question of the voice of black women, in the sense of their ability to denounce

the discriminatory practices by Western feminisms that have relegated black women to the margins of cultural and historical life. Black women, in creating black feminist movements, set out to devise responses that are better suited to the reality and needs of their fellow countrymen which are by no means identical to those verbalised by feminists in the West”.

There are fundamental differences in the interpretation of concepts, which lead to very different definitions of feminism. For example, “One of the main differences between Western and African feminism is based on the fact that the notion of femininity does not mean exactly the same thing for Western and African societies. The category “woman” cannot be considered a category separate from its context. “Woman” does not only constitute a social role, an identity, a position, or a location. First and foremost, “woman” is a sum of various positions, role,s and meanings” (Oyewumi, 1997, 2003). As Oyeronke Oyewumi explains, each individual occupies multiple contexts that are not separate from each other, but interact, mix and influence each

other. Each individual, therefore, has multiple and various relations to power, privilege and inequality (Telega-Soares, N., 2014).

The report produced by the **Migra Myths Project** reveals accounts of discrimination that also show a cultural component in the way some women are perceived. For example: “Friends of my (Portuguese) husband stopped talking to us because they believed I was giving him a scam. The judge that married us kept warning me all the time that I wouldn’t have the right to anything if I separated from him”. Brazilian woman, Age Group 40-44, Incomplete Higher Education, Setúbal. And another example from the same woman: “I got out of a moving taxi once, because the driver wanted to take me to see the flat that he wanted to finish building for a “Brazilian woman who would treat him well!”

**LILA  
ABU-LUGHOD**

**Lila Abu-Lughod** (2013) analysed the experiences of several Islamic women and identified several erroneous beliefs about the realities of these women. On the one

hand, there is a widespread belief in the West that these women are part of a homogenous group and are generally oppressed, and that this is directly related to the religion they profess. On the other hand, this assumption of a direct link between oppression and religion does not allow for realistic and empathetic analysis and understanding of the situations experienced individually by each of these Women.



Belonging to a religion can be very significant for a person's identity, and their sense of community, and each person lives it in a very particular way.

For example, we find that many Women continue to wear Hijab daily even when it is not imposed by the law of the country they live in or by their family. Listening to these women is often forgotten in reception processes in Western contexts, and measures are adopted without their effective participation, once again reproducing oppressive logic of action. Generalisations about "cultures" prevent us from appreciating and understanding people's experiences and the contingencies in which we live. The Muslim world is sometimes presented as a threatening, worrying, and homogeneous culture in which the situation of women, supposedly oppressed, represents the ultimate proof of how "different" this culture is from the West. Images of Muslim Women flooded the media as a means of justifying a rescue mission by the West - it was necessary to "save" them from their cultures. This was used as one of several justifications for the invasion of Iraq, where, ironically, Iraqi women had, at the beginning of the millennium, the highest levels of education and participation



Book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, 2013

in the labour force and politics of the Arab World. Her ethnographic research reveals an immense variety of experiences and lives of Women of the Arab World, inviting us to question dogmas and reductive stereotypes about the reality of Muslim Women.

**From these examples we see how the concept of Feminism has to be looked at and applied with a strong intercultural component** - it is not experienced in the same way by groups with different ethnocultural backgrounds, or who are the target of other discriminations that associate gender and other characteristics. Thus, gender equality strategies must be worked from this intersectional perspective, making room for different experiences and narratives of different women, and avoiding universal responses that neutralise and minimise these important differences.

"gender equality strategies must be worked from this intersectional perspective"

Lila Abu-Lughod

# The “Gender and Interculturalism” Project

Among the project's actions, 3 webinars were held and 3 episodes of our PODCAST “Portugal PLURAL” were recorded and published (link in the resources).

Throughout these webinars and episodes, we met women who work every day for more inclusive cities where no discriminatory behaviours of any kind persist.

**This guide aims to summarise the advice and recommendations left by these women, some warnings, and some practical ideas that can be implemented to develop initiatives and public policies that consider the gender variant and its different nuances according to each woman's identity and ethnocultural belonging.**

We believe that a **city plan for interculturality** should always contemplate an intersectional dimension, assuming that the experiences of each person can vary greatly according to their different characteristics. A black woman in a

mostly white or colonialist society will certainly have a different experience from a woman with a disability, or with a less-represented religion. A woman with less economic power will also have other challenges that are not comparable to a woman with financial means. Ultimately, each woman lives in a very specific reality, with multiple contextual influences, making her life difficult to compare with that of any other woman. For this reason, interculturality policies cannot find general solutions that, with a single “equal for all” approach, solve all inclusion challenges.

Throughout this document, we have summarised some of the key recommendations that emerged from this project. A list of useful resources and references used in writing these recommendations can be found at the end.



**REDE PORTUGUESA DE CIDADES INTERCULTURAIS APRESENTA**

**SAÚDE, GÉNERO E INTERCULTURALIDADE**

**Webinar online Gratuito**

**Convidadas:**  
 Beatriz Padilha - CIES/ISCTE  
 Goizane Gago Mota - cidade de Bilbao  
 Cátia Ramos - influenciadora de bem-estar  
 Teresa Vieira - mediadora do ACM  
 Cynthia de Paula - Casa do Brasil  
 Joana Canelo - GAT Lisboa  
 Helena Viegas - Associação Corações com Causa

**Segunda-feira, 30 de maio de 2022, 14:30h - 16:30h**

**LINK NA BIO PARA INSCRIÇÃO**

**WEBINAR Comunicação, género e interculturalidade**  
 27 junho 14:30  
 Conheça as nossas oradoras

**Educação, Género e Interculturalidade**  
 WEBINAR | 26 DE SETEMBRO às 14:30

**Introdução ao tema e moderação da mesa redonda:**

- Maria José Casa-Nova (CIED - Universidade do Minho)

**Participantes da mesa-redonda:**

- Lúcia Vicente (autora, atriz, contadora de histórias)
- Margarida Pacheco (ARTHEMIS +UMAR)
- Olga Mariano (Letras Nômade)
- Rosa Moniz (Life & Leader Coach)

**Guests of the 3 webinars promoted in the scope of the Project “Gender and Interculturality”, 2022**

## RECOMMENDATIONS



## Dialogue, Questioning, and Listening

Firstly, recommendations should arise from a process of questioning.

**In this process, which we want to be continuous and not sporadic, we should ensure that we listen to the different stakeholders.** We should ask ourselves, “Who might be missing?”, “Which voices are not being heard?”

The people who propose and execute public policies can and should listen to different voices during the process, preferably before, during, and after their implementation. These different voices should include the **voices of the people directly affected by** the actions in question, i.e. to whom they are addressed, and should have some degree of **representativeness** of the different existing communities.

The motto should always be “nothing about us without us”.

We want to know what needs people identify, what impact they have on their lives, how they think they can be addressed and what the municipality can do about it. Of course, not all needs find a quick or direct echo in actions, but when this happens, or when expectations go beyond the cities’ competencies, this should be given back to the people to adjust expectations and eventually plan for the involvement of other stakeholders.

However, let us not rush to say that something is impossible. Let us allow ourselves time to analyse the proposals and ideas, let us involve the people and groups themselves in the responses and not just as consultants:

- Are there civil initiatives that can help?
- Are there other ways of responding to this need?
- What other resources can we mobilise (funding, partners from other cities, volunteers, etc.)?
- What is working well and what needs to be changed?
- Where are the barriers to access and how can they be removed or minimised?

**This listening can be carried out using various methodologies, which can be used concomitantly:**

#### **REGULAR CITIZENS' ASSEMBLIES:**

with rotating seats and where some representativeness is ensured, a space for debate on policies and initiatives designed to include the recommendations, suggestions, and warnings given therein. More than just a place for listening, these groups can also function as a place where proposals are voted on and where civic participation is encouraged in their execution.

