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Intercultural Policies and Intergroup Relations. Case Study: Valencia, Spain

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Intercultural policies and intergroup relations

Case study: Valencia, Spain



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About CLIP

In 2006, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the city of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) established a 'European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants', henceforth known as CLIP.¹ The network comprises a steering committee, a group of expert European research centres and a number of European cities. In the following two years, the cities of Vienna and Amsterdam joined the CLIP Steering Committee. The network is also supported by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and has formed a partnership with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

Through the medium of separate city reports (case studies) and workshops, the network enables local authorities to learn from each other and to deliver a more effective integration policy. The unique character of the CLIP network is that it organises a shared learning process between the participating cities, between the cities and a group of expert European research centres, as well as between policymakers at local and European level.

The CLIP network currently brings together more than 30 large and medium-sized cities from all regions of Europe: Amsterdam (NL), Antwerp (BE), Arnsberg (DE), Athens (EL), Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Breda (NL), Budapest (HU), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Frankfurt (DE), Helsinki (FI), Istanbul (TR), İzmir (TR), Kirklees (UK), Liège (BE), Lisbon (PT), Luxembourg (LU), L'Hospitalet (ES), Malmö (SE), Mataró (ES), Newport (UK), Prague (CZ), Strasbourg (FR), Stuttgart (DE), Sundsvall (SE), Tallinn (EE), Terrassa (ES), Turin (IT), Turku (FI), Valencia (ES), Vienna (AT), Wolverhampton (UK), Wrocław (PL), Zagreb (HR), Zeytinburnu (TR) and Zürich (CH).

The cities in the network are supported in their shared learning by a group of expert European research centres in:

- Bamberg, Germany (European forum for migration studies, efms);
- Vienna (Institute for Urban and Regional Research, ISR);
- Amsterdam (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, IMES);
- Turin (International and European Forum on Migration Research, FIERI);
- Wrocław (Institute of International Studies);
- Swansea, Wales (Centre for Migration Policy Research, CMPR).

There are four research modules in total. The first module was on housing – segregation, access to, quality and affordability for migrants – which has been identified as a major issue impacting on migrants' integration into their host society. The second module examined equality and diversity policies in relation to employment within city administrations and in the provision of services. The focus of the third module is intercultural policies and intergroup relations. The final module (2009–2010) will look at ethnic entrepreneurship.

The case studies on intercultural policies were carried out in 2009.

¹ See also <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm>.

Acknowledgements

Researchers from FIERI in Turin are responsible for this report on Valencia. Considerable effort has been taken to find all necessary data on Valencia for this study, and invaluable help was provided by the contact person from the Municipality of Valencia, Pere Climent Bolinches of the Immigration Support Centre (*Centro de Apoyo a la Inmigración, CAI*). Many officials and other parties who are involved in integration policy, statistics and immigrant support have been interviewed, as the list at the end of the report indicates. They have provided reports, statistics and comments on the concept version of this study.

In addition, representatives of the Islamic Cultural Centre, the Islamic Community, the Islamic Council of Valencia, the Catholic charity Caritas, the Urban Mission of the Evangelical Church and the Orthodox Church have all been willing to provide information. Finally, researchers from the University of Valencia (*Universitat de València*) have supplied data and useful comments. The author is grateful to all those who have cooperated in giving information and in particular to Pere Climent for coordinating the field visit and answering all requests for data and documents.

The authors are fully responsible for the content of this report, the copyright of which remains with Eurofound.

Introduction

This module of the CLIP project focuses on intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Its purpose is to provide an overview of both the policies carried out by the Municipality of Valencia on this matter and the standpoints of the various relevant actors in the city – immigrants and religious minorities in the first place, but also autochthonous or indigenous non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic experts and journalists.

A questionnaire was developed, composed of three parts: a) local intercultural policies in general; b) local policies towards Muslim communities; and c) intergroup relations and radicalisation. This questionnaire was sent to the contact person in Valencia. After receiving the completed questionnaire, a city visit was arranged with the contact person. Interviews took place with officials of the administration, representatives of immigrant and religious associations, representatives of autochthonous NGOs and the main local newspapers, as well as two researchers from the University of Valencia. The full list of persons interviewed is provided at the end of the report.

The case of Valencia can be considered as an interesting example of interculturality at local level. The municipality, in the North–South Plan 2009–2013 (*Plan Norte-Sur 2009–2013*) – its main document on immigrant policy – emphasises the need to foster immigrant associations' participation in all of the existing consultative and participative institutions already operating at municipal and district level. This has resulted in the inclusion of immigrant associations in the so-called solidarity platforms (*Mesas de la Solidaridad*), which have been established in the districts in order to implement the municipal social policy. This is not just symbolic participation; through these platforms, immigrant associations have been able to obtain funds in order to implement their projects. However, at least as far as Muslim organisations are concerned, different situations emerge: participation and cooperation with neighbourhood associations appear to be well established in some areas of the city, but in other contexts they seem to encounter more difficulties.

The civil society is another important actor in Valencia, not just in providing assistance and help to newly arrived immigrants, but also in designing more elaborate integration measures. Interreligious dialogue is a case in point: no official policy of the municipality exists on this issue, yet Catholic organisations have mobilised to provide platforms of dialogue that now represent reference points for the local administration.

This report will outline the situation regarding intercultural and interreligious dialogue in Valencia and the main actors working on these issues. The following section gives background information on immigrant policy and church–state relations in Spain.² The report then focuses on the city context and provides data on the composition of the immigrant population as well of the Muslim minority. Particular attention will be devoted to immigrant organisations. The case study will then describe local intercultural policies, considering both official initiatives on the part of the local administration and mobilisation on the part of civil society organisations. The next chapter is devoted to intercultural policies towards Muslim groups. Before some concluding remarks, the report examines the city approach to issues of radicalisation within both the majority and minority population.

² The author wishes to thank Anja Van Heelsum from IMES who has written the section on the history of migration and the characteristics of immigrants in Spain in the framework of other case studies for Spanish cities. The author has added a specific part on the policies of the Autonomous Community of Valencia – that is, regional-level policy.

Brief history of migration to Spain

Spain is situated at the crossroads of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, Europe and Africa. Between 700 and 1200, the south of Spain was part of several Muslim empires and considerable movement took place towards Morocco in the south and Italy in the east. In 1236, the Christian reconquest (*reconquista*) progressed to the last Islamic stronghold, Granada, and a period started in which the empire became a successful seafaring and colonising nation. The Spanish empire was one of the largest in world history and included areas in Africa, Asia, Oceania, as well as a large part of the current United States (US) and of South America and the Caribbean. More specifically, it included the following areas:

- Equatorial Guinea, Spanish Morocco and Spanish Sahara in Africa;
- the Philippines in Asia;
- Guam, Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands and Palau in Oceania;
- Mexico and a large part of the current US in North America;
- Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Panama in Central America;
- Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela in South America;
- Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Tobago and Trinidad in the Caribbean.

Moreover, the Canary Islands, as well as Ceuta, Melilla and the other places of sovereignty (*plazas de soberanía*) on the north African coast have remained part of Spain.

Except in the US, Spanish is still the national language in many of these territories and some movement of people occurs, for instance from Spain to Central and South America and back. In short, Spain's history is characterised by a strong international orientation.

In the first 80 years of the 20th century, economic development in Spain was not strong. Emigration was more common than immigration. Between 1850 and 1950, 3.5 million Spanish people left for the Americas (Ortega Pérez, 2003). From 1950 onwards, Spain's workforce moved to the richer industrial areas in northern Europe. During the 36-year dictatorship of General Franco, Spain became internationally isolated. Only some former emigrants to, and political refugees from, South America immigrated to Spain.

After General Franco's death in 1975, Spain made the transition to a democratic state and the economic situation quickly improved, with King Juan Carlos as head of state. The Constitution of 1978 expresses respect for linguistic and cultural diversity within a united Spain, contrasting with the suppression during General Franco's rule.

Currently, the country is divided into 17 autonomous regions with their own elected authorities. The level of autonomy of each region differs. The northern regions of Catalonia, the Basque Region and Galicia each have a special status, with their own language and other rights. Catalonia has received extra powers in taxation and judicial matters since the referendum of 2006 when a Catalan Constitution was approved. However, one of Spain's most serious domestic issues is a residue of the dictatorship era and relates to the autonomous regions: the problem with the armed nationalist and separatist organisation Basque Homeland and Freedom (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*, ETA) and the tension in the northern Basque Region.

Emigration of guest workers to the north came to a halt because of the worldwide economic crisis of 1973. Since 1975, some 650,000 Spanish people have returned to the country, while about two million Spanish persons improved their position and continued to live abroad (Borkert et al, 2007). On the other hand, a considerable number of retired people from the European Union moved to the Spanish coast.

Economic growth increased further when Spain became a member of the EU in 1986. The Spanish economy boomed from 1986 to 1990, averaging 5% annual growth. After a Europe-wide recession in the early 1990s, the Spanish economy resumed moderate growth in 1994. Immigration accelerated quickly after this, and Spain changed from being an emigration country to an immigration country.

Between 2000 and 2004, the number of migrants to Spain tripled, amounting to 7% of the population, or 3,050,847 persons. In 2004, Spain received the largest number of immigrants in the EU. However, the economic crisis that began in 2008 has hit Spain hard, because its economy was largely dependent on the construction sector. Immigration has recently declined, although the latest statistical data were not yet available at the time of the research. Table 1 outlines the Spanish population profile, including the biggest immigrant groups, at the start of 2008.

