

Building structures for Intercultural Integration in Cyprus Intercultural Ambassadors

Paphos District Intercultural Network



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Overview

In diverse societies there is often the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over values, behaviour or resources. In cities, where people with different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses live together in close proximity, such tensions may be natural and indeed part of everyday life. Instead of denying, ignoring, or repressing conflict, the intercultural city seeks to anticipate, identify, address and resolve issues to the satisfaction of all protagonists without compromising the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The intercultural city views conflict as a normal feature of free, dynamic and communicative communities and sees the very process of conflict mediation and resolution as an opportunity for innovation and sustainable social cohesion.

The **Intercultural Ambassadors** initiative is a central component of the **Action Plan for inclusion and diversity in Paphos District**, which focuses on fostering social cohesion and conflict resolution. **Representatives of the municipality of Paphos have suggested the need for this initiative**, recognizing its potential to address key challenges in community integration. Within the plan, the Ambassadors are envisioned as key actors under the "Conflict Mediation" theme, designed to bridge cultural divides, promote understanding, and mediate tensions between diverse ethnic communities.

Aim

The **intercultural ambassador initiative** is a crucial tool for promoting integration within an intercultural city, specifically within the Paphos District. This initiative seeks to recruit one ambassador for each community, offering a reliable point of contact to foster communication, resolve conflicts, and enhance cooperation with local authorities. The objective is to not only unite people within their own

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communities but also help them navigate and resolve conflicts, which are common in cosmopolitan cities. While the ambassadors will not deny tensions, their role is to address these challenges constructively while upholding the principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Purpose

- **Representation and communication**

Ambassadors will serve as representatives of their respective communities, promoting intercultural dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect. They will play a critical role in communicating community needs and concerns to local authorities.

- **Conflict prevention and mediation**

One of the primary functions of the ambassadors will be conflict resolution. They will work proactively to address potential misunderstandings and tensions between different cultural groups before they escalate, promoting peaceful coexistence.

- **Intercultural council**

The Intercultural Ambassadors will form part of a proposed **Intercultural council** that acts as a bridge between ethnic communities and municipal authorities in Paphos. This Council would ensure diverse voices are heard and facilitate communication between the local authorities and the communities it serves.

The Intercultural council could consist of members of the Paphos Region Intercultural Network with a Board who will oversee the operations of the ambassador initiative. Initially, members of the board could be appointed by

the local municipalities in cooperation with CCIF Cyprus and, as the program matures, will be elected by the members of the council.

Role

Each ambassador represents a specific community, working to integrate its members into the broader society. They raise awareness of community issues, foster leadership within their groups, and celebrate the positive contributions of migration to the local culture. Ambassadors are also responsible for organizing cultural and artistic activities for Paphos citizens. Their work extends to acting as mediators and spokespersons for their communities, with a two-year term. In this role, they address community conflicts and facilitate smooth interactions across different cultural groups.

Once recruited, ambassadors will attend monthly meetings and participate in cultural activities organized by **CCIF Cyprus**. Their contributions are pivotal to the city of Paphos, making it crucial to select individuals who can meaningfully represent their communities.

Skills

Given the significant responsibilities of the role, ambassadors must embody certain key qualities:

- **Leadership and influence**

Ambassadors should be able to inspire and unite people within their community.

- **Trustworthiness and confidence**

As representatives of their communities, they must be reliable, confident, and capable of addressing conflicts and challenges publicly.

- **Communication**

Ambassadors must be articulate, capable of engaging with others effectively, and able to mediate between different cultural groups to foster understanding and cooperation.

- **Awareness**

They should be attentive to the needs of their community members, ensuring that all voices are heard and concerns are addressed.

How to become an intercultural ambassador

The selection of intercultural ambassadors in Paphos will be guided by community leaders with strong communication and language skills, as outlined in the Action Plan for Inclusion and Diversity in Paphos. Ideal candidates will be those recognized for their ability to foster dialogue, build bridges across communities, and contribute to social cohesion and integration.