#### **FOCUS GROUPS:**

specific moments designated for this purpose, with a pre-prepared set of questions and subject to content analysis. They can be held whenever a particular policy or initiative is being prepared, as a way of deepening reflection on it and its potential impacts on communities.

#### **MEDIATORS:**

to have, in the city staff, people who are part of the different communities and groups existing in the territory, as a way to better reach these publics, mediate the relationship with the services, and mobilise people for activities. These figures have a key role to play as they often perform informal listening moments in their daily lives and can represent a voice of the communities in the teams. With the appropriate mediation training, they can be an asset.

#### **REPRESENTATIVENESS IN STAFF:**

ideally the city employs people from different groups and communities in proportion to their share in society. In recruitment processes, this can be intentionally proposed through a quota

system. Such representativeness has multiple advantages: on the one hand, it communicates to the wider community that people from such a group are valued by the municipality; on the other hand, it gives more security and confidence to those who feel part of such a group in approaching municipal services, feeling that they can more easily understand what is being communicated to them. Finally, this will be a way to balance opportunities, since in most cases people from minority groups (and especially women from these groups) will have less access to quality jobs consistent with their qualifications, which has a major impact on their quality of life.

#### **INVITATIONS TO PEOPLE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE ISSUES**

to be addressed in seminars, webinars, and conferences, promoting dialogue and debate between academia, communities and professionals from different sectors.

#### **SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY PROJECTS:**

direct support to local associations and grassroots, informal groups, and community volunteering groups represent an important role in the necessary sharing of decision-making power and local action. We assume, with this stance, that we will hardly have better answers to local challenges than the people who live with them every day, and we then adopt a partnership relationship and share the necessary resources to implement potential solutions. This partnership, which we want to be as horizontal as possible, may include investment in the training of community leaders, financial support, allocation of resources and mentoring for local initiative projects, advocacy, support for the establishment of other partnerships and financing relevant to the projects, support

## Dialogue, Questioning, and Listening

for promotion, dissemination and social mobilisation for the initiatives, etc. Ideally, this support is thought after listening to the communities (to ensure its pertinence and adjustment to the challenges felt) and should assume a continuity in time, allowing support to different phases of growth of the initiatives, not being only short-term temporary support. They should also be open and have space for community initiatives organised in an informal way (i.e. other than those of an association, cooperative, or company).

**These responses of support to associations should exist and be made available in a way accessible to the communities** (for example, regarding places and schedules).

Finally, the sharing of experiences and resources, mentoring, and mutual help between local groups and associations can be stimulated through forums, community groups, and social networks/parish social committees.

**TERESA VIEIRA**

Our guest, **Teresa Vieira, a mediator of the ACM's Roma Communities Support Centre**, raised reflections regarding the importance of thinking about projects that have

greater temporal continuity, even when the funding lines are over. She stressed that much of the work needed with Roma communities is connected to generational issues and, therefore, will not be changed in just a few months.

As an example, with the support of the city of Lisbon, [CLIP - Resources and Development](#) was created, an association formed and self-managed by various local organisations that aim to be a “home” for citizenship movements. In it, organisations without a physical office can hold meetings, training, and events, use the computer resources available, and the accounting and legal consultancy services. CLIP also organises training, debates, community meetings, and other learning moments, according to the needs of the associated entities, and has a bank of resources that can be requested (such as: sound system, resources for hosting events, etc.) and a library. On its website, it provides relevant information, such as open sources of funding and g, relevant legislation, publicises local initiatives and also provides support in the search for partnerships and in the writing of proposals for funding lines.

The cities of **Vila Verde, Vila Nova de Famalicão and Santa Maria da Feira** developed a project entitled «**Welcoming Ukrainians**» in which the starting point for the implementation of measures was conducting focus groups with people of Ukrainian origin



that arrived since the beginning of the conflict, in February 2022. A practical guide for the reception of people in a refuge, temporary protection, and asylum situations, was drafted by the RPCI Cooperative based on the recommendations given by people during these discussions.

**It is also important that people's time spent in consultation is properly valued.**

If we pay professional consultants, why not pay community consultants? Sometimes we expect people to do all this work voluntarily, but not everyone may be able to do this (either for financial, personal, or family reasons). Make sure that these moments are truly inclusive, that people can be present without constraints on their personal and work lives, and that they feel valued.

The consultation should allow us to clearly understand the **inequalities** that exist in access to services and activities. This will give us a clearer picture of the asymmetries that may exist, especially within the same belonging groups, and how we can bridge them. For example, the city has set up a service for migrant people. Is everyone able to use it (or even know that it exists) if they do not have access to transport in their area of residence and/or if the transport is too expensive? If they have jobs that do not allow them to go out during office hours? If they have a motor or visual impairment? If they cannot read, write, or speak the language? If they have small children to look after during opening hours?

We should bear in mind that these asymmetries are often associated with

power asymmetries that are reinforced by differences in access. If, for example, it is still true that women are often the main caregivers of children and older people, this makes their participation limitations greater. Our intervention, to be truly intercultural, should help to **intentionally minimise the asymmetries identified**, enhancing the improvement of the quality of life of the most excluded populations.

**MARIA JOSÉ  
CASA-NOVA**

**Maria José Casa-Nova**

suggested that cities should think about the logic of interculturality and build themselves as places of intercultural mediation. It would

be important for city councils to promote intercultural dialogue activities, taking into consideration the festivities of each culture, the construction of gardens with a multiplicity of plants from the different geographical contexts of origin of immigrant people, neutral meditation spaces, suitable for any religious denomination, for example, so that all people would feel the spaces as their own, contributing to psychological comfort.

## Dialogue, Questioning, and Listening

### CASE STUDIES

A school in Lisbon found that, in the 5th grade, many girls from the local Roma community stopped attending school. Faced with this situation, teachers considered that it would be better to choose the path of dialogue with the community to understand what was going on. They understood that there was a great concern in the community about the affective security and sexuality of the girls and that the community feared that they would be put in sensitive situations by older boys attending the 9th grade at the same school. Therefore, the problem was not them being schooled (as the teachers initially thought), but the safety of the girls.

Safety was a need that both teachers and families identified with, and this opened the door to a solution. The solution found was to create special classes just for these girls, with an exclusive female teacher. The mothers of these girls even started to attend classes with their daughters, taking notebooks and pens with them (as they themselves had not had this opportunity). They realized, from this experience, that by ensuring that the children stayed in school, the age of their marriage was delayed and their schooling increased.

At an early stage, it was necessary to create differentiated responses to build confidence and a sense of security. Today, these have increased and there are no longer separate classes. **The process of non-judgmental listening and a flexible attitude was essential to find a solution - the previous 'one-size-fits-all' response was not working.**

**ROSA  
MONIZ**

**Rosa Moniz, Life & Leader Coach**, considers that the path is through education, the cause she embraces, and from there we should build our understanding. In

her opinion, integration is a two-way street. Therefore, society must also be educated. She recalled that in one of her projects, two young Roma girls stayed longer in school because they were good friends with Cape Verdean girls

who attended the same school. Intercultural relations can have a lot of relevance in this respect. It is worrying to see gender situations perpetuated by women themselves. She said that she had read in an article that women have different expectations for daughters-in-law than for daughters. Women need to think about gender within as internal and external dimensions. Rosa Moniz also considers that every child has rights and duties and that no one can sell a child a diminished story about their future perspectives. She also shared

what her grandmother often said, “a woman cannot do this”, and “a woman does not do this”. Although she did not inherit this belief, she feels that in some of her sisters and cousins these ideas are still present and are carried over to their children.