Table 1: *Spanish nationals and largest immigrant groups in Spain, by nationality and country of birth, 1 January 2008*

	Number	%	Born in Spain	Born abroad	% 2nd generation
Total population of Spain	46,257,822	100%	40,113,294	6,044,528	
Foreign nationals	5,268,762	11%	261,897	5,006,865	5%
Spanish nationals	40,889,060	89%	39,851,397	1,037,663	
EU Member States (in 2006)					
United Kingdom (UK)	352,957	1%	9,941	343,016	3%
Germany	181,174	0%	7,927	173,247	4%
Italy	157,789	0%	7,431	150,358	5%
Rest of Europe					
Romania	731,806	2%	2,889	702,916	4%
Bulgaria	153,974	0%	4,969	149,004	3%
Ukraine	79,096	0%	3,062	76,034	4%
Poland	78,560	0%	4,419	74,141	6%
Non-western countries					
Morocco	652,695	1%	77,453	575,242	12%
Ecuador	427,718	1%	1,353	414,188	3%
Colombia	284,581	1%	5,517	279,064	2%
Bolivia	242,496	1%	6,989	235,507	3%
Argentina	147,382	0%	2,477	144,905	2%
China	125,914	0%	1,393	111,984	11%
Peru	121,932	0%	2,228	119,704	2%
Total South Americans	1,784,890	4%	30,734	1,624,126	2%

Source: *Website of National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE), 2008*

Religious profile

Spain itself is predominantly Catholic. Immigrants from Central and South America are generally Christians, although not all are Catholic. No data are available on religious denomination, so this study can only make estimates of the number of non-Christians. It will focus on the number of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists since these appear to be the major categories. To estimate the approximate number of Muslims, the study took an overview of immigrant groups from the National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, INE) and selected the countries with a large or majority Muslim population with substantial immigration to Spain. These countries are: Morocco, Mauretania, Algeria, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Mali, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Bosnia. This ensured that the largest Muslim populations were included. The analysis assumes that the overrepresentation due to the minority of non-Muslims in these countries and the underrepresentation due to the smaller populations from other countries missing from this list will counterbalance each other.³ The study thus reached an estimated number of 832,976 Muslims in Spain, as at 31 December 2007. The four largest groups came from Morocco (648,741), Algeria (45,845), Pakistan (36,388) and Senegal (33,227).

National policy context

Immigration policies

Spain did not have an immigration policy until the 1980s. When it joined the EU, the country was under pressure to restrict the entry of non-EU citizens. The immigration policy of 1985, regulated by the Law on Foreigners (*Ley de Extranjería*) considered most immigration as a temporary occurrence and immigrants were conceptualised as workers who required regulation by the then Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales*) (Ortega Pérez, 2003). After the NGO Amnesty International criticised the severity of the foreigners law in 1989, a first attempt was made in 1990 to draft an integration law (Borkert et al, 2007). This led to the establishment of the General Directorate for Migration (*Dirección General de Migraciones*).

Initiated by liberal politicians, a large regularisation of illegal immigrants took place in 1991. However, this ultimately had little impact since, three years later, 50% of the immigrants who had legalised their status with a one-year work permit had returned to an irregular status. To compensate for ineffective and restrictive admission policies, regularisation programmes have taken place in 1994 (on grounds of family reunification), 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2005.

The municipalities have their own register of citizens, the *Padrón*,⁴ which includes irregular workers. If a worker obtains a one-year employment contract, they can ask the municipality for a work and residence permit and regularise their situation; however, the regularisation office is slow to process applications. Recently, the system has tended to legalise people gradually throughout the whole year, avoiding the large-scale regularisations that the EU criticised.

In addition to Spain's work permit system, the country has experimented with a labour quota system to respond to long-term and short-term shortages in the labour market. While it was intended to regulate the immigration flow, many illegal immigrants considered the system as a way of gaining legal status and most applications came from undocumented immigrants already in Spain. The system was reformed in 2002 so that applications can only come from abroad, based on bilateral agreements with Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Morocco, Nigeria, Poland and Romania.

A unique law in Europe was passed in 2008, which makes it possible for Moroccan immigrants who have lived and worked legally in Spain for two or more years to return to Morocco and receive their welfare benefits in their home country.

³ For example, in Senegal, 5.7% of the population is Christian; in Iran, 1% is Christian and 1% is Bahá'í.

⁴ For more information on the *Padrón*, see Gsir, 2008, p. 8.

Integration policies

Besides measures to control immigration, programmes for immigrants' social integration were undertaken at this time. In 1994, the government presented an Interministerial Plan for the integration of immigrants, with the intention of granting immigrants the same civil and social rights and responsibilities as Spanish citizens. The concept of integration was in this manner directly linked with citizenship and the philosophy was based on the principle of equal rights and freedoms for every person. In line with the institutional rights of its autonomous regions, Spain tends to promote and recognise the cultural autonomy of migrants (Borkert et al, 2007, p. 29). The policy was not directed at specific groups, but at granting equal rights – for instance, for immigrant children at schools.

In 1998, the Law on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their integration was passed, which focused clearly on integration and the political and social rights of non-EU foreigners. It came into force in January 2000.

When the People's Party (*Partido Popular*) came to power in 1996, this centre-right government, led by José María Aznar, was interested in economic liberalisation and privatisation. A new agency was established – the Government Delegation for Foreigners and Immigrants (*Delegación del Gobierno para la Extranjería y la Inmigración*) – within the Ministry of Interior Affairs (*Ministerio del Interior*). This meant a shift of power away from the then Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which had predominated during the socialist times. In 2000, the so-called 'Greco Plan' was presented, which emphasised migrant adaptation. According to Ortega Pérez (2003), the Greco Plan addresses four key areas:

- global, coordinated design of immigration as a desirable feature in Spain, as a member of the EU;
- integration of foreign residents and their families as active contributors to the growth of Spain;
- admission regulation to ensure peaceful coexistence with Spanish society;
- management of a shelter scheme for refugees and displaced persons.

In the Greco Plan, the autonomous communities play an important role in implementing immigrant integration.

The current left-wing government, comprising the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) and led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, came to power in 2004 and was re-elected in 2008. It tends to focus more on improving the social provisions and work situation for immigrants. In 2006, an agreement was signed in which all the political forces of the Spanish state agreed on how to develop integration policies; it is known as the Civic Responsibility Pact. On 19 February 2007, the First Strategic Plan on immigration and citizenship proposed €2 billion for integration measures over a three-year period.

At regional level, first interventions of the Autonomous Community of Valencia on immigrant integration were essentially concerned with access to healthcare, which is one of the main responsibilities of the autonomous communities in Spain. In 2002, the Autonomous Community Council established the Interdepartmental Commission on Immigration by Decree No. 33/2002 and the Valencian Forum for Immigration (*Foro Valenciano de la Inmigración*) by Decree No. 34/2002. Following these decisions, the autonomous government of the region has developed two immigration plans, the first one for the period 2004–2007 and the second for 2008–2010 (*Plan Valenciano de la Inmigración 2004–2007 and 2008–2010*). The participation of immigrant associations is a top priority in both plans, and the strategic role of the forum is emphasised. The forum is a platform for participation, through which immigrant associations have the opportunity to express and to channel their point of view. It also provides advice on immigrants' integration policies and initiatives to the Immigration and Citizenship Department (*Consellería de Inmigración y Ciudadanía*). Together with immigrant

associations, comprising 12 out of 21 participants, autochthonous NGOs working on immigrant integration are also represented, by nine organisations.⁵

According to interviews with academic experts and immigrant associations in Valencia,⁶ however, the Valencian Forum for Immigration does not seem to be very effective in channelling immigrants' requests and views. Firstly, immigrant associations in the forum have been appointed by the autonomous community, and they are not considered to be representative of the foreign population in the region. Secondly, the forum meetings are infrequent (usually twice a year), which is regarded as an indicator of its limited influence on policymaking processes.

As a reaction to the marginal role played by the forum, an Alternative Forum for the Protection and Rights of the Social Integration of Immigrants (*Foro Alternativo por la Defensa y los Derechos de la Integración Social de la Inmigración*) was established by a group of immigrant associations excluded from the official forum. It is an informal but highly contentious platform, composed of 30 immigrant associations, which aims to advocate for immigrants' rights and put pressure on the autonomous community and local administrations regarding immigrants' integration-related issues. As an alternative platform, constituted in order to criticise the People's Party government of the autonomous community and its Valencian Forum for Immigration, the Alternative Forum does not seek official recognition. On the contrary, it is concerned with keeping its independence and distance from the regional government and from the People's Party, which is also in power at city level. Because of this critical stance and closeness to left-wing social movements, the Alternative Forum is not regarded by either the regional or Valencian city authorities as a possible partner in policymaking.

In December 2008, the government of the Valencian Community (*Generalitat Valenciana*) approved a new law on immigrants' integration (*Integración de las Personas Inmigrantes en la Comunitat Valenciana*) – Law No. 15/2008. The main feature characterising this law is the introduction of the 'integration contract' (*compromiso de integración*), with an explicit reference to similar instruments adopted in the main central and northern European immigration countries.⁷ According to the law, immigrants' incorporation should be based on an agreement establishing the rights and duties of both parts. The integration contract is conceived as a voluntary programme rather than being compulsory. It is supposed to offer a basic knowledge of the values, democratic rules, political structure, cultures and official languages of the Valencian region. However, as emerged in the field visit interviews, the new law does not specify how the integration contract will be actually implemented. In general, the involvement of local NGOs, the Valencian Forum for Integration and local intercultural spaces is envisaged. This might lead to the conclusion that civil society organisations will somehow be involved in the integration programmes, but there is still uncertainty regarding the manner of their involvement.

Policies on division between church and state

The separation of church and state is a highly politicised issue in Spain. Attempts by liberal groups to abolish strong interrelations between church and state meet with strong resistance from conservative parties. Article 16 of the Spanish Constitution concerns the freedom of ideology and religion (*Libertad ideológica y religiosa*). This is relevant for the division between church and state. In Article 16.2, the Constitution states that 'no one should be obliged to be afraid because of reasons of ideology, religion or belief', while Article 16.3 notes that 'the state is not tied to any religion, but has since 1977 a special agreement with the Vatican, recognising that Spain's population is in majority Catholic'.

⁵ See http://www.cic.gva.es/index.php?Itemid=68&id=1131&option=com_content&task=view.

⁶ See the list of persons interviewed at the end of this report.

