



Enhancing structures and policies for intercultural integration in Cyprus” project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Project Number: Council of Europe 2023-2024

Guidelines for Intercultural Use of Public Spaces in Nicosia

Introduction

Public spaces are essential components of urban life, serving as venues for interaction, social inclusion, and cultural exchange. In a city like Nicosia, known for its rich cultural diversity, the effective use of public spaces can significantly enhance community cohesion while supporting the integration of migrants and fostering a sense of belonging among all residents. Recognizing the importance of these spaces, the Intercultural Cities Program (ICC) and CIP, the regional network coordinator for Nicosia District, has set forth an initiative aimed at promoting interculturalism within public settings.

The primary goal of this initiative is to create comprehensive guidelines for the intercultural use of public spaces. These guidelines will focus on the organization of events, emphasizing cultural inclusivity, diversity representation, and community participation. By ensuring that events reflect the needs and preferences of both local populations and migrants, these guidelines will enable municipalities in Nicosia to design and manage public spaces in ways that celebrate the city’s myriad cultural heritages.

In providing direction for the intercultural organization of events in public spaces, this document aims to empower municipalities to develop inclusive practices that engage all community members. With a focus on valuing and representing diverse perspectives, these guidelines will serve as a catalyst for enhancing social integration and fostering a vibrant, cohesive community where every voice is heard and appreciated. Ultimately, by embracing cultural diversity in public spaces, Nicosia can reinforce its identity as a truly intercultural city, where all residents feel valued and connected.



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Guidelines for intercultural use of public spaces:

1. Promoting Cultural Diversity through Public Space Design

1.1. Inclusive Architectural and Design Elements

Recommendations:

- ✓ Incorporate architectural and design elements that reflect Nicosia’s multicultural makeup. For example, in areas with high migrant populations, incorporate design features such as signage, art, or landscaping that draw inspiration from the various cultures within the city.
- ✓ Use materials, colors, and art that are representative of the different cultural backgrounds in the community. This might include mosaics, murals, or sculptures inspired by various cultural traditions.
- ✓ Collaborate with local artists and cultural organizations from different communities to create public art that reflects the diversity of Nicosia.
- ✓ Provide spaces for community members to participate in the creation or curation of public art, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in the public space.

1.2. Designated Cultural Spaces

Recommendations:

- ✓ Facilitate (or create) spaces where intercultural events, performances, and gatherings can take place, allowing various cultural communities to express themselves and share their traditions with others.
- ✓ Establish outdoor amphitheaters, stages, or public squares where different groups can organize cultural performances, festivals, and celebrations.
- ✓ Use temporary or permanent installations that reflect different cultures, such as outdoor exhibitions or installations that highlight the history and contributions of migrant communities in Nicosia.

2. Accessibility and Inclusivity in Public Spaces

2.1. Equal Access for All Groups

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Ensure that public spaces are accessible to everyone, including marginalized or vulnerable groups such as migrants, people with disabilities, and the elderly.
- ✓ Ensure there is clear and understandable signage, available in multiple languages, to facilitate easy navigation for people who do not speak Greek or English.
- ✓ Install multilingual signage in key public spaces, such as parks, squares, and transportation hubs. The languages to be prioritized can be determined by the demographics of the area.
- ✓ Make physical adjustments where needed, such as ramps, wider pathways, and accessible benches, ensuring everyone can enjoy the space.

2.2. Community-Driven Public Space Development

Recommendations:

- ✓ Encourage community participation in the planning and design of public spaces to ensure that they meet the needs of all groups, especially marginalized populations, including migrants.
- ✓ Organize public consultation sessions or workshops with diverse community members (including migrants, refugees, and local residents) to gather input on the design, function, and programming of public spaces.
- ✓ Create advisory boards or committees that include members of different cultural backgrounds to provide ongoing feedback on the use of public spaces.
- ✓ Promote intercultural dialogue through workshops, forums, and public talks in community spaces. These events should encourage residents of different backgrounds to come together to discuss issues such as migration, integration, and coexistence.
- ✓ Organize discussions on topics like intercultural understanding, inclusion, and social integration in open public spaces. Partner with local NGOs, cultural centers, and academic institutions to provide a platform for learning.
- ✓ Create spaces for informal conversations and socializing, such as community gardens or picnic areas, which can encourage spontaneous interactions among residents of diverse backgrounds.