When the **Associação Luso Caboverdeana de Sintra** started, there were many conflicts. Rosa recalled a conflict that occurred between a student and a teacher because the student did not look the teacher in the eye, and she considered it to be disrespectful. It was necessary to explain to the teacher that for a Cape Verdean to look a teacher in the eye is a lack of respect. This episode generated action and had an impact: **it was necessary to create an intercultural sphere in the school.**

SÓNIA  
MATOS

**Sónia Matos,** association leader, and Roma mediator, highlights the importance of full access to education for Roma women so that they can break the cycle

of social exclusion in which they are often trapped, thus being dependent on men to manage their lives.

In her words, “Roma culture is Portuguese culture more than 50 years behind”. The woman’s role was to be a housewife and mother. Roma women are only now beginning to take the first steps towards conquering their space and independence. In her opinion, everything starts with school integration.

She exemplified how her association (**AMUCIP – Roma Portuguese Women Association**) works with these women and with men from the Roma community to make this access to education a reality, even for women who are already married and left school a long time ago.

A lot of perseverance and dedication is needed, but there are already more than 40 Roma people with university degrees in Portugal, so the reality is beginning to change.

She also mentioned the importance of raising the awareness of education professionals, so that they transmit positive expectations to Roma girls at school and help them to believe in themselves, avoiding perpetuating negative stereotypes and beliefs about the Roma community.

She pointed out that social neighbourhoods are ghettos and that children who leave a social neighbourhood are already marked. The education professionals themselves leave with a pre-defined thought. Another factor is that Roma children do not attend kindergarten; they enter the first cycle coming from the

## Dialogue, Questioning, and Listening

family to school, without knowing how to cut, paint, identify letters... The demotivation starts right away. She then argues that it is necessary to listen to the community and work with socio-cultural mediators in schools. It is necessary to have representation in schools, it is necessary for Roma children to feel that this space is theirs.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the language used. Statements like “what a beautiful girl, she doesn’t even look like a Roma”, make girls shy away.

Project times are too short, they do not allow working with people. Professionals work for the community and not with the community. It is necessary to involve Roma women in the search for solutions. The first job is to gain the trust of husbands and mothers-in-law to be able to give strength and confidence to Roma women.

Sónia also mentioned that the Roma community is not represented in History although it is part of Portuguese History. Roma people were in the galleys of the “Discoveries”. When Portugal was at war, many Roma lives were lost.

## Intercultural Competences

It is crucial that those working in public service develop their intercultural competencies.

**Intercultural competencies are a set of skills that enable us to communicate and live in culturally complex environments, minimising conflict by increasing the possibility of mutual understanding and empathy.**

Mastering intercultural competencies is key to an inclusive and intercultural attitude in approaching partner entities and all people living in the territory. It allows us to move away from our ethnocentric and Eurocentric view of reality, under the influence of which public policies are created and implemented (often contributing to situations of institutional and

systemic discrimination), and to adopt greater cultural flexibility, understanding that behaviours arise from frames of reference based on a wide variety of perspectives and values, all of which are equally valid and important.

We often feel that we are more interculturally competent than we really are. It is not easy sometimes to realise the misunderstandings and offence we can unintentionally cause. Often our stereotypes, prejudices, and biases

lie in our unconscious and can condition our actions in subtle ways, but with a high impact on someone's life, especially when we provide public services. It is therefore important to make them conscious so that they can be the object of our reflection and questioning and so that we can prevent this from happening. This capacity of self-questioning is usually well implemented through training actions that can be provided to the municipality staff as well as to partner entities.

## CASE STUDIES

The municipality of **Oeiras** is conducting training on Diversity and Inclusion gradually for all its staff, to enhance self-reflection and the development of more inclusive attitudes toward colleagues and society in general.

The initiative comes from Human Resources, on the premise that this kind of reflection is often not done intentionally and that most people are in fact unaware of their own prejudices and biases. The training is delivered in Blended Learning for most of the staff and adapted in face-to-face format only for people less familiar with technologies, with a duration of 7 hours.

Within the framework of a **European project entitled NET-IDEA**, the Networks of Intercultural Cities of Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Sweden, in partnership with the cities of Erlangen (Germany) and Lublin (Poland), are developing a 12-hour training course in Intercultural Competences that will be tested in early 2023 when it will be made available to all interested cities.

Until then, it will be tested by the cities of Vila Verde, Braga, and Santa Maria da Feira in Portugal, as well as 12 other cities in Europe and beyond.

Some resources for the development of actions in this area can be found below, in the "Resources" section.

# Intersectionality

Listening should always consider the principle of intersectionality.

**No one person or small group represents a whole group** - if a person with a disability tells us that they prefer a certain adaptation to an activity, this will not be the reality for all people, even those who share the same type of disability. This means that we must listen to many different people, and yet always have an open mind to different views and adaptations. If the listening moments are well thought out, this will be easier to achieve, and we can create forums for debate and discussion to reach a consensus and think of measures that can accommodate the necessary flexibility.

This factor is especially important regarding gender issues. For example, women from a given ethnic or cultural group may experience their realities in very different ways according to their multiple characteristics, belonging groups, contexts, and life realities.

**BEATRIZ  
PADILLA**

According to **Beatriz Padilla**, it is therefore important to look at each person holistically, observing their multiple dimensions, and propose corresponding integrated services. The lack of an intersectional look (due to the neutrality of public policies) and the highly segmented specialisation of most municipal services and teams can often lead to "blindness" regarding certain aspects. For example, it may prevent us from perceiving the existing asymmetries between men and women in different areas, such as culture or sports, and from making the necessary adjustments to ensure equity.

**MARGARIDA  
PACHECO**

**Margarida Pacheco**, an expert at ART'THEMIS+ Project and researcher at the UMAR Observatory for Adolescence and Violence, believes in prevention. Working on gender issues with children and young people, she believes that it is necessary to talk to young people not only about discrimination but also about privilege and that we should adopt an intersectional perspective.

As stated in the publication *Preventing Violence, Building Equality*, "the main purpose of the ART'THEMIS Project is to promote, among the younger generations, a culture of equality, peace and non-violent resolution of conflicts, transmitting and sharing knowledge, intervening in the deconstruction of stereotypes and myths around the relationships between men, women and other people, fighting for the rights of women and girls and for the rights of victims, contributing to the empowerment of young people."



The Project does not ignore other forms of violence, structural or direct and interpersonal, of which our children, adolescents, and young people are victims, such as racism, homophobia, class inequality and poverty, and empowerment. Focusing particularly on gender equality and the prevention of gender violence, the intervention is guided by mediation strategies using artistic tools, providing children, adolescents, and young people with opportunities to be protagonists in cultural production and social change”.

According to the same publication, “National and international data show a high prevalence and/or incidence of these forms of violence against women, whose effects are considered by several authors to be as important as an epidemic. In Portugal, in 2015, according to data from the Observatory of Murdered Women - OMA, of UMAR, there were 29 femicides and 39 attempted femicides (Observatory of Murdered Women - OMA, UMAR). In that same year, 87% of the killers maintained an intimate relationship with the victims as (former) husbands, (former) boyfriends, or (former) partners.

Based on the data from the Annual Internal Security Report (RASI) 2015, of the incidents registered for domestic violence by the Police, 85% of the victims are female. In the age group between 18 and 24 years, one finds the highest percentage of female victims, 91%. In the age group under 18 years, the percentage of female victims is 62%. In that year, it was observed that 15% of the victims were under 25 years old. Regarding the reported victims, 9% were under 25 years old (...) These data also show that these forms of violence are not neutral, being based on gender asymmetry. Several studies have

shown that they cut across socioeconomic conditions (social class), culture, ethnicity or racialised groups, social condition, age, ability, religion, among other social factors”.