⁷ See the preamble of the law at http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/CCAA/va-I15-2008.html.

Historically, strong relations between the state and particularly the more conservative elements of the Catholic Church, such as Opus Dei and the Legion of Christ (*Legionarios de Cristo*), are associated with the era of General Franco. Prime Minister Zapatero intends to make the relations more neutral and open, removing some of the Church's influence, privileges and control, particularly its influence on the educational system. The prime minister has suggested reducing the symbolic presence of religion in general, for instance removing crosses in city halls and schools, or discontinuing the practice of swearing on the bible during the inauguration of ministers; ministers can choose to say 'I promise' instead of 'I swear'. However, this proposal has not been received enthusiastically by the conservative People's Party nor by the conference of bishops and cardinals (*Conferencia Episcopal*). While this conference is slowly losing the substantial power it once had, the Catholic Church in Spain still owns television and radio stations and newspapers and can therefore continue to influence people.

The Ministry of Justice (*Ministerio de Justicia*) keeps a database on religious associations. Such organisations need to register with the Ministry of Justice in Madrid to acquire an official and legal status, and be listed in the database of religious and ideological associations.⁸ Registration makes it possible for associations to respond to calls for proposals from the Ministry of Justice, and to obtain funding from the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence (*Fundación Pluralismo y Convivencia*) – a public foundation created by the Spanish government in October 2004 with the purpose of promoting social integration, training and cultural programmes for the minority religions that have an agreement with the state.⁹ This foundation concerns only social activities, and not religious ones.

Regarding the organisation of Islam in Spain, two national federations of Muslims exist: the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (*Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España*, UCIDE), which is fully Islamic; and the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (*Federación Española de las Entidades Religiosas Islámicas*, FEERI), which represents Christians converted to Islam. These two organisations come together in the Islamic Commission of Spain (*Comisión Islámica de España*, CIE). The commission is the legitimate representative group that gives voice to Muslims, and that communicates on legislative initiatives and with the Main Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. The establishment of CIE was encouraged by the then socialist government in 1992 in order to make a cooperation agreement between the state and Islam's official representatives (Mantecon, 2004, p. 215). According to the Framework Law on Freedom of Religion of 1980, cooperation agreements can be considered special laws regulating relations between the state and officially recognised religions.¹⁰ The agreement with CIE deals with:

*'the status of Islamic Religious Leaders and Imams, determining the specific rights deriving from the practice of their religious office, their personal status in areas of such importance as social security and ways of complying with their military duties, legal protection for their mosques, civil validity of marriage ceremonies held pursuant to Muslim rites, religious services in public centres or establishments, Muslim religious education in schools, the tax benefits applicable to certain property pertaining to the Federations that constitute the Islamic Commission of Spain, commemoration of Muslim religious holidays and, finally, cooperation between the state and said Commission for the conservation and furthering of Islamic historic and artistic heritage.'*¹¹

⁸ The database is available at <http://dgraj.mju.es/entidadesreligiosas>.

⁹ See http://www.pluralismoyconvivencia.es/quienes_somos.

¹⁰ The Spanish government has concluded agreements with the Catholic Church (as early as 1978), and with Protestants, Jews and Muslims (all in 1992).

¹¹ See material taken from the official translation provided by Spain's Ministry of Justice regarding Law 26 of 10 November 1992, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/spain/>.

On the basis of the 1992 agreement, CIE and its communities are entitled to the tax benefits and exemptions allowed for non-profit companies and private charities; however, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, they do not enjoy any special budget and tax allocation.

According to Mantecon (2004, p. 216), the cooperation agreement is not applied and complied with in many respects because of disputes between the two organisations that form CIE – that is, UCIDE and FEERI – which undermine CIE’s capacity to work efficiently in the implementation of the law. Nevertheless, CIE accuses the government of a lack of political will. A clear example concerns marriage: Article 7 of the agreement recognises the civil effects of marriages celebrated in accordance with the religious form established by Islamic law, but registration is not automatic and may take considerable time. A certificate must be requested from the Register of Births, Marriages and Deaths, which checks the capacity of the spouses in accordance with the Civil Code – to avoid polygamy, for instance.

Another interesting issue is that of Islamic religious education (Mantecon, 2004, p. 227). Article 10 of the cooperation agreement states that:

‘Muslim pupils, their parents and the head teachers of school establishments so requesting are guaranteed the right of the former to receive Islamic religious education in public educational establishments and private establishments under contract provided that, in the latter case, the exercise of this right does not conflict with the character of the centre.’

However, courses may not interfere with normal school activities, and the agreement gives no specification about the legal status of the teachers. In March 1996, another agreement was ratified by CIE representatives and the justice and education ministers concerning the appointment and remuneration of Islamic religious education teachers. Nevertheless, lack of agreement between the two federations within CIE has prevented the application of the specific terms of this second agreement (Mantecon, 2004, p. 228).

Profile of Valencia

Brief description of the city

The city of Valencia¹² has a total population of 810,064 inhabitants and is the centre of an extensive metropolitan area that comprises a million and a half residents. This total represents 16% of the population of the Valencian region and makes Valencia, in terms of population, the third largest city in Spain after Madrid and Barcelona. It is also the third largest city in terms of registered immigrants. Foreign nationals – just as Spaniards – have to register in the municipal census (*Padrón*). The city population increased throughout the 20th century and was stable during the 1990s. At the beginning of the 21st century, a strong migratory inflow and rising birth rates have led to a dynamic increase in the population. The population of the city is relatively young: 19% are aged from 15 to 29 years and 33% are aged from 30 to 49 years.

From an economic point of view, Valencia has a highly developed services sector, including final demand activities, wholesale and retail, specialised services for businesses and professional activities. Almost 73% of the economically active population is employed in this sector. Nevertheless, the industry sector is still important, with 11% of the population working in industries such as paper products, graphic arts, wood products and furniture manufacturing, metal products, and footwear and clothing. About 8% of the population works in the construction sector. The agricultural sector (1.2%) is relatively minor and it concerns mostly horticultural cultivation. Unemployment is lower than the Spanish average.

The dynamism of the city as an economic and tourist centre, and as a place of reference for a multiplicity of economic activities, is emphasised by the strength of institutions such as the Valencia Trade Fair, the Autonomous Port, the Stock Exchange, the Palace of Congress and four universities. Valencia's port is the largest in Spain, handling 20% of the country's exports. Valencia also has a number of important cultural institutions that are becoming increasingly relevant in the development of the city: the Valencia Institute of Modern Art (*Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno*, IVAM), the Palace of Music and the City of Arts and Science contribute an undeniable added value to the city and to its metropolitan surroundings as a centre of culture and leisure.

City's migrant population

In January 2008, among a population of 810,064 persons, foreigners living in Valencia and registered at the municipality numbered 116,453 people, or 14.4% of the total resident population (Valencia Administration (*Ajuntament de València*), 2008a, p. 7). In 1991, foreign immigrants represented just 0.7% of the Valencia population; 10 years later, in 2001, this proportion was 3%. A more notable increase was registered in 2004, when the foreign population reached 9.1%, tripling in just three years.

Table 2 shows the 10 main national groups of immigrants living in the city in 2008 and gives an idea of their evolution in numerical terms over the last three years. The newest EU Member States – Romania and Bulgaria – reveal the most notable increases in 2008. The Latin American nationalities show a more regular trend, with the exception of Bolivia. Morocco and Nigeria also register increases in the number of immigrants living in Valencia, as does China – in contrast to Pakistan which seems to have decreased in this regard.

¹² For sociodemographic and economic information on the city, see Valencia Administration, 2008b (data refer to 1 January 2008).

Table 2: Largest immigrant groups, 2006–2008, by country

	2006	2007	2008	% variation 2007/2008
Ecuador	18,540	16,315	16,214	-0.6
Bolivia	8,197	12,818	15,849	23.6
Colombia	10,336	9,590	10,218	6.5
Romania	6,027	6,582	9,708	47.5
Argentina	4,547	3,840	4,001	4.2
China	3,717	3,464	3,805	9.8
Bulgaria	2,938	2,752	3,439	25.0
Pakistan	4,009	3,722	3,396	-8.8
Morocco	3,326	2,984	3,172	6.3
Nigeria	2,648	2,609	2,884	10.5
Total	99,820	102,166	116,453	14.0

Note: The table only considers countries characterised by high migration pressure and does not take into account people originating from developed EU and non-EU countries. Among the former, Italy is the only case that would range among the top 10 countries, with 5,312 residents in 2008. According to CAI officials, a non-negligible number of Argentinians in Valencia may have Italian passports. However, no data are available to confirm this hypothesis.

Source: *Valencia Administration, 2008a*

From a gender perspective, the overall ratio of the foreign population living in Valencia is moderately unbalanced in favour of men: 53.5% of foreigners are men while 46.5% are women. Eastern European and Latin American nationalities are relatively balanced in gender terms, but men strongly prevail among Africans, in particular among those from: Mali (97.8%), Senegal (93.4%), Ghana (89.1%), Algeria (76.4%), Cameroon (70.4%), Nigeria (65.7%), Guinea (65.4%) and Morocco (63.1%). The same situation can be found among both recently arrived Asian nationalities such as those from Pakistan (93%) and India (86.4%), and more established ones such as Syrians (63.8%). The gender ratio is reversed for immigrants from the Philippines, among whom women prevail (68.7%); this is also the case for Honduras (70.1%), Paraguay (62.5%), Equatorial Guinea (63.5%) and Hungary (59.3%). In general, immigrants – both men and women – are concentrated in the central age groups, between 20 and 44 years: 66.9% of the total foreign population living in the city in 2008 shared this age profile.

According to a study carried out in 2006 on immigrants' main sectors of employment (Antuñano and Soler, 2007), a clear prevalence in the services sector can be noted. Some 69.51% of the total employed immigrant population in the city works in services, followed by the construction sector (22.87%), fishing and agriculture (5.16%) and industry (2.4%). Compared with the rest of the Valencian region, in the city, employment in the services sector prevails, especially in commercial activities (Antuñano and Soler, 2007, p. 159).