CCIF Cyprus, in cooperation with local municipal authorities, will oversee the recruitment process, which includes:

- Reviewing motivation letters and conducting interviews.
- Gathering input from municipal representatives.
- Ensuring diverse representation across age groups, with particular attention to:
 - Student Ambassadors (ages 18–30)
 - Senior Ambassadors (over 30).

Recruitment announcements will be made via social media platforms to raise awareness and encourage applications for the Intercultural Ambassador Initiative.

Eligibility criteria

To become an Intercultural Ambassador for Paphos, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be **18 years or older**.
- Reside in the **Paphos District**.
- Be willing to commit to the role for a minimum of **one year**.

How to apply

Interested individuals will complete the 'Registration of Interest' form, explaining why they believe they are well-suited to become an Intercultural Ambassador. In the form, applicants are encouraged to highlight their connection to the community and their commitment to fostering intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

What happens if the ambassadors group is full?

If applications are submitted when the current group of ambassadors is already full, the individuals will be added to the Paphos Intercultural Network. Members of this network receive regular updates and invitations to participate in relevant activities and events organized by CCIF Cyprus. Should a position for an Ambassador become available in the future, a member of the team will contact them to arrange a short informal meeting about their application and the role.

Training and development

The ambassadors will undergo a comprehensive training program, covering key areas such as intercultural communication, conflict resolution, leadership development, and community engagement strategies. This training will include

workshops, seminars, and collaborative working groups designed to strengthen their skills and knowledge.

Additionally, ambassadors will receive ongoing training to refine their abilities, with CCIF Cyprus, in cooperation with the local municipalities, leading these sessions and emphasizing a "learning by doing" approach. Key training areas will include:

- **Public speaking and communication skills**

Ambassadors will be trained to speak confidently in public and represent their communities effectively.

- **Conflict resolution**

A significant portion of the training will focus on equipping ambassadors with the tools to address and mediate conflicts.

- **Mentorship and collaboration**

Mentoring programs will be established to provide ambassadors with expert guidance, while regular meetings will track progress, discuss challenges, and offer feedback.

- **Collaboration and support**

Ambassadors will work closely with municipal authorities, facilitating a two-way flow of information between the communities and local government. To further incentivize their work, ambassadors will be offered benefits such as support in finding employment and direct contacts with local authorities and police, helping them build stronger ties within the municipality.

Other countries

Several countries have developed effective intercultural ambassador programs.

Portugal, for example, has successfully implemented an ambassador system that involves regular seminars, feedback reports, and mediation practices to strengthen intercultural dialogue. Similarly, **Dublin, Ireland** has used its **NEIC network** to promote diversity and overcome barriers like language. **Ballarat, Australia** uses social media to share information about cultural events and international awareness days, thus encouraging intercultural exchanges.

Conclusion

The **intercultural ambassadors** initiative is a promising approach to fostering social cohesion and intercultural understanding in the Paphos district. The initiative was designed in consultation with the members of the Paphos district intercultural network and Ad Hoc groups. By promoting collaboration, representation, and proactive engagement, this initiative aims to create a more inclusive environment and strengthen community ties. Through careful selection, training, and support, ambassadors will be empowered to mediate conflicts, promote cultural exchange, and ensure that all communities feel heard, valued, and connected.

Contact Information

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References

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- [Intercultural Cities - Multicultural Ambassadors Program](#)
- [City of Ballarat - Intercultural Ambassador Program](#)
- [NEIC - Intercultural Development Coordinator](#)
- [Municipal and Intercultural Mediators, Portugal](#)
- [CCIF Cyprus - Intercultural Activities](#)
- [Council of Europe - Intercultural Cities Portugal](#)
- [Paphos Regional Intercultural Network](#)
- [Intercultural Cities \(ICC\) Index Analysis Report for Paphos District.](#)
- [Action Plan for Inclusion and Diversity in Paphos District](#)