Publication about the Project ART'HEMIS and UMAR with the title “Preventing Violence, Building Equality”

LÚCIA  
VICENTE

**Lúcia Vicente** considers that the greatest challenge for the dissemination of her work is the deconstruction of privilege, class privilege, gender privilege, economic, and educational. The barrier of privilege is found in children from an early age. No one wants to lose power and privilege.

## Intersectionality

### CASE STUDIES

Ciga Giro project news, Diário do Minho where we can read “Ciga Giro project contributes to change Roma community's lives for the better”



#### VILA VERDE

**Vila Verde** has been developing work with the Roma community. In summary, the project **CIGAGIRO8G**, works on education, health, empowerment, citizenship, ICT skills, and integration into the labour market. It has the support of several partners, including the Community Centre of Vila de Prado, the Portuguese Red Cross (Braga delegation), and implemented with two school groups, addressing many gender issues and women's empowerment but also working with men to understand and promote women's rights.

The project promotes a meeting with Roma women on Tuesdays, entitled “Voice is your weapon”. In these meetings, they have realised that for these women to feel empowered, there are many issues that need to be addressed, many prejudices that need to be dismantled, and that many of these women have very low self-esteem and it is necessary to work on this aspect. For example, explaining that they can arrive home after 4 pm and still have their soup ready in time for dinner. The dream of many women in the gypsy community is to get a driving licence and work has been done with Roma men to this end. A woman from one of the Roma communities has already obtained her driving licence and is now preparing to enter higher education.

The project has revealed the need to work also with the men of the Roma community for greater involvement in the children's education. It is noted that some women report not valuing education because they do not perceive that there are employment opportunities in the labour market for Roma people, and there is a general feeling that there is only the option of working in street markets or selling scrap metal. This has been the main target of the work: all the children in this project are in school and their mothers are participating in training.

The project has also been concerned with employment issues, with some men and women from the Roma community being integrated into the labour market, opening other perspectives for the community.

Realising that being in school is not the same as being included, the Municipality decided to do a joint activity with Roma children and a scout group. A survey was initially launched to both groups to understand how they see each other, how they perceive themselves, and how they think others perceive them. Afterward, it will be possible to confront each group with what was said and to work on raising awareness of rumours and false beliefs about each other.

## BILBAO

The city of **Bilbao** (Spain) highlights the multiple discrimination faced by many women of migrant origin - 3 out of 4 of the women accommodated in temporary shelter homes for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); and 2 out of 3 seeking prevention services, are of migrant origin. These figures reveal an over-representation that translates into increased vulnerability, as women from other backgrounds represent only 14.9% of all women in Bilbao.

The city has been developing the programme “Education for Social Transformation” with the aim of promoting empowerment and responsibility sharing regarding the power imbalance of gender issues in community work. This programme is based on the belief that social cohesion is achieved by building the equality inherent in intercultural integration.



“Programme - Education for Social Transformation”, Bilbao

The empowerment of women, especially women of migrant origin, regarding health promotion is seen holistically, integrating physical, sexual, reproductive, and emotional well-being, and considering it a necessity and a basic right. The prevention of **sexual and gender-based violence (SGVB)** is enhanced through the production of knowledge and capacity to identify the phenomenon, its processes, and signs, based on a human rights perspective. The sharing of responsibilities is assumed as essential for intercultural integration, based on the assumption of the existence of a gender power imbalance, and community prevention actions for Gender Equality are promoted, encouraging inter-institutional cooperation and a “bottom-up” multi-level approach.

In terms of activities, the programme promotes **training** for migrant women as “Empowerment Agents” in various communities and training of “Agents for Health and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting” among women and for men who are relatives of women who were subjected to the practice in childhood. Training for young Maghrebi boys and men of African origin with a role of social and/or religious influence as “Agents for Equality and Prevention against Violence” and training for local NGOs are also promoted. On top of this, the programme develops **guides** and other informative actions according to the needs.

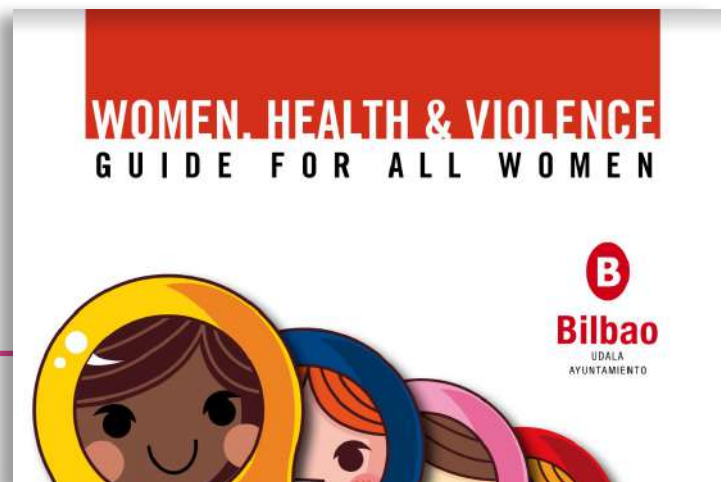
## Intersectionality

### CASE STUDIES

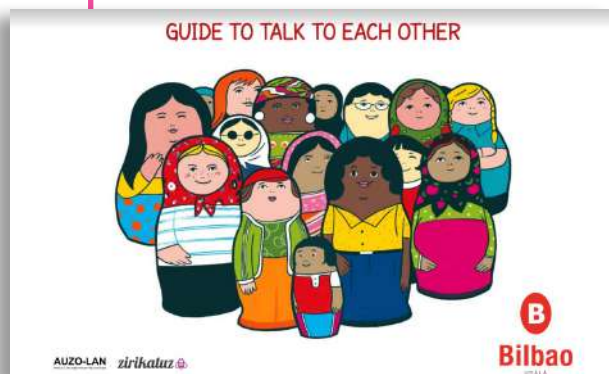
cont. Bilbao

These actions have been constantly evaluated and monitored and have already revealed significant impacts and a multiplying effect. The main differentiating factors have been:

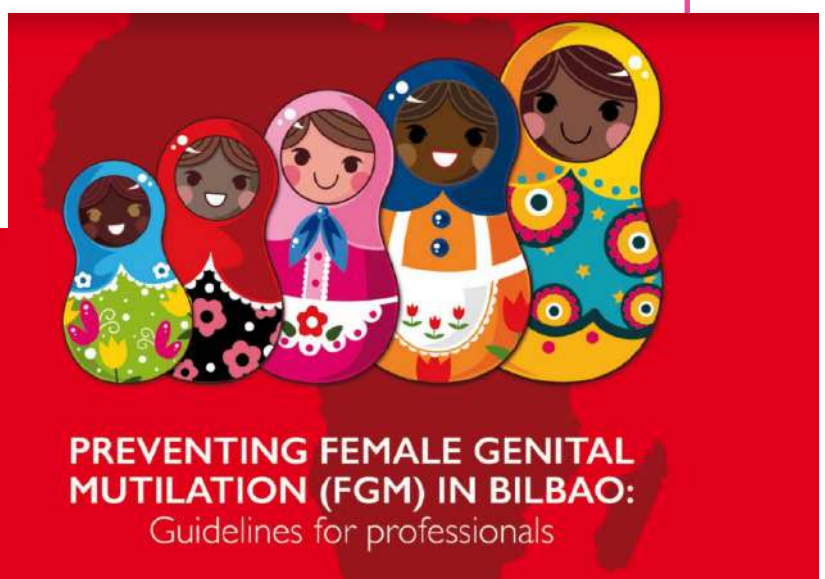
- a) the protagonism, empowerment, and leadership of women themselves in the whole process.
- b) the multidisciplinary and horizontal approach, which has allowed the city to reach out to communities that would not have been possible otherwise.
- c) access to hard-to-reach communities not reached by most existing services.
- d) the constant evaluation and adaptability of the responses, according to the needs that have been identified.
- e) working together with public bodies of different kinds, taking an intersectoral approach.