In 2008, foreign immigrants represented 14.4% of the city's resident population (Valencia Administration, 2008a, p. 37), although some districts show an incidence above 20%: this is the case for El Calvari (23.3%), La Roqueta (20.9%), Tres Forques (20.8%), La Font Santa (21.3%), Natzaret (21.5%), L'Amistad (21.5%), Orriols (29.6%) and Ciutat Fallera (21.5%).

In principle, the municipality considers every legal organisation that has the capacity to gather the immigrant population as being relevant in fostering intergroup relations and immigrants' integration in the city. In more practical terms, and with reference to the experience of the social workers and officials of CAI – who have specific competence in the matter – a particular relevance is assigned to sector-based or functional associations that gather people around specific demands

or goals regardless of their cultural background. However, CAI officials are also aware that different types of associations may be better suited to addressing the changing needs that individuals experience in the integration process.

In such a perspective, ethnic, national and religious associations – which are depicted as providing automatic solidarity – are viewed as being particularly relevant in the initial phases of the integration process, since these are more suited to cope with the material and psychological needs of people who have recently arrived and may perceive the new environment as hostile. However, as time passes and integration proceeds, CAI officials expect that ethnic and national associations will lose their centrality, and that functional associations, characterised by a more heterogeneous composition – including both immigrants of different origins and also autochthonous people – will prevail. These associations, which are considered to channel natural solidarity, gather people in cultural, social, leisure or neighbourhood networking terms, and can better satisfy the needs of individuals who are more integrated into the receiving society.

In summary, CAI regards both types of associations as being relevant in the context of city intercultural and intergroup relations, notwithstanding a preference for the second kind. Such a preference is based on the expectation that immigrants participating in the more heterogeneous associations can play a crucial bridging role between their groups and the receiving society. However, given the very recent start of migration flows towards the city, such organisations are still lacking in Valencia – the only case being that of a multiethnic women’s association, the Association of Immigrant Women (*Asociación de Mujeres Inmigrantes*). Likewise, these associations – which by definition have the ambition of gathering together different nationalities, such as immigrants from Latin America or eastern Europe for instance – actually have a far more restricted membership, corresponding usually with one specific nationality.

Regarding national or ethnic associations, according to the official list provided by CAI, 22 organisations exist, representing different nationalities from different areas of origin (Table 3).

Table 3: List of 22 national or ethnic associations in Valencia

Area of origin	Nationality	Associations
Africa	Algerian	<i>Casa Argelia</i>
	Moroccan	<i>Asociación de Inmigrantes Marroquíes (Al Amal), Asociación de Mujeres Saharauis en España</i>
	Senegalese	<i>Asociación de Inmigrantes Senegaleses</i> <i>Asociación de Integración de los Negros Africanos en Valencia (ASINAV)</i>
	Ghanaian	<i>Asociación de Lituanos en Valencia y Castellon</i>
Eastern Europe	Lithuanian	<i>Asociación de Lituanos en Valencia y Castellon</i>
	Ukrainian	<i>Asociación de Ucranianos (Ukraina)</i>
	Romanian	<i>Asociación Rumana de Valencia (AROVA), Asociación Valenciana Ayuda Países del Este (AVAPE)</i>
South America	Argentinian	<i>Asociación de Argentinos en Valencia</i>
	Cuban	<i>Asociación de Cubanos en Valencia (ACUE)</i>
	Peruvian	<i>ARI-Perú, Asociación de Peruanos</i>
	Bolivian	<i>Asociación de Bolivianos (ASBOLES)</i>
	Colombian	<i>Asociación de Colombianos en Valencia (ACOLVAL)</i>
	Chilean	<i>Casa de Chile en Valencia</i>
	Ecuadorian	<i>Asociación Valenciana de Ecuatorianos Progreso Iberoamericano (AVALE)</i> <i>Asociación de Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos y Latinoamericanos (RUMIÑAHUI)</i>
	Uruguayan	<i>Asociación de Uruguayos en la Comunidad Valenciana (ASURVAL), Casa Uruguay</i>
Venezuelan	<i>Asociación de Venezolanos en Valencia (VENENVAL)</i>	
Asia	Filipino	<i>Asociación 3K</i>

Source: CAI

However, according to CAI, many of these organisations seem to exist only on paper: most of them are extremely weak from a structural point of view, often reflecting an isolated leadership, without any real relation to the majority of the fellow nationals living in the city. Just seven of the groups organise regular activities, relying on extended membership and participation, and are thus regarded as being relevant by the municipal administration for their contribution to immigrants' integration and intergroup relations. These seven organisations are the:

- Association of Ecuadorian and Latin American Immigrants (*Asociación de Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos y Latinoamericanos*, RUMIÑAHUI);
- Association of Bolivians (*Asociación de Bolivianos*, ASBOLES);
- Association of Colombians in Valencia (*Asociación de Colombianos en Valencia*, ACOLVAL);
- Association of Romanians in Valencia (*Asociación Rumana de Valencia*, AROVA);
- Association of Moroccan Immigrants (*Asociación de Inmigrantes Marroquíes*, Al Amal);
- Association of Senegalese Immigrants (*Asociación de Inmigrantes Senegaleses*);
- Association of Ukrainians (*Asociación de Ucrainianos*, Ukraina).

In terms of religious associations, the Islamic Cultural Centre (*Centro Cultural Islámico*), the Islamic Council of Valencia (*Consejo Islámico de Valencia*) and the Orthodox Church of Valencia (*Iglesia Ortodoxa de Valencia*) are considered to be particularly relevant for the scope of their activities and their membership.

The North–South Plan 2009–2013 is the official document approved by the Municipal Council of Valencia (see next chapter) that sets the main goals of immigrant integration policy in the city.¹³ Two sections deal with immigrant associations: 'Intercultural activities' (*Área de Interculturalidad*) and 'Participation and associationism' (*Área de Participación y Asociacionismo*). These sections specify policy purposes in this respect, namely to:

- enhance the organisational and participative capacity of immigrant associations through their inclusion in all of the existing participative institutions;
- foster immigrants' integration in cultural, leisure and other kinds of functional associations present in the city – not just in immigrant associations or in those providing help to immigrants;
- promote and enhance membership in immigrant associations as a form of social participation;
- support the participation of immigrants, and especially women, in spaces that favour establishing relations with the autochthonous population, such as neighbourhood associations, parent school-based associations and trade unions;
- promote networking between the local administration and organisations of civil society in order to strengthen the civic participation of the immigrant population;
- encourage the involvement of the immigrant population in the management of municipal services through their participation in all existing participative bodies, such as commissions, councils and district consultative committees.

¹³ The North–South Plan is composed of three parts, focusing on immigration, international cooperation and development, and co-development.

As is clear, the municipality aims to promote an intercultural associative movement acting as a link between immigrants and the autochthonous population. In this sense, the administration regards as particularly relevant those immigrant associations that work on issues such as interculturality, anti-racism and interreligious dialogue.

Regarding the immigrants' welfare, immigrant communities are considered too weak and poorly structured to offer proper welfare services. From this point of view, autochthonous charity or voluntary organisations and NGOs such as Caritas, the Red Cross and Valencia Acoge (working for immigrant rights) appear to be more relevant. These organisations have been the first to mobilise in offering initial accommodation services to immigrants in a context of continuously changing and rapidly increasing migration inflows. As a consequence, they have consolidated experience in delivering assistance and welfare services to immigrants. At the moment, Caritas and the Red Cross have a contract with CAI for the delivery of social assistance services to immigrants.

City's Muslim population and its characteristics

According to the Andalusian Observatory (*Observatorio Andalusí*), an autonomous body of UCIDE, in 2006 some 113,595 Muslims were living in the Community of Valencia, amounting to 10.5% of the total 1,080,478 Muslims living in Spain that year (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007, p. 137).

At municipal level, however, no official data are available. The census in Valencia does not register information on the religious affiliation of the population. As a consequence, official data on the Muslim population in the city are not available. As outlined earlier, an indirect measure of the size of this group can be obtained by considering official data on ethnic and national groups that come from countries where Islam is the main religion. This is of course an unreliable measure, since it is based on the simplistic assumption that all of the people coming from a certain country are affiliated with Islam, which is not necessarily the case. Moreover, on the other hand, it does not take into account Muslims of Spanish origin and Spanish citizens converted to Islam, who – according to CAI – form non-negligible numbers in the city. In arriving at an approximate estimate, it is hoped that these two methodological limitations may largely balance each other out.

In terms of ethnic and national origin, the main groups that comprise the Muslim population in the city of Valencia are Moroccans, Algerians, Senegalese, Nigerians (although in this group a Protestant minority is also present), Malians, Georgians, Pakistanis and Syrians, to which a very small number of Palestinians and Serbians should be added.

On the basis of the municipality's official statistics (Valencia Administration, 2008a), in 2008 the presumably Muslim-affiliated population amounted to 14,254 people or 12.2% of the immigrant population registered at the Municipality of Valencia and 1.7% of the overall Valencian population. In terms of denominational structure, the Valencian Muslim community is predominantly Sunni and reflects the various Koran doctrinal traditions present in the Arab world and in Europe (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007, p. 138). Islamic brotherhoods such as Sufi and Murid are also present, although these are far less well organised than the rest of the Muslim community (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007, p. 137).

As regards the social and economic situation, the Muslim population appears to be highly differentiated. Three components can be singled out: Middle Eastern students, who arrived in Valencia in the 1970s; male Maghrebian workers of the 1990s, coming from the north African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania; and newly arrived groups, such as people from sub-Saharan Africa and Pakistan.

In relation to the first segment, this is composed essentially of Syrians, Palestinians and a few Egyptians who arrived in Spain and in the city of Valencia in the late 1970s as university students. Their level of education is thus particularly high

and they are often self-employed. Mixed marriages are common, and most of these immigrants have been living in the country for more than 30 years.

