



FRAMING PAPER

November 2018

THEMATIC FRAME

"THE POWER OF SOCIAL COHESION, DIVERSITY, AND PARTICIPATION IN OUR CITIES"

INTRODUCTION

Act.Now was founded by a private initiative of individuals in the wake of the large flight-movements towards Europe in 2015/16. It started with reacting first spontaneously to the acute challenges and issues associated with the sudden and massive arrivals, subsequently with well-informed and responsible actions.

As the founders' intention was and is to touch the lives of as many people as possible, and knowing that municipalities in various locations are at the forefront of responding and dealing with these challenges, the Mayors represented the first focus of our attention and activities. As politicians, heads of municipal administrations and stakeholders for public and private interests, Mayors bear the responsibility of caring for the wellbeing of all people living in their municipal districts. Therefore, the International Mayors' Conference NOW became Act.Now's annual main public event in Vienna/Austria paving the way for increased interaction and consolidated efforts to tackle issues of common interest regarding Human Dignity and Rights.

In order to achieve sustainable change beyond isolated high-profile gatherings, Act.Now facilitated the creation of the NOW Mayors' Network as well as the establishment of thematic working groups during the 3rd International Mayors' Conference NOW in January 2017. Since then, Act.Now has expanded its scope to support our societies and promote cohesion and participation. The young generation is at the center of attention, being the future leadership that will constitute tomorrow's communities.

Mayors and municipality representatives from more than 10 different countries in Europe, the Balkan as well as the MENAT regions currently form the NOW Mayors' Network.

It is our intention to support the members of the network and their municipalities in promoting peaceful, meaningful and prosperous communities under the thematic frame "Changing the Narrative – The Power of Social Cohesion, Diversity, and Participation in our Cities". We aim to foster dialogue and exchange of knowledge and experience to identify and inspire promising practices. We want to provide insights into various contexts by organising field trips to member municipalities in different countries. We offer assistance to empower communities, build the capacity of local administrations and support advocacy initiatives that are of common interest.





SOCIAL COHESION, DIVERSITY, AND PARTICIPATION

In order to promote prosperous and cohesive communities, municipalities should take measures which serve the needs of all citizens and avoid excluding certain groups. Regardless of their origin, religion or social background, people living in a city or community share one common thing: Space. Therefore, municipalities should enable conventional and unconventional participatory processes for all people living in their cities/communities in order to shape the space they share.

Acceptance of diversity and tackling challenges positively are important drivers to create and sustain a cohesive society. Social cohesion means having a distinct orientation towards the common good.

Moreover, the promotion of political and social participation showing the willingness of an individual or a group to influence political decisions on different levels also contributes to the wellbeing of a diverse community.

Our main goal is therefore to empower Mayors and municipality representatives to enhance the factors leading to social cohesion, such as:

- Foster an active local community to strengthen a sense of belonging and bonding (e.g. providing space for low-threshold encounters)
- Foster the positive reception, integration and enablement of participation of the challenged and disadvantaged of society (including recent immigrants, single parents, low-paid employees, those dependent on public assistance benefits etc.)
- Design activities to promote social interaction between various groups
- Promote a prosperous society by giving each individual the same chance for personal development
- Ensure that adequate and balanced services are provided sufficiently and in equality

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

By jointly developing and showcasing positive examples, promising practices and successful initiatives in the context of culturally and socially diverse communities, we aim to contribute to changing the public narrative, which is now increasingly characterised by populist rhetoric. Since this rhetoric stirs up emotions, especially anxieties, and effectively divides diverse societies by promoting homogenous and exclusive societies, the NOW Mayors' Network advocates positive narratives and progressive, innovative ideas replacing destructive public opinion making.

Within the NOW Mayors' Network we promote ...

- The articulation of new visions and progressive, innovative ideas fostering social cohesion among a diverse society
- The conveyance of our messages through media and interpersonal communication
- The association of municipalities in our network through collaborative projects across borders





MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES

Members of the NOW Mayors' Network include officials in responsible positions in smaller and medium-sized municipalities who have experience in working with former or recent migrants. Their common goal is to promote social cohesion in their municipalities and therefore shape a cohesive surrounding for all future generations. All member municipalities appreciate the mutual exchange between the MENAT region, the Balkan and Europe and find common grounds they can jointly work on.

ACTION PLAN

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, all members of the NOW Mayors' Network have jointly worked on an Action Plan we seek to implement in the coming years.

1 FIELD EXPOSURE

We facilitate one or two field trips per year visiting our network members in Europe, the Balkan or the MENAT region. These "Field Exposures" should inform about local challenges (social, political, economical) and how they are tackled by the respective municipality through specific projects/initiatives (addressing children/youth, the unemployed, social beneficiaries, refugees, migrants etc.). Visits to local institutions will make promising practices visible. Discussions with committed local politicians / decision makers with progressive ideas for strategies and actions will widen our perspectives.

2 ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS

Each field exposure should be accompanied by a one-day workshop addressing one or two specific topics. The topics can either be related to the issues of social cohesion, diversity and participation, or to the thematic NOW Working Groups (Children's Rights, Trauma Surviving, Exploitation and Human Trafficking, Gender Equality, Research Network for Diversity, Education and Social Cohesion). This can also include other topics relevant to the members of the network (e.g. good governance, funding of municipality projects; building economical sustainability etc.).

3 CAPACITY BUILDING

We aim to assist in strengthening capacity building in the municipalities by undertaking field trips and by offering workshops (see above) to the members of the NOW Mayors' Network. Furthermore, Act.Now seeks to enhance synergies between the NOW Working Groups and the member cities/communities of the network, e.g. through tailored workshops in the municipalities.

In case there is a need for capacity building in topics which cannot be met by the NOW Working Groups (e.g. technical or management skills), Act.Now will assist in finding external experts or organisations but we will not host such workshops.





FUTURE PLANS

1 ADVOCACY

We aim to support Mayors and municipality representatives in working on joint statements to advocate for specific cases that one or several municipalities are dealing with. These statements can be addressed to local governments, the EU, or international organisations.

Furthermore, Act.Now sees itself as an intermediary and facilitator between municipalities and international institutions, helping to build connections and introduce municipalities to international organisations.

2 COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

By facilitating the above mentioned activities we hope that collaborative projects between two or more cities/communities from Europe, the Balkan and the MENAT region could be arranged. Such collaborative projects could for example be joint programmes on social cohesion or on promoting tolerance etc.; enhancing knowledge exchange between municipalities via mutual visits of delegates; applying for joint projects to EU- or international funding organisations.

3 COLLECTION OF PROMISING PRACTICE EXAMPLES

By organizing annual or bi-annual field exposures and sharing regular updates about ongoing projects in member cities/communities of our network, we seek to collect promising practice examples and showcase them through our media channels. Such promising practices will contribute to "change the narrative" and might inspire other municipalities to launch similar projects.

4 "NOW MAYORS' NETWORK SOCIAL COHESION AWARD"

Act.Now wants to regularly recognize the efforts of municipalities to strengthen social cohesion in their communities in terms of projects and initiatives. An award will be presented to serve as a symbolic appreciation of a sustainable project/initiative addressing all members of society.

5 COOPERATION WITH OTHER CITIES' NETWORKS

In order to enhance our network and support capacity building as well as specific projects on social cohesion, Act.Now seeks to cooperate with other European and international cities' networks in case their programmes are related to the thematic frame of the NOW Mayors' Network.



Act.Now
Hohe Warte 28/3
1190 Vienna, Austria

T: +43 1 890 90 05
F: +43 1 890 90 05-5
office@act-n-o-w.com

www.now-conference.org
www.act-n-o-w.com