*Women, Health & Violence: Guide for All Women, Bilbao*



*Guide to talk to each other, Bilbao*



*Preventing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Bilbao: Guidelines for professionals, Bilbao*

## Flexibility

The policies and initiatives promoted should have the capacity to adjust to different realities, even those that may not yet have had the opportunity to emerge during such questioning.

**During the life of a policy or initiative, other needs may arise, and it is important that the initiative or policy is designed to be able to adapt to these new realities. Situations evolve and adapt, and communities and people change...**

It will never be possible to predict all these situations in advance, but we can prepare for the unforeseen. Having a regular listening mechanism in place allows for sufficient flexibility to adjust as needed. The way policies are described and how they are implemented is essential and sometimes you can find ways to leave some adaptations open.

Professional training has been a practice adopted in many contexts, namely in public services, all over Europe and beyond, to improve this flexibility capacity.

Both training and the creation of communities of practice aim to promote the provision of increasingly humanised services, which may mean that they must be adapted to each context and person and not standardised.

It is important to create safe spaces where professionals from the same area, and between areas, can reflect and share practical ideas, supporting each other in a relationship of critical and empathetic friendship, and favouring a critical capacity in the provision of services.

The existing funding lines available to both the public and private sectors should also allow for this flexibility, as well as stimulate the active listening mentioned above and the collection of disaggregated data in order to better understand the inequalities and thus plan responses that are more adjusted to each context. In the creation of municipal financing lines, for example, gender criteria may be considered, with extra points for initiatives led by women or creating structures to accelerate female leadership, mainly (but not only) in certain communities where it is perceived that such exclusion is a particularly relevant factor.



## Flexibility

### CASE STUDIES

**Ana Paula Costa, social scientist, and member of the board of directors of the Casa do Brasil of Lisbon, in charge of the Migra Myths project,** stated that the immigration process is a crisis process, it is never comfortable. At first, there is always a process of adjustment, which is felt more acutely in the case of migrant women, because the pre-established inequality that exists between men and women also arises in migration. Often it is the men who arrived first and found a job and the women come into a situation of financial dependence. To the inequality for being a migrant is added the inequality for being a woman.

In its report on discrimination practices in Portugal, the Migra Myths project reveals that “In Portuguese society, Brazilian women are racialised and sexualised, which contributes to some phenotypic characteristics combined with, for example, the cultural dimension, being used to represent these women and differentiate them (Craveiro 2018). Moreover, these migrants suffer from a prejudice whose basis is racism. Regarding the immigrant communities in Portugal, the Brazilian community is the largest, with women also being the majority. In the case of these women, gender stereotypes intersect with many others, mostly linked to “Brazilianness” and the idea of an available, hypersexualised body, legacy of a colonial vision, and the objectification of women”.



#migramyths





## Communication

The importance of communication has been mentioned a lot throughout our project. Not only because it is important to really listen to people and communities, but also because it is important to keep people informed and aware of what is happening (or, if not, why?).

**For people to be informed, information needs to be accessible, and we can ensure that by writing in a simple and direct way and using languages that can reach everyone in our city.**

Communication through images was also mentioned a lot - the importance of representativeness on posters, in brochures, and in the media and the narratives, these images convey, both verbally and visually. Do we represent all communities in our communication? Do some communities only appear in situations that may reinforce less inclusive stereotypes or attitudes (e.g. linking them to poverty, crime, and migration)? Are men and women (and other gender identities) represented out of their traditional, stereotypical roles?)

Communication was also mentioned a lot because of the importance of the words we use every day. According to Maria José Casa-Nova, terms and inclusive language matter because they generate corresponding mental images - if we always refer to a president and "him", the image that will come to us will be of a man in that position. If, on the other hand, we say "the person who presides" this leaves room for my brain to project the image of a person who has another gender identity. Furthermore, many of our guests mentioned situations where words and phrases were used by public services and others that made them feel out of place, that they "didn't belong" there, or that their needs were not important.

Finally, it is important to actively combat false ideas and myths and to show concerted action that deconstructs and prevents hate speech that may exist in communication, for example on social media.

## Communication

### CASE STUDIES

Considering the importance of working on communication and fighting prejudice on social networks, Casa do Brasil in Lisbon started the **Migra Myths project**. This project collects and analyses the main myths propagated by social networks and the media, also promoting content with credible statistical information that helps to counter negative narratives and fake news about people of various origins.

The diagnosis in the report of this project reveals that myths, prejudices, stereotypes, and fake news also cut across gender: 81.36% of the women interviewed said that they had already suffered discrimination based on prejudices and stereotypes about immigration or for being immigrants in Portugal, against only 19% of the men interviewed. Among the women interviewed, 50.85% were of Brazilian-Portuguese, Brazilian-Italian, Guinea-Portuguese, and Cape Verdean-Portuguese nationality.



Report on Experiences of Discrimination in Immigration in Portugal, Migra Myths, Casa do Brasil. 2021

**As stated in the report**  
**“It is undeniable that the construction of negative stereotypes regarding immigrant women,** especially those of Brazilian nationality, is a reality present in Portuguese society”. However, when we intersect with other factors, such as racialised markers,

ethnicity, gender, social class, nationality, and migratory status, we understand that these not only influence the construction of subjectivity but are also replicators of subordination and social inequality (Craveiro 2018 cited by the Report).

The report highlights “problems in access to rented housing, sexual harassment

in the workplace and on public spaces, greater vulnerability to unemployment, labour exploitation, and professional disqualification are elements that add risks to the Brazilian woman’s life project outside her country of origin and affect her integration, sense of belonging and well-being. As a result, she is often not guaranteed fundamental rights. Our diagnosis revealed that the stereotype of Brazilian women in Portugal is related to prostitution: 23.9% of the people interviewed stated that they had already experienced some type of discrimination or heard some type of comment related to the prostitution of Brazilian women. Next, the most representative myth and fake news stereotypes are related to criminality (21.6%), stealing jobs (14.2%), and stealing husbands (also related to Brazilian women - 14.4%)”.

Social networks and the media in Portugal were pointed out, by the persons interviewed for this report, as the main means of propagation of these myths, stereotypes, and fake news about immigration and immigrants in Portugal. In first place are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (31.7%), followed by private services like commerce, banks, restaurants, and others (19.3%), public services (18.7%), school and academic education (13.3%) and the media (12.3%).