The second group is numerically more relevant and comprises male Maghrebian (especially Moroccan and Algerian) workers who arrived in the city during the second half of the 1990s. Family reunions have already taken place, and a growing trend towards stabilisation of the existing immigrant population is evident in the emergence of a second generation. The gender ratio, however, is still unbalanced, as women account for just 36.9% of the total Moroccan resident population, and for 23.6% of the Algerian group (Valencia Administration, 2008a, p. 16).

The third segment is the most recent and is less known by the municipality. Pakistanis, as well as Nigerians and other sub-Saharanans, have become a relevant group in the official statistics since 2005. As newly arrived groups, women still account for a very low proportion of these immigrants: 7% for Pakistanis, 6.6% for Senegalese and 2.2% for Malians – the only exception are the Nigerians, 34.3% of whom are women.

According to CAI officials, the four most important Muslim religious organisations in the city are the:

- Islamic Council of Valencia, whose headquarters is in the Great Mosque (*Gran Mezquita*) of Valencia, which was inaugurated in 1992 and is today the most attended Islamic worship centre in the city;
- Islamic Cultural Centre, founded as the cultural association of the Great Mosque, from which it departed in 2004 to settle in new and distinct premises;
- Islamic Community (*Comunidad Islámica*), established in 1966 by a small group of Middle Eastern university students and legally recognised since 1989;
- worship room in the district of Ruzafa (*Asociación Al-Fatah*).

Some of these organisations adhere to national and regional alliances and federations. More specifically, the Islamic Community is among the founders of UCIDE, one of the two national federations represented in CIE, while the Islamic Cultural Centre is affiliated to the Superior Islamic Council of the Valencian Region, a regional federation of 25 Muslim organisations. However, there are no city federations with which the city administration can communicate. Relations between associations are few and usually informal. A certain degree of rivalry also seems to be present, in particular between the Islamic Council of Valencia and the Islamic Cultural Centre, which in 2004 left the Great Mosque to establish its own independent headquarters.¹⁴

The four associations listed above are primarily worship centres that attract a Muslim population, which is highly dispersed in the city. At the same time, they provide basic social assistance for people in need – that is, material support such as food and first shelter, as well as psychological and moral support. In addition, they organise cultural and leisure activities such as Arabic courses for children and adults, summer camps for children and Spanish language courses.

¹⁴ According to CAI officials and other people interviewed, disputes started because of the expansion of Islamic Cultural Centre activities.

From the point of view of the municipal administration, and in particular of CAI, these associations play a crucial role in supporting the welfare of their communities, not only by providing social assistance services but also by taking part in projects and events at district level that allow for the building of positive relations with other neighbourhood associations. This is the case regarding the cultural week organised every year in the Orrriols district, in which the Islamic Cultural Centre participates by opening its mosque to the neighbourhood. In the Natzaret district, close cooperation exists between the Islamic Community and the neighbourhood associations: the latter ensure legal counselling services for immigrants by paying a lawyer who regularly meets people in the Islamic Community headquarters. An ‘open mosque’ programme is also carried out for the district’s schools, to offer students an opportunity to learn more about Muslim religious precepts and practices.

Local intercultural policies in general

Responsibility in the city and general approach to ethnic issues

As a complex organisation, the Municipality of Valencia is composed of different departments, roles and levels of decision making, which makes it complicated to identify a unique and consistent attitude towards immigrant associations. Nevertheless, according to CAI officials – who are in the frontline in immigrant integration policy – a favourable attitude prevails, as pointed out by a number of initiatives of the municipality.

Firstly, in 2003 the First Plan for the Integration of Immigrants¹⁵ (*Primero Plan Municipal para la Integración de la Inmigración*) was approved, on the basis of which CAI was constituted in 2004. This was a decision of the then Popular Party mayor, highlighting her special interest in immigrants' integration. Specific tasks were assigned to CAI in relation to immigrant associations, such as providing information on how to establish an association and to obtain legal recognition, facilitating access to various data and documents, and providing opportunities for participation in specific projects.

Secondly, in the North–South Plan 2009–2013, which as noted earlier is the municipality's main official document on immigrant integration policy, the section devoted to participation and associationism (*Participación y Asociacionismo*) envisages specific goals and means of fostering the participation of immigrants and their associations. The plan was prepared by a technical office (*Oficina Técnica del Plan*) and was discussed extensively with the social partners – that is, the trade unions and employer organisations – and various relevant local NGOs, although no special involvement of immigrant associations seems to have been pursued. Civil society organisations could propose amendments up until the end of August 2008, and some of these were taken into account in the final version of the plan that was approved by the municipal council (*Pleno Municipal*). The plan considers participation in associations as being crucial for immigrants' integration, since this is supposed to enhance immigrants' involvement and responsibility in managing municipal services. Greater involvement should be pursued through the incorporation of immigrant associations into all of the existing participatory institutions, such as commissions, local councils and district committees, and through networking (*trabajo en red*).

Thirdly, immigrant associations participate in the solidarity platforms established in the 11 city districts to monitor living conditions in the neighbourhoods and to promote social assistance projects. This represents an opportunity for immigrants to be involved in the implementation of local integration policy, as will be discussed below.

Lastly, the positive attitude of the local administration towards immigrant associations is also indicated by the participation of aldermen and CAI officials in the cultural activities, celebrations and other public events that immigrant associations organise.

Given the role played by CAI in supporting immigrant organisations, this is the municipal office actually in charge of dealing with immigrant associations. From an institutional point of view, the current Popular Party Mayor, Rita Barberá Nolla, has assigned authority over immigration issues – including relations with immigrant associations – to the Social Policy and Integration Alderman, Marta Torrado de Castro. Associations often report directly to Ms Torrado; however, depending on the particular demands, they may also report to other aldermen responsible for more specific issues, such as education.

¹⁵ According to Enrique Mota of the University of Valencia, this was the first programme on immigration launched by any municipality in Spain (field visit interview).

According to Ms Torrado, relations with immigrant associations in the city are positive and fruitful, as indicated by their participation in various municipal initiatives, such as ‘Pass the Ball’ (*Pasa la Bola*). This is a programme of cultural and leisure activities that started in May 2009 and was scheduled to take place in the 11 city districts up until the end of November 2009. The project is a clear example of the intercultural integration strategy pursued by the local government: the organising committee is composed of four associations, two of which are immigrant associations. Moreover, immigrant associations participate in the neighbourhood platforms tasked with defining the activities to be carried out in each district. According to Ms Torrado, their participation is crucial, since immigrant associations represent a new group that enriches the local community and offers an opportunity for mutual learning and appreciation.¹⁶

The social policy alderman actively takes part in immigrant association initiatives, such as celebrations or other events. In case Ms Torrado cannot be present in person, CAI officials representing the local government guarantee their participation.

The municipal council, composed of 32 counsellors, is the collegial body where strategic policies are debated and adopted. In November 2008, the council¹⁷ approved the North–South Plan 2009–2013 by a majority vote, with the abstention of the 12 PSOE representatives. Currently, no representatives from local ethnic communities are in the municipal council. Since migration inflows are very recent in Valencia, immigrants do not have the formal prerequisite to be elected to the municipal council – that is, they are not yet Spanish citizens.

Issues, demands and interests of immigrants

According to CAI officials, the major issues in relation to immigrant groups are: sociocultural issues, such as festivals, art, film, theatre, literature and minority language; social needs, such as housing, employment and health; development aid; education, including host-country language learning; and sports.

Regarding sociocultural issues, these are linked mainly to community celebrations and other cultural initiatives of immigrant associations. In this respect, the main demands of the ethnic and religious organisations in the city concern the availability of space for their activities, that is, spaces for the celebration of national festivities and public premises for the associations’ regular activities. CAI cooperates by identifying possible premises or outdoor public spaces, as in the case for instance of the Colombian association that celebrates its national day every July in the city’s main park. On the other hand, the request for regular premises cannot be satisfied, since the use of municipal real estate is not the responsibility of CAI. According to CAI officials, providing a public premises to a private association is rare and just a few Spanish NGOs enjoy such a privilege, the only exception being the provision of a piece of land to the Islamic community where the Great Mosque was built in 1990.

In general, cultural demands are addressed in the cultural mediation area of CAI, which currently aims to promote projects for the diffusion of cultural diversity and to give support to cultural initiatives organised by immigrant associations.

Religious groups have also from time to time requested appropriate premises for the practice of their worship. These demands cannot be dealt with by CAI, which nevertheless confirmed in the field visit interview the scarcity of public premises available and the impossibility of obtaining such premises on a regular basis.

¹⁶ Based on interview with Ms Torrado carried out during the field visit.

¹⁷ The current municipal council was elected in 2007. The Popular Party received an absolute majority of councillors (20). The only opposition group is represented by the PSOE (12 councillors).

Social demands and issues arise in relation to the needs encountered, especially by newly arrived immigrants and those who live in precarious conditions. Employment is a major issue, particularly in the context of the current economic crisis. According to NGO staff interviewed during the field visit, the number of poor immigrant families asking for basic help such as food or second-hand clothing is increasing. Housing is another issue, because of the high rents and the discrimination faced by some groups such as Moroccans and black Africans in general.

Socioeconomic demands are usually treated by the administration according to the principle of ‘normalisation’. No specific social services are offered only to immigrants; however, they are supposed to receive first support and attention from general social centres (*centros de servicios sociales*) operating at neighbourhood level.¹⁸ An exception to this rule is the First Accommodation Service offered by CAI, which deals with the most vulnerable immigrant groups in the city, such as people who have just arrived and non-resident immigrants with no means of subsistence. The service aims to prevent social exclusion by providing basic assistance such as night shelter and food.

Education is another important issue since knowledge of the Spanish language is crucial for integration into the labour market and the receiving society in general. At the same time, immigrant children’s education is another sensitive point, especially in terms of the language and culture of origin. However, education is not the responsibility of the municipalities in Spain but of the autonomous communities, although municipalities may undertake initiatives to meet specific demands. The Municipality of Valencia guarantees to the district schools a number of activities aiming to support intercultural curricula and learning (see the project *Carpeta Educativa* outlined below). Moreover, various charity or voluntary organisations offer language courses for children both in Spanish and Valencian, which are the two official languages of the region; the municipality finances some of these courses.