3. Intercultural Programming and Activities

3.1. Cultural and Social Events

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Recommendations:

- ✓ Organize and promote intercultural events in public spaces that celebrate the diversity of Nicosia. These events should aim to bring different cultural communities together, creating opportunities for interaction, learning, and mutual respect.
- ✓ Host regular events such as music festivals, food fairs, art exhibitions, dance performances, and cultural celebrations in public spaces that showcase the traditions of different cultural groups in Nicosia.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for migrants to share their traditions, such as through cultural days or international food markets, giving locals the chance to engage and learn about different cultures.

Example: The NGO Citizens in Power (CIP) has successfully organized Intercultural Walks, highlighting the city's rich cultural diversity through carefully chosen landmarks. These walks were conducted in English to ensure accessibility for both Greek Cypriots and foreign nationals, fostering an inclusive environment for all participants to learn about the city's intercultural heritage.



Photos of the first Intercultural Walk in Nicosia, organized by CIP, on 15 June 2024.

4. Representation and Visibility in Public Spaces

4.1. Celebrating Diverse Cultures Through Visual Representation

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Designate areas of public space, such as walls, where local artists and community members can display art that reflects cultural diversity.

4.2. Remembrance and History of Migrants

Recommendations:

- ✓ Highlight the contributions of migrant communities in the city by dedicating areas of public space to commemorate their history and role in shaping Nicosia’s development.
- ✓ Create informational plaques or small monuments in public spaces that tell the story of migrant communities in Nicosia, their contributions, and their integration journey.
- ✓ Partner with cultural organizations to host educational events that explore the historical and contemporary experiences of migrants in Cyprus.

5. Sustainability and Environmental Awareness

5.1. Eco-Friendly, Inclusive Public Spaces

Recommendations:

- ✓ Incorporate environmental sustainability in the development of intercultural public spaces. Create green spaces that are accessible and provide safe, welcoming environments for all community members, fostering social and environmental responsibility.
- ✓ Develop community gardens and eco-friendly green spaces that bring together people of different backgrounds to work together, share knowledge, and bond over environmental awareness.
- ✓ Organize environmental and sustainability workshops in public spaces, where migrants and local communities can collaborate to improve the urban environment.

6. Maintaining Safety and Comfort in Public Spaces

6.1. Creating Safe Spaces for All

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Ensure that public spaces remain safe and comfortable for everyone, particularly for migrants who may feel marginalized or vulnerable.
- ✓ Ensure visible security measures, such as good lighting, emergency contacts, and regular monitoring, so all community members feel secure in using public spaces.
- ✓ Foster a culture of respect and non-discrimination by training public space workers (e.g., park rangers, city officials) to be culturally aware and equipped to address issues of intolerance or exclusion.

Final Comments

This document has been created by the NGO Citizens in Power, regional coordinator for Nicosia and Larnaca, under the Intercultural Cities program of the Council of Europe. Its aim is to assist municipalities in developing clear guidelines for the intercultural use of public spaces, supporting them in becoming more migrant-friendly and facilitating the integration of diverse communities into the public life of the city.

By adopting these guidelines, the municipalities of Nicosia can transform public spaces into hubs of cultural exchange, mutual respect, and inclusion. Intercultural public spaces not only celebrate the diversity of the community but also play an essential role in building stronger social bonds, promoting understanding, and supporting the integration of migrants into the city. When everyone feels valued, public spaces become more than just physical areas—they become places where all residents, regardless of their background, can interact, learn, and thrive together.

These guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for municipalities in Nicosia to use their public spaces in a way that fosters intercultural understanding and community integration.

Resources:

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