Migra Myths project posts, Facebook, 2021 and 2022 where we can read:

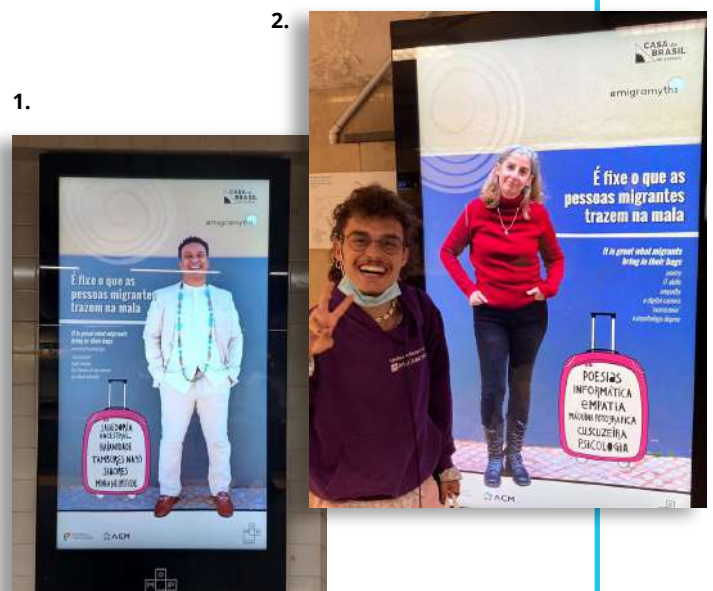
1. "Curious facts about immigration in Portugal: In 2020, the most important reasons to issue residence permits were family reunification (35,736), professional activity (29,715), and studying (12,285)".
2. "Myth: Immigrants overload the social security services", "Fact: Immigrant people have a high contributive capacity and represent a very high balance to the social security (in 2020 alone, the balance was 802 million euros)"



As part of this project, **Casa do Brasil Association** produced several publications with the aim of demystifying preconceived ideas about migrant people, using real data.

**These images intend to contribute to the increase of information as a means to combat erroneous messages and hate speech on social networks.**

Communication can and should be used to deconstruct myths and stereotypes. The project has already carried out several online campaigns, among them ["It's cool what migrants bring in their suitcase"](#), with billboards scattered around the city of Lisbon highlighting the knowledge that people bring to the country, with the aim of highlighting the diversity and life story of migrants in Portugal, as well as valuing the cultural, social and economic contribution they bring to society as a whole.



"It's cool what migrant people bring in their suitcase" campaign, Migra Myths, Casa do Brasil, 2021.

1. "Ancient Wisdom, "Baianity", Nago Drums, Flavours, My blackness"
2. "Poetry, IT, Empathy, Camera, Couscous Lover, Psychology"

## Communication

### CASE STUDIES

**Lisboa**, is developing a pilot project in the field of education with the Roma community entitled **“Menarche goes to school”**, aimed at girls in preadolescence in order to raise awareness of this issue, which brings many questions in school attendance by Roma girls.

According to Helena Viegas of the **Association Hearts with Crown**, responsible for the coordination and implementation of the project, **“Menarche goes to school”** is a project developed by the team of the movement **#TodasMerecemos** (we are all worthy) with the aim of broadening the debate on menstruation, menstrual poverty, and sustainability, aimed at 8th-grade students.

**Actions were developed to deconstruct the taboos that persist on the subject, touching essentially on three points:**

1. Health linked to menstruation: with a doctor present at every session, in order to clarify doubts about the menstrual cycle and associated issues with the greatest scientific rigour;
2. Menstrual poverty: by raising the debate on gender equality and the disadvantages that can affect women during menstruation.
3. Sustainability: presenting the most durable options such as menstrual cups and menstrual briefs.

#TodasMerecemos

CORAÇÕES  
COM CORDÃO

**Helena Viegas took the opportunity to reinforce the importance of the project having been developed from the beginning with the school.** In conversation with the board and the education professionals, they ended up realising the need to have the presence of a social assistant in order to mediate the dialogue with the school's Roma community. Therefore, Helena Viegas underlines the importance of horizontal construction, taking into consideration the specific needs of each reality. A session with the girls' mothers was also held, presenting several options of products with lower cost, to be used by the girls and demystifying existing ideas about them, which often cause the healthiest and safest options not to be used.

The municipality of **Lisbon** also developed the project **“We are the rights we have”** in 2016.

This campaign aimed at **“valuing diversity by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices”**, as well as “raising the awareness of Lisbon citizens to Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship”. “The promotion of equality is an obligation of the municipality,” reinforced the councilmen for social rights at the time, João Carlos Afonso. The various posters, with phrases and images of people living in the city with different characteristics sharing their experiences of discrimination, aim to communicate a widespread belonging to the city of different identities and have a strong message of anti-discrimination commitment from the municipality. The messages and the campaign were carried out in a participatory way, and several actions of dialogue and awareness raising of different actors were part of the process.

“We are the rights we have” campaign, Lisbon



1. “Everyday I fight against discrimination. They judged me for being a lesbian, but I’m not hiding anymore.”

2. “Everyday I fight for a city without discrimination. I grew up in a social housing neighbourhood.”

3. “Everyday I promote intercultural dialogues. I have suffered prejudice for being a Roma.”



## Communication

### CASE STUDIES

**Loures** has been carrying out several urban art initiatives and one of the murals in Quinta do Mocho addresses gender issues: the two figures represented do not have a defined/ explicit gender, both have different skin tones, and, next to them, we can see the sentence “Union makes strength”.

Many women participated in the painting of the murals. Every month there are guided tours of the neighbourhoods, in which the guide indicates the paintings done by women, providing a space for communicating different perspectives on the neighbourhoods. These works illustrate different feelings and represent a way of listening to and giving visibility to different voices.



Miguel Brum



Nomen

**Loures is the fifth municipality with the largest number of foreign population in Portugal.** Of the 19,649 migrants living in Loures, the largest group is from Brazil (19%); followed by Cape Verde (11%), São Tomé and Príncipe (10%), Angola (9%), Guinea-Bissau (9%) and Romania (5%). This reality may change due to the arrival of the Ukrainian people. Loures is a diverse territory in geographical and human terms, with rural and urban contexts coexisting in the same territory. The Loures vision for interculturality is based on the idea of promoting equal opportunities and working on conciliation, knowledge, and information. In its Municipal Plan for the Integration of Migrants 2020-2022 (PMIM), the city

develops Portuguese language classes for migrants and has provided babysitting services so that women can attend them.

The existence of public acts, and clear stances on acts of racism or xenophobia and homophobia (for example, flying the LGBTQIA+ flag on LGBT Pride Day), is something seen as extremely important and communicates the values that the municipality stands for.

Gender balance and origin have been an achievement internally within the municipality's human resources, which has already achieved equity in terms of management positions.

**There is also a protocol with the Techari Roma association and with the Amplos association.**

The protocol with the Techari association has three axes: culture, interculturalism, education (with mediators in schools), and housing. Within the scope of the protocol, a photography exhibition entitled "Nomads" has been held. On the day of the opening of the exhibition, a dance group of Roma girls performed. The association is mostly composed of men, which is not very usual in the associative axis. A common strategy was agreed upon to ensure that the girls attend school, a question to which the president of the association peremptorily said yes.



Eva Bracamontes

Public art gallery, Loures



## Communication

**CATARINA  
MARQUES  
RODRIGUES**

**Catarina Rodrigues, one of our speakers in the promoted webinars,** highlighted the lack of women and people representing socio-

cultural diversity in the media, both in news and in leadership and management positions of media organisations. She also stressed that the most recurrent themes in the representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities living in Portugal in the news are, in descending order: crime, integration, prostitution, legalisation, violence, and work.

Despite this scenario, more recent data reveals that gender equality issues are considered very important for the public and especially for generation Z.

Most people surveyed consider that the media have made progress on these issues, but that there is still a lot of work to be done. Generation Z considers that the media have an important role to play in increasing gender equality.

She underlined that the media transmit images to people that shape the way they see the others, and may favour unconscious biases, namely in relation to appearance, age, and gender, among others.

According to the last [European Social Survey](#), 62% of people in Portugal express some form of racism. Therefore, Catarina Marques Rodrigues suggests that when we write a text and want to ensure that our communication is being done in a correct and inclusive way, we should answer the following questions:

- **May I be offending someone?**
- **I'm leaving someone out?**
- **Am I spreading a stigma or a preconceived idea?**

She ended by stressing that for a person to become anti-racist must go through a process, which passes through three zones: **the zone of fear, the zone of learning, and the zone of growth.**

**ALICE  
MARCELINO**

**Alice Marcelino, a Portuguese visual artist of Angolan origin,** said that the black body is very policed by society, the way it dresses, the way it expresses itself...