Healthcare issues are also particularly relevant, particularly for foreign women. Again, this is not a municipal responsibility but a regional one. Nevertheless, CAI is involved in a regional project on the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and on the transmission of sexual diseases among Latin American young people.

Regarding the use of sports facilities, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia recently put forward a request concerning the reservation of a special timetable for Muslim women in the public swimming pool. The Sports Department has not agreed to this demand since restrictions on access to public utilities on the basis of a particular group’s needs cannot be allowed.¹⁹ In general, immigrant associations may have access to public sports premises not only for sports needs but also for recreational activities. For this reason, throughout 2009, CAI intended to promote socio-educative projects that use sports as an integration strategy (see for instance the ‘Pass the Ball’ project mentioned above).

Finally, development and co-development are central issues in the North–South Plan 2009–2013, which envisages municipal support for programmes of sustainable development in the main areas of origin of the immigrant population resident in Valencia.

¹⁸ See the North–South Plan 2009–2013 of the Social Welfare and Integration Council (*Concejalía de Bienestar Social e Integración*), p. 17.

¹⁹ According to CAI officials, this would also be economically unfeasible, since the costs of such a special dedicated time would be too high.

Forms of relations and dialogue

At the moment, there are no regular contacts between the municipality and ethnic or religious associations. Usually, contacts occur following specific requests on the part of the associations, such as those mentioned above – for example, public spaces for the celebration of a festival. Nonetheless, the North–South Plan 2009–2013 proposes the establishment of more regular contacts with ethnic and religious organisations, and to this end it envisages a number of measures to:

- foster the co-responsibility of the immigrant population in the running of municipal services through its incorporation into all existing participatory institutions, such as commissions, councils and district boards;
- support activities and projects based on networking between a greater number of organisations, on the basis of their real strength and/or numerical relevance;
- establish a Commission on Immigration within the Municipal Council for Social Action;
- encourage the participation of immigrant associations in the solidarity platforms (see above) as well as in the future City Social Council (*Consejo Social de la Ciudad*).

Currently, most of these measures have yet to be implemented. Such is the case of the City Social Council, an institution intended to foster citizens' participation in local government; this body was introduced by a national law approved in December 2003²⁰ but the city of Valencia has not yet formed such a council. Likewise, the Commission on Immigration, formally introduced by the North–South Plan, is still to be constituted.

Regarding participation at neighbourhood level, this seems to vary significantly according to the relevance of the immigrant presence in the different city districts. However, some immigrant associations have benefited from projects promoted by neighbourhood solidarity platforms. This is the case regarding the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia, which actively takes part in the solidarity platform established by neighbourhood associations in the Orriols district.

In other words, the municipality – and CAI in particular – has not institutionalised formal contacts with ethnic and religious organisations, but these groups are encouraged to take part in the channels of participative democracy already existing in the city. The Commission on Immigration would represent the first attempt at an institutionalised, formal contact with immigrant associations. This would be a specific commission representing a special social category, adding to other commissions already existing within the Municipal Council for Social Action, which represent groups such as retired people or disabled persons. Nevertheless, according to the Director of the Technical Office, Pere Climent Bolinches, Ms Torrado does not seem to favour the proliferation of such special commissions. Participation of immigrant associations in existing participative institutions is regarded as being crucial to integration. As a consequence, the Commission on Immigration does not appear to be a priority for the municipality.

In terms of religious issues, the only initiative of the municipality to undertake regular contact with religious groups in the city has been carried out in the context of the Strategy and Development Centre of Valencia (*Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo de Valencia*, CeyD). The municipality established this mixed public–private agency in 2004, together with

²⁰ According to the 2003 law, the City Social Councils will comprise representatives of the most relevant economic, social, professional and neighbourhood organisations. The main function of this body is to produce studies, information and proposals on issues of local development, strategic planning and urban projects.

local actors²¹ interested in taking part in designing the city's future strategies for economic and social development; it is chaired by the municipality. In 2006, CeyD established a strategic group (*grupo de anticipación*) called the Polyedric City (*Ciudad Poliédrica*), chaired by the then alderman on human progress and composed of the representatives of the main religious groups present in Valencia, the two universities, the Education Council and other public agencies. The main objective was to act as a permanent platform for the identification and strengthening of the city's common cultural values, and for the prevention of urban conflicts by tackling their social and economic causes and preventing ethnic or religious opposition. However, according to the actors interviewed,²² the strategic group met just twice and did not coalesce as a regular municipal platform for religious dialogue. At the moment, it does not appear to be active.

Municipal grants to associations can be of two distinct types: a subvention (*subvención*) based on regular – usually annual – calls for projects, and a convention (*convenio*) directly agreed by the administration and the association for the delivery of specific services. The first type of funding is strictly linked to the implementation of projects selected on the basis of criteria specified in the call, whereas the second is conceived as a more general agreement between the parties for a two-year minimum duration, and with fewer requirements for the association.²³

Immigrant associations have access to both kinds of funding. For the subventions, the municipality runs annual calls for projects on specific social needs and on anti-poverty and social exclusion. Immigrant, religious and autochthonous ethnic (Romany) minority associations may be involved in the running of projects aiming to foster the integration of their communities, especially on issues such as access to employment, teaching of the language of origin to the second generation and renovation of the association's headquarters.

However, regarding convention contracts, at the moment only one immigrant association has such an agreement with the municipality – for running first-accommodation services such as night shelters. In general, such a permanent relation is more common with Spanish NGOs. In the area of social services for immigrants, as noted earlier, CAI has agreements with the Spanish Red Cross and Caritas.

The municipality does not have specific measures aiming to prevent social exclusion. The Social Services Programme for Social Inclusion 2006–2009 acknowledges the necessity of combating discrimination or exclusion against specific groups in the population, including immigrants. The Municipal Department of Human Resources carries out regular training programmes for municipal officials and for the local police with the twofold purpose of providing knowledge on immigration affairs and informing personnel about immigrants' social situation and living conditions.

²¹ More than 300 private and public entities are represented in the CeyD Council. The executive committee comprises 15 such entities, including the municipality, the Valencian Farmers' Association, the Metropolitan Agency for Hydraulic Services, the Province of Valencia (*Deputación de Valencia*), the Economic Department of the Autonomous Community, the University of Valencia and the Polytechnic University of Valencia, the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia, the Port Authority, the Employers' Confederation and the Valencia Fair Agency (<http://www.ceyd.org/>).

²² The representatives of Caritas, the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia and the Urban Mission of the Evangelical Churches all gave a positive assessment, but regretted the abandonment of such efforts on the part of the municipality.

²³ In administrative terms, associations that have a convention contract with the municipality are not obliged to justify each expense; however, they must do so in the case of the subvention.

As noted, the city's primary document on intercultural relations, defining its policy objectives and main measures, is the North–South Plan 2009–2013. In terms of its general framework, the plan is centred on the principle of enhancing coexistence with an intercultural perspective. This implies that municipal immigrant policy should aim to strengthen among autochthonous citizens favourable attitudes towards intercultural relations and living together in diverse social contexts. At the same time, it should promote the values of freedom, justice, equality and solidarity, which are considered crucial in order to legitimise immigrants' presence and participation in Valencian society. The general goal of such a policy is to achieve integration through fostering dialogue and relations between the receiving society and immigrant communities, as well as among these latter disparate groups.

More specific goals in the North–South Plan are as follows, namely to:

- reinforce the values of tolerance and respect for human rights in all municipal services;
- deal with conflict between the autochthonous and immigrant populations, in order to prevent degeneration and to take advantage of the positive potential of diversity;
- raise awareness among the Valencian population regarding immigration as a positive and enriching phenomenon;
- transmit the values of the receiving society to the immigrant population;
- encourage intercultural contacts in order to facilitate a mutual and bi-directional integration;
- foster the organisational and participative capacity of immigrant associations;
- favour immigrants' integration into cultural, leisure or other associations in the city, not just community associations or autochthonous organisations working on migration.

While the North–South Plan 2009–2013 establishes the general framework, more specific guidelines can be found in CAI's programme in the field of cultural mediation, known as the 'Valencia Cultural Mosaic' (*Valencia Mosaico de Culturas*). Three strategic areas of intervention are singled out: intercultural education, interculturality, and participation and associationism.

In the area of intercultural education, the municipality promotes projects aiming to develop support activities for the educational community to bring about multicultural cohabitation through the transmission of core common values. It also offers cooperation and support to organisations already carrying out activities in the city's schools, aiming to foster positive attitudes of respect for cultural differences and a rejection of discrimination. The municipality supports new activities for the youngest age groups on intercultural coexistence. In addition, it develops activities with other administrations, organisations and associations already working on these issues in the city, as well as cooperating with other departments of the municipality.

Regarding initiatives on interculturality, according to the Common Reporting Scheme, these are directed at:

'gradually incorporating the immigrant population into the different cultural contexts of the city. Municipal spaces must adapt to the new reality and encourage interculturality as a means of building positive attitudes towards diversity and as a resource for the strengthening of the cultural development and advancement of our city.'

In relation to the third area of intervention – participation and associationism – the Valencia Cultural Mosaic programme and CAI officials acknowledge the crucial role of associations as instruments of participation in the receiving society. Thus, it is considered essential to promote activities aiming to encourage the participation of different immigrant groups and to establish channels of funding in order to strengthen their structures.

Despite immigrants' recent history in the city, some events organised by immigrant groups typically receive support from the municipality in the sense that public spaces or premises are provided free of charge. This is the case of the Colombian national celebration, which takes place on 20 July each year, and of the Ecuadorian Summer Celebration on 15 July. Since the city of Valencia also traditionally celebrates its July Fair (*Feria de Julio*) around this time, the festivities merged last year in a unique city event. Other celebrations and events are also organised at district level, such as the Ukrainian Independence Day and the cultural week of the Islamic Cultural Centre in the Orriols district.

As noted above, associations are generally constituted on an ethnic or national basis. Even when they refer to broader groups in their denomination, such as African or Latin American groups, in practice they are the expression of one national group. The Alternative Forum for the Protection and Rights of the Social Integration of Immigrants mentioned earlier can be considered as the only interethnic organisation in Valencia, with which the municipality has informal relations. This forum generally invites CAI to its initiatives and issues information on its activities. However, this organisation is highly politicised and contentious, so relations cannot be of an official or regular kind. The municipality also has informal relations with the two platforms on interreligious dialogue established by the University of Valencia and by the Research Centre for the Social Integration and the Education of Immigrants (*Centro de Estudios para la Integración Social y Formación de Inmigrantes*, CeiMigra); these will be described below.

Good practices and challenges in intercultural dialogue

According to CAI officials, good practices aiming to support intercultural dialogue are based on the assumption that diversity is a resource of the city. This is especially the case for a number of projects in the field of education. The first initiative is '*Carpeta Educativa: Todos a Una por Diversidad*', which started in 2004 with the purpose of establishing regular intercultural spaces and practices in all of the city schools, not just those with a relevant presence of pupils with a foreign background. Immigrant associations and seven autochthonous NGOs have been involved in designing specific intercultural activities for teachers, children and parents' associations.

In particular, for teaching staff, a regular programme of seminars is offered on interculturality and conflict mediation, as well as on the prevention of racism and xenophobia. Moreover, an orientation service is also available on demand, providing to individual teachers or small groups advice and support on specific issues. Regarding students, specific programmes are differentiated according to their age and level of education, such as basic courses on interculturality for primary school pupils or more advanced seminars on racism, prejudice and xenophobia for children attending secondary school. Extra-curricular recreational activities such as theatre and video production are also offered. Support activities for parents' associations aim to raise awareness on immigration flows and intercultural relations, as well as to provide information and translation services for foreign parents in order to encourage their participation in school activities.

The main innovative point that CAI emphasises is networking and cooperation between different organisations with the intention of combining various and specific activities already carried out in some pilot schools into an integrated project offered to the whole city. This joint programme should answer the specific needs of the various actors involved in the educational process.

The second project is known as '*Diversinema: Cinema for intercultural coexistence*' (*Diversinema: Cine para la convivencia intercultural*), which was promoted in the context of the 2008 European Year for Intercultural Dialogue with the purpose of raising awareness among young people about interculturality through various audiovisual instruments. The initiative took place in the week between 17 and 21 November 2008, with the screening of two films, a music laboratory and two exhibitions, the first one on toys from around the world (*Juegos del mundo*) and the other one on drums (*El tambor nos une*). The latter exhibition gathered instruments from all over the world in order to show the universality and interculturality of drum music. Specific didactic materials were also produced to support discussion and work in the classroom. Organised and wholly funded by the Social Policy and Integration Department through CAI, the project was also supported by the Education Department, the Youth Department and the University of Valencia.

The third project cited by CAI as a good practice is the Popular University of Valencia training days – Immigration and diversity: Keys to coexistence (*Jornadas Formación Universidad Popular de Valencia – Inmigración y Diversidad: Claves para la Convivencia*). This popular university is an institution of the Municipal Department of Education that organises cultural events, inviting professors and experts on specific themes.²⁴ In July 2008, three days were dedicated to training conferences and seminars for the professors of the university on the issues of immigration, cultural diversity, racism and xenophobia. Their active and large participation represented a success for the education department.

Despite these positive experiences, the persons interviewed for this study cited a number of problems in implementing the municipal integration and participation policies, especially in relation to the First Plan for the Integration of Immigrants, which is described by CAI officials as being ‘too ambitious’. According to the 2001–2004 plan, CAI had a mandate to set up an observatory on the city’s immigrant population, but this has not yet been done.²⁵ Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Commission on Immigration has not yet been implemented. Problems of coordination between the various municipal departments concerned with immigration have also been noted. The perception of CAI as a branch of the social services department appears to have been detrimental to its ambition of implementing a coordinated municipal programme of action. In theory, the other municipal departments, such as those for education and youth, are supposed to cooperate with CAI and provide financial resources for the implementation of common activities. In practice, such cooperation cannot be assumed and depends on the willingness of the other departments to collaborate.

Difficulties in cooperating with immigrant associations were experienced in a particularly notable situation: in 2004, a group of about 100 illegal sub-Saharan immigrants started camping during the night under one of the Río Turia bridges.²⁶ Spontaneous groups of Catholic volunteers were the first to provide help to these people, together with NGOs like *Centro Arrupe*, the diocesan Caritas, *Intermón-Oxfam* and Doctors of the World (*Médicos del Mundo*). The Alternative Forum led vocal demonstrations against national and local authorities – including the municipality – advocating the regularisation of these immigrants. The illegal status of the people concerned was a major point of dispute between civil society organisations and public authorities, especially national, unwilling to concede any special amnesty. As a consequence, municipal authorities could not intervene directly, since it would have been against the law. Nevertheless, CAI organised various meetings with all of the organisations involved to seek suitable solutions. In the end, it took three years to reach an agreement: the national government allowed the regularisation of these immigrants and a new Municipal First Accommodation Centre was set up to host them.

Relations between ethnic groups

In general, relations between the majority population and the immigrant minorities in the city are described as positive, both by the administration – that is, CAI officials and Alderman Torrado – and by the other actors interviewed in Valencia (see the list of persons at the end of this report). The immigrant population is dispersed throughout the city, although a few neighbourhoods are characterised by higher concentrations. As noted earlier, in the Orriols district, immigrants represent 29.6% of the total population, while in eight more neighbourhoods the proportion is slightly above 20%.

²⁴ Although it is referred to as a university (*Universidad*), it does not actually deliver any degree or certificate programmes.

²⁵ This goal has been reiterated in the North–South Plan 2009–2013.

²⁶ In fact, the Río Turia is just a riverbed, since the water was deviated after the floods of 1957. At the moment, the riverbed hosts the main city park and the modern area of the Arts and Science City Hall.

The municipality views these concentrations with some concern as potentially hostile environments where foreigners and the less-advantaged Spanish population are somehow forced to live together because the poorer quality of housing keeps rents affordable. However, no studies are available on Valencian people's attitudes towards immigration, which are described by CAI as 'peaceful but distant' (Common Reporting Scheme).

At the same time, some neighbourhoods have seen positive consolidating experiences of cooperation between autochthonous organisations and immigrant groups, especially in respect of the solidarity platforms. As already explained, these platforms gather together at district level all of the organisations working on social welfare in order to assess emerging needs in the neighbourhoods and to prepare projects and action plans that could be financed by the municipality. Every year, the Department of Social Policy and Integration launches a call for projects in the area of poverty and social exclusion; this call targets the associations represented in the solidarity platforms. According to CAI official data, in 2008, a sum of €59,771 was spent on programmes directed at the integration of immigrants and/or refugees out of a total budget of €530,000.²⁷ Grants were awarded to 13 projects presented by the immigrant associations participating in the solidarity platforms of the 11 districts.

In the city, some relevant examples of various forms of cooperation arise between different ethnic and religious organisations. The Alternative Forum, discussed earlier, is a common platform for immigrant and autochthonous associations; it aims to debate, analyse and advocate for the integration process of foreign immigrants in Valencia. As shown above in the example of the Río Turia, the Alternative Forum is particularly vocal and demanding on issues of equality, respect for cultural difference and anti-racism. Moreover, the trade unions, particularly the Confederation of Workers' Commissions (*Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras*, CCOO), have close ties with various immigrant associations especially on issues of access to the labour market and employment.²⁸

The associations that participate in the Alternative Forum have established various forms of informal cooperation, such as the sharing of their headquarters, in order to reduce their expenses. This is the case of the Moroccan association Al Amal and the Bolivian association ASBOLES.

In terms of collaboration between different religious organisations, two platforms exist: the Chair of the Three Religions (*Cátedra de las Tres Religiones*) of the University of Valencia and the CeiMigra interreligious space. The *Cátedra* was established in 2000 to represent Christianity, Judaism and Islam, after the signing of an agreement between the University of Valencia, the Father Congar Ecumenical Centre (*Centro Ecuménico Padre Congar*), the Federation of Jewish Communities in Spain (*Federación de Comunidades Israelitas de España*, FCIE) and UCIDE. It aims to offer courses on the three founding religions of the organisation at different levels (postgraduate or masters courses) and under different perspectives²⁹ (philosophical, psychological or sociological). Moreover, the *Cátedra* organises regular seminars and conferences on interreligious dialogue and is open to the contribution of other religious persuasions.³⁰ The Orthodox Church of Valencia, as well as Valencian Muslim organisations, and in particular the Islamic Cultural Centre and the Islamic Community, collaborate with the *Cátedra*.

²⁷ In 2008, immigrants and refugees represented the third highest priority in terms of spending, after childhood and youth (€276,156) and residents in general (€64,516).

²⁸ Interview with the CCOO Secretary for Immigration, Ventura Montalbán Gámez. Efforts were also made by telephone and email to contact the General Workers' Confederation (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, UGT), but these efforts were unsuccessful.

²⁹ On the history of the *Cátedra*, see Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007, pp. 274–275.

³⁰ Recently, a seminar on the Bahá'í religion was organised. However, representatives of the Evangelical Church interviewed during the field visit questioned the idea of opening the *Cátedra* to that extent. According to their point of view, it may lose its original purpose of fostering dialogue among the three monotheistic religions.

CeiMigra is an institution founded in 2001 by the Jesuits (*Compañía de Jesús*) and hosted in the long-established San José College. Since its inception, CeiMigra has received the support of the Government of the Autonomous Community, and in particular of the Immigration and Citizenship Department.³¹ While primarily concerned with the promotion of research studies on immigration, as highlighted by the work of the Valencian Observatory on Migration (*Observatorio Valenciano de las Migraciones*), the centre actually carries out a variety of activities, such as training, first assistance and orientation, and legal consultancy.³² In the context of interreligious dialogue, CeiMigra has promoted various seminars and conferences to which the different religious organisations that are active in the city have been invited. Moreover, CeiMigra offers support to immigrant communities for the celebration of their traditional festivities, such as for instance the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Novena and the Russian Orthodox festivities.