For example, through the hair. A black woman who wears her hair naturally is the target of various judgments: she's an artist; she's exotic; she's not professional. As a black woman who has lived in several countries (Portugal, France, United Kingdom, Greece, for example), Alice Marcelino also addressed the circumstances of integration. She

**62%**

of people in Portugal  
express some form of  
racism.

exposed that the challenges to integration for a black person start right at the moment of travel. Before travelling to another country, a black person must do some research first to find out if it is a country where he or she may be a target of blatant racism, and if there are hairdressers who can deal with your type of hair, for example.

In the professional field, the first challenge is that the advertising industry is an area still dominated by white men, and the system is designed for the needs of men, from job opportunities to who makes the decisions. Still, there is also an expectation that because she is a black woman, she has only one narrative - that of oppression which, although part of the experience of many black individuals, is not unique and does not apply to everyone, and this ends up closing many doors. Finally, there are very few opportunities for artists who are also mothers. Male artists who are also fathers continue to develop their careers without having children being an obstacle.



YOLANDA  
TATI

**Yolanda Tati, a journalist, and influencer,** shared her experience of early career and motherhood. At the beginning of her career in the media field, she

faced some barriers, and there was a general perception among agents that her profile as a black woman would not be a voice that people wanted to hear, that there would be no space for her voice. Gradually this situation changed, and it was clear that this space existed but was not being adequately explored. Yolanda Tati has a very significant presence on social networks and when she became a mother with her partner, a white man, there was a lot of speculation about the skin colour of the baby, which is what caused the most discussion.

Finally, she mentioned that she often feels her skin colour and gender as something that immediately creates an expectation that she will be an aggressive person, a domestic worker, or a promiscuous personality since this is the representation that many people make of black women as if they could not occupy other places.

**The [Black Lives Matter](#) movement has changed the panorama.** From the moment this debate started, brands changed their positioning and Yolanda Tati increased her clientele. When she took part in an advertising campaign in which one of the moments she wore her hair straight, she generated a huge debate on social networks, being criticised for not wearing an afro. The conclusion she came to is that black women are so poorly represented that from the moment a black woman appears she has to represent all black women - "she has to wear an afro". It has not yet reached the point where a black woman can be whatever she wants and wear her hair however she wants.

In the Portuguese media, there is still a long struggle ahead to achieve greater representativeness, particularly on TV.

The struggle for greater representativity on TV is relevant, given the weight that this medium still has in people's lives in general - it is still a very influential medium.

## Communication

SÓNIA  
MATOS

**Sónia Matos** mentioned access to information as essential for the full integration of Roma women. The Social Inclusion Income (RSI) changed the scenario: it

allowed women to dream, to make the leap. Social media has also generated important changes in the Roma community. Young women in the community use mobile phones and social networks a lot. This enables them to talk to the boys they are going to marry before the wedding, which was not the case before.

The situation of the Roma community will only change when the majority community's thinking changes. The will of society to give representativeness to the Roma community must exist. If there are inequalities between men and women in the majority community, in the Roma community there are even greater inequalities. Roma women marry, in general, younger than non-Roma women, and the problem of reconciling family life and professional life arises very early on.

LÚCIA  
VICENTE

**Lúcia Vicente, author, actress, and storyteller,** mentioned that she has developed work at the literary level in two areas: literature dedicated to children and literature dedicated to the

education of children on gender equality and racism. She believes that educating children from an early age through language is very important because the sooner children hear an inclusive language, the sooner they can contribute to change.



Book "Raízes Negras"  
(Black Roots) by Lúcia Vicente

Her recent book Black Roots tells the stories of black characters relevant to Portuguese history and not only, namely Women. "Giving visibility to these stories is a way to combat invisibility and promote representativeness."

In the same line, the project "[Wiki Loves Women](#)" collects contributions for a greater representation of Women of African origin on Wikipedia, having found that there was a clear discrepancy between the number of men and women cited by the platform and, even more evident, the serious absence of references to Africa, in general, and to important Black Women in history, in particular.

MARGARIDA  
PACHECO

**Margarida Pacheco** recalled the moment when, during a Master's class, a teacher asked one of her colleagues what her nationality was. The classmate answered 'Portuguese'. The teacher

insisted that she had to have a country of origin and that her parents had to have a country of origin. The classmate replied that her nationality and country of origin were Portugal. All her classmates didn't know how to react to the situation.

Margarida Pacheco considers that this episode refers to the structural violence that happens daily in schools and elsewhere.

## Access

Access to services is essential for the full exercise and enjoyment of citizenship.

**This access is often conditioned by various factors, many of them unintentional, arising from an ethnocentric vision that, as human beings, tends to shape the way we see the world.**

The use of a given service may be totally or partially blocked for reasons of lack of information, linguistic differences, misunderstandings of cultural and/or religious origin, and/or a series of assumptions about the behaviour and understanding on the part of those who attend.

As we have seen above, the mastery of intercultural competencies, which includes intercultural communication, will be very important in supporting the development of a less ethnocentric and more relativistic outlook, fostering greater openness to people being able to think and act differently.

Essentially, it is necessary to assume that the needs and motivations each person presents may be very different from each other (regardless of whether they share a certain geography, religion, or language) and may be very different from your own needs and motivations in a similar situation.

. It is not possible for us to truly understand what it is like to be in the place of another person, because we do not share the same life story, the same cultural references, the same

values, or the same needs. What is obvious to me is not necessarily obvious to the person in front of me.

**Achieving a service that reveals true empathy begins by understanding these factors**, and assuming a posture of listening and flexibility, as seen above. We not only expect the person who comes to us to adjust to the system, but we make ourselves available to adjust the system to people. Inclusion is about dialogue and understanding, recognising that our answers are not always what the person needs.

CYNTHIA  
DE PAULA

**Cynthia de Paula, president of Casa do Brasil Association**, refers us to the reports of the **Migra Myths** project, where many stories of discrimination in public services appear. The

difficulties of access, namely to the National Health Service, are much mentioned by the migrant population.

Discrimination, especially against migrant women, is felt in several areas. Health is where there are more reports of discrimination, harassment, and difficulties due to the language barrier. Regarding the service provided by the Border services, there are reports of xenophobia, racism, and difficulties in the process. There are also reports which emphasise that in the Social Security and Tax Services, often the person in charge of the service is unaware of the procedures. Until a person obtains a residence permit, they are

## Access

often in limbo, a situation that increases their vulnerability - they do not report because they are afraid, they fear being deported because they are in a vulnerable situation. If migrants are victims of a crime and are in an irregular situation, they do not report it because they fear retaliation.

**Casa do Brasil** also created the ["Informa em Ação"](#) project, developed through a participative process that involved professionals from different areas and migrant people. The result was the preparation of the following informative guides, created in partnership with GABIP - Almirante Reis (Lisbon City Council and Aga Khan Foundation Portugal), the Health Centres of Central Lisbon, and GAT - Activists in Treatment Group:

- [Guide to Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period in Portugal;](#)
- [Guide on the Importance of Wellness in Health;](#)
- [Guide for Migrant Participation in Health Policies and Entities.](#)

**The association chose to work only with women and to make the materials available in 6 languages: Bengali, French, English, Mandarin, Nepali, and Portuguese.**

Regarding accessibility, which can be understood as de facto access, that is, dignified access that provides adequate care, language was cited as a major hindrance.