A similar function is carried out by the Evangelical Church and in particular by the Urban Mission of Valencia (*Misión Urbana de València*), which offers spaces to Protestant immigrant groups – such as Nigerians – for their Sunday celebration. In addition, Caritas, in the context of its pastoral function, encourages local parishes to host the traditional ceremonies of Catholic immigrant groups.

Along with these official platforms, informal cooperation between different associations is also frequent.

Public communication

The municipality has no official public communication strategy in relation to ethnic and religious groups. However, the participation of the alderman in the celebrations and events organised by the various immigrant associations can be considered part of a more general friendly image that the municipality is willing to communicate to the citizenry.

According to the Communications Officer of the Department of Social Policy and Integration, María Jesús Grande, the main issue for the municipality is how to communicate its integration policy in an effective manner. Immigration is a sensitive issue, which can be easily politicised. A low-profile strategy is regarded as preferable in order not to give the impression of favouring immigrants over the local population. In the context of the current economic crisis, the risk of creating rivalry and competition over scarce resources cannot be overlooked. Communication about integration policies should not serve the visibility interests of politicians: it should be neutral and balanced in its tone to give the correct information about the municipality's activities.³³

A study carried out in 2003 on practices in reporting on immigration (Siurana Aparisi and Garcia Calandín, 2004) examined nine daily newspapers³⁴ and revealed that journalists usually refer to institutional sources and rarely to immigrants and their organisations.³⁵ Immigrant associations are considered only in relation to protests and much less in their everyday activities. The content analysis of the news published in the period September to December 2003 showed

³¹ CeiMigra is also funded by the Bancaixa Foundation, a private funding agency linked to a local bank.

³² http://www.ceimigra.net/images/stories/pfds/Presentacion_Institucional_CeiMigra.pdf (in Spanish, 4.13Mb PDF).

³³ According to Ms Grande, an example of a poor communication strategy on immigration is the high media visibility style adopted by the Alderman on Integration and Citizenship of the Valencian Autonomous Community, Rafaél Blasco, who 'is always in the news'. Recently, complaints have been published in the newspapers asking Mr Blasco to take into account the problems of Spanish people, and not just those of immigrants.

³⁴ These were: *Levante*, *Las Provincias*, *Diario de València*, *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *Información*, *La Verdad* and *Mediterráneo*.

³⁵ The study was based on a content analysis of the news and interviews with journalists. At the time of the field visit in Valencia, a new study on local press practices on migration was soon to be published. Unfortunately, it was not yet available at the time of writing.

that immigration is often associated with negative words such as ‘problem’ and ‘problematic’, ‘illegal’ and ‘avalanche’. Some words even convey open prejudice, as is the case with *moros*, an offensive word for Arab people.³⁶ Only one newspaper among the nine analysed has a weekly page devoted to immigration-related issues.

The same study reveals that local newspapers, as well as the rest of the major local media, have no personnel of an immigrant or ethnic minority background, nor are there journalists who specialise in immigration. Since immigration is not regarded as an area of specialisation, no training on interculturality is offered in the media. Interviews with local media specialists carried out during the field visit confirm this situation.

The local radio can be considered an exception to a certain extent: a few broadcasts on immigration are chaired by immigrants, some of whom are professional journalists. In general, these kinds of broadcasts aim to address immigrants’ problems, especially legal issues, and usually a lawyer is invited to take telephone calls.

Ethnic media in Valencia – and in Spain more generally – appear to consist essentially of free press journals. Most of these newspapers are based in Madrid and Barcelona but have a Valencian edition, such as *Sí se puede* or *Raíz*. The publications *Toda la Información* and *Latino* are produced and published in Valencia. The latter addresses Latin American immigrants, whom advertising agencies view as a particularly interesting target market. *Toda la Información*, on the other hand, is a free monthly journal funded by the municipality, the autonomous community and the Bancaixa Foundation, a private funding agency linked to a local bank; this journal deals with immigration in general. Special attention is devoted to the activities of immigrant associations and to international development initiatives. A legal counselling column is also offered.

Raíz has editions in Romanian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Arabic. However, according to the people interviewed, Arab immigrants are not as good consumers as Latin Americans, which explains the relatively minor interest in this audience on the part of the free press.

Summary and lessons learnt

Immigrant integration policy in Valencia is very recent, since the First Plan for the Integration of Immigrants only dates back to 2003. For the time being, the North–South Plan 2009–2013 defines the strategy of the Municipality of Valencia in relation to ethnic and religious groups. Participation is the keyword: intercultural dialogue is expected to stem from the participation of immigrant associations in the mainstream consultative and participative institutions. Ad hoc commissions and bodies are viewed less favourably, since immigrants are expected to contribute to the city’s general well-being and development.

As is clear, participation is not intended as a means of expression and recognition of differences, but rather as an engagement in the local polity structures and institutions. Differences are a resource insofar as they enrich these structures and institutions, leading the receiving society to change and learn from cultural diversity as well.

The positive experience of the solidarity platforms established at district level appears to be the main result of such a strategy. As has been noted, immigrant associations have been actively involved, especially in areas such as Orriols or Natzaret, where significant concentrations of foreign residents have gathered. Through the solidarity platforms, 13 projects for the integration of immigrants and refugees have been financed and immigrant associations have been involved in their implementation.

³⁶ Although it was used only eight times in the four months analysed, any use of this clearly prejudicial word is reprehensible.

However, not all of the participative institutions formally envisaged in the 2003 First Plan for the Integration of Immigrants and mentioned also in the more recent North–South Plan 2009–2013 have been implemented. Immigrant associations appear to have been poorly involved in defining participation, despite the emphasis of the First Plan on this concept. According to CAI officials, this lack of participation is a consequence of pitfalls in the implementation of the First Plan. The North–South Plan should aim to overcome the isolation of immigrant associations and foster their inclusion in local policymaking institutions.

Moreover, it is not clear on what basis immigrant associations will be selected and admitted to these participative institutions. Systematic data are not available on the participation of immigrant associations in the districts' solidarity platforms. With regard to Muslim groups, however, from the field visit, positive experiences of cooperation emerged as well as more contradictory ones (see below).

Participation without recognition risks casting doubts on the level of equality between the parties involved. The other forms of interreligious dialogue mentioned in the report – such as the Chair of the Three Religions or the CeiMigra Centre – while interesting and valuable, still point to a certain asymmetry insofar as the Catholic Church plays a crucial role. Participation does not seem to imply equality, but rather involvement and responsibility for some common project and/or goal.

In this context, the role of ethnic and religious organisations depends on whether these groups agree to take part in existing institutions and contribute to supposedly common goals. The Alternative Forum for the Protection and Rights of the Social Integration of Immigrants clearly represents a challenge in this respect. Its highly politicised attitude and recourse to protest are regarded by the municipality as an impediment to collaboration. Nevertheless, the very existence of the Alternative Forum, gathering together 32 immigrant associations, clearly reveals that cultural difference is not just accidental but may be a resource of political mobilisation that does not conform to the expectations of the municipality and to its idea of intercultural dialogue.

However, it must be noted that, at an informal level, relations between CAI and the various ethnic and religious organisations present in the city – as well as with members of the Alternative Forum – are well established, although not regular. Despite an official approach that seems aimed at downplaying differences, CAI officials appear to be aware of the demands and needs of different immigrant groups. Nonetheless, the marginal role of the office in the bureaucratic machine is regarded as a major obstacle for the pursuit of a more consistent strategy towards immigrant associations. In relation to the demand for regular premises where the associations' headquarters may be set up, for instance, CAI – while acknowledging the legitimacy of such requests – does not have the means to intervene since this is the competence of the real estate department.

Networking both within and outside the administration is regarded by CAI as an added value for an efficient integration policy, as highlighted by the projects mentioned as instances of best practices. However, the participation of immigrant associations in these projects does not seem to be considered crucial.

Local intercultural policies towards Muslim communities

Major issues, demands and interests

Since the migratory history of Valencia is very recent, as already explained, immigrant groups are still primarily concerned with basic needs – such as night shelters, work and regularisation (see the social issues highlighted in the previous chapter) – while specific demands in respect of ethnic or religious identity seem to lag behind. However, according to CAI officials, with regard to Muslim organisations, the main issues in the city pertain to: food menus, especially in relation to school canteens; gender roles; and the teaching of Islam and Arabic at school. Regarding food precepts, public schools have in general accommodated requests for the adaptation of school canteen menus, providing meals free of pork for Muslim pupils.

Issues related to gender roles essentially deal with access to health centres. This may be particularly difficult for women who have been abused. The presence in most health centres of bilingual women acting as linguistic and cultural mediators aims to facilitate the access of Muslim women. Another example of a demand related to gender roles concerned use of the swimming pool on the part of Muslim women; as noted earlier, the municipality rejected this request. However, in the interviews carried out during the field visit with Muslim associations, demands related to gender roles did not emerge as central issues. In terms of health, much more emphasis was put on the circumcision of children, which is not covered by the public health service and thus implies a cost for Muslim families.

The teaching of Arabic to children appears to be a controversial issue. The Cooperation Agreement between the Spanish state and the Islamic religion (see above under ‘National policy context’) provides for the teaching of Islam at school. Nevertheless, according to one of the staff members interviewed at the association, problems arise with implementation in some of the city schools. Apart from the Islamic Cultural Centre, which has succeeded in obtaining the opportunity to have Arabic classes for children on Saturday mornings at a school in the Orriols district,³⁷ the other associations complain that their requests have not been considered. For example, the Islamic Council of Valencia claimed that a school in the district hosts Chinese language classes;³⁸ however, despite their continuous requests, no one agreed to host Arabic classes. In one case, despite the willingness of the school director, the school council – composed of the pupils’