TERESA  
VIEIRA

Teresa Vieira spoke about the complexity of medical language, which becomes a serious obstacle when we take into consideration people with a low level of education and that, therefore, **“individualised care is necessary”**. The people who work in health services must adjust their communication with whom they wish to speak so that they are fully understood.

It is also necessary to be aware of different cultural practices and reflect on existing prejudices, which can lead, for example, to serious situations with pregnant women.

TERESA VIEIRA  
E CÁTIA RAMOS

Teresa Vieira and Cátia Ramos underline the importance of developing projects that broaden the knowledge about the “other” for the medical class. Training should take place within the universities themselves, so that the students enter the world of work better prepared and their practice is not influenced by prejudices that may lead to discrimination, as is the case of professionals who informally highlight, in patients’ files, the indication of ethnicity.

The improvement in the training of people working in the administrative services of health centres was a point mentioned by all our guests, as well as the need to invest in knowledge about the different groups living in Portugal, to promote the construction of more empathetic and respectful medical teams capable of dealing with interculturalism.

Some cities have created **general population services** with an itinerant format, using vans that rotate to different geographical areas, namely the most remote ones, where more people with mobility difficulties live, with less transport, etc. Other services have created extended opening hours once a week to cover people who may not be available during normal working hours (for example, once a week it is open until 20:00 or from 7:00, and/or on Saturdays).



## Access

### CASE STUDIES

**Beatriz Padilla** mentioned that the health Centre (belonging to the public National Health Service) in Venda Nova, Amadora, created a mobile service where support was provided in terms of maternal and child health, reproductive health, support in making appointments, follow-up of identified cases, specific awareness-raising actions for the territory in question, etc.

This practice was discontinued because a strategy of greater decentralisation was adopted by the National Health Service, with the existence of new centres closer to the different localities. Fernando da Fonseca Hospital, in Amadora, created a similar mobile service and Amadora Municipality implemented the “Passa Palavra” project aimed at people in homeless situations.

**Joana Canedo** told us about the **GAT association in Lisbon**, which promotes the MANAS project: self-help groups, centred on artistic experiences and well-being, as a way of enhancing inclusion and reducing situations of gender-based violence.

These groups, aimed at women and non-binary or queer people, may include people who use drugs and/or are sex workers, are mothers, unemployed, have mental health issues or disabilities, of different ages and backgrounds, some having experienced homelessness and belonging to racialised groups. The goal is to create a safe space for meeting and sharing through participatory methodologies.

**The aim is also to foster the feeling of belonging to the city and the neighbourhood, ensuring access to rights, the assumption of responsibilities and the enjoyment of full citizenship.** To this end, it promotes debate and learning on themes such as Gender Equality, Equity and non-discrimination, Health, Violence, Substance Use, Legislation and Legal Support, Trauma, mental health care, and Sexual and Moral Harassment, among others, with a view to enhancing strategies for managing situations of oppression and discrimination, as well as bridging the gap between people and support structures (such as health centres, etc.). Their initiatives resulted in increased insertion of the people involved in social, housing, and health responses, increased feeling of peer support, greater access to essential goods, and increased perception of well-being.

The municipality of **Oeiras** has created a reception guide especially dedicated to Health and Migration, with useful information about rights and obligations, as well as existing resources and how to access them. The guide can be found in the resources below.



"Immigrants' Guide to Access to Health - Law and Resources"

## Summary

In sum, everyone plays an important part in building a more inclusive world when it comes to gender and interculturality.

**We all need to be more conscious and critical about our thoughts, our words, and our actions as they influence our culture and the mindset of the next generations.**

Developing critical thinking on these topics starts with a simple reflection: we recognise differences because we are different from each other.

We leave you with the advice and recommendations gathered throughout our project, some warnings and some practical ideas that can be implemented to develop initiatives and public policies that consider the gender variant and its different nuances according to each woman's identity and ethno-cultural belonging.

Let us reinforce the idea that a city plan for interculturality should always contemplate an intersectional dimension, considering that the experiences of each person can vary greatly according to their different characteristics.

Here's an overview of our key recommendations:

### 1. Dialogue, Questioning and Listening

Adopt a participatory approach to social issues, with the direct involvement of all people. "Who might be missing out?", "Which voices are not being heard?"

### 2. Intercultural competences

need to be developed in all people working in public services.

### 3. Intersectionality

No one person or small group represents a whole group

### 4. Flexibility

The policies and initiatives promoted should have the capacity to adjust to different realities.

### 5. Communication

It is important to really listen to people and communities, but also keep people informed and aware of what is happening.

### 6. Access

to services is essential for the full exercise and enjoyment of citizenship.

## Resources

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- [“Saúde para tod@s”](#) - Guia de acesso de imigrantes à Saúde - Direito e Recursos” Oeiras Municipality
- Practical summary Bilbao [“Education for Social Transformation”](#)- in English
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- Bilbao guides mentioned in the text: [Bilbao.eus, Áreas Municipales, Cooperación, Convivencia y Fiestas, ¿En qué consiste?](#)
- [Mobile unit provides home health support to children and young people in Sintra and Amadora | PIPOP - Portuguese site for pediatric information PIPOP - Portuguese site for pediatric information](#)
- Amadora municipality reinforces intervention in the homelessness area | Passa a Palavra Project ([cm-amadora.pt](#))
- Guide to [gender-neutral or humanised language](#)
- [Inclusive Language](#) Guide
- Guide to [gender-sensitive budgeting](#)
- [Guidelines for Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period in Portugal](#) (PT); [Guidelines for pregnancy](#) (ENG)
- [Guide on the importance of wellbeing in health](#) (PT); [Health - the importance of wellbeing](#) (ENG)
- [Guia para a Participação Migrante nas Políticas e Entidades de Saúde](#) (PT); [Guide for migrant participation in health](#) (ENG)

## Podcasts

- Podcast [“Portugal Plural”](#), RPCI (3 episodes on the theme “Gender and Interculturality”) – in portuguese

## Free online courses and training resources

- [“Intercultural Competences”](#) course, INA, 2022
- Resources on [Intercultural Competences](#), Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities programme
- [“Diversity and Inclusion”](#) course, Aga Khan Foundation Portugal, 2021

## Websites

- [Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network #WeTogether #ICCities #cidadesinterculturais](#)
- <https://www.acm.gov.pt/inicio>
- [ARTTHEMIS+ \(umarfeminismos.org\)](#)
- Afrolink project: [Home - Afrolink](#)
- [Bilbao city](#) Site
- Website of the association [GAT – GRUPO DE ATIVISTAS EM TRATAMENTO – The Neighbourhoods](#)
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- AMUCIP - Association for the Development of Portuguese Gypsy Women: [Associação para o Desenvolvimento das Mulheres Ciganas Portuguesas - AMUCIP \(weebly.com\)](#)
- Migra Myths Project: [\(20+\) Migra Myths - Demystifying Immigration | Facebook](#)
- [Gender Calling](#) Project (Catarina Marques Rodrigues)
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- [Public Art Loures \(cm-loures.pt\)](#)
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- [Home - Black Lives Matter](#)
- [Cátia Semedo Ramos \(@catiasemedoramos\) • photos and videos on Instagram](#)
- [CLIP Resources and Development | Resources and Development \(cliprd.org\)](#)

## Vídeos

- Documentary “6 Women, 1 Seed”: [https://youtu.be/poWm\\_MlATm4](https://youtu.be/poWm_MlATm4) - Lisbon, GAT
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-Kmfa8\\_uMs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-Kmfa8_uMs) - Bilbao
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeaT0TvsfAQ&t=10s> - Bilbao
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- [We Should All Be Feminists Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie para TEDxEuston - YouTube](#)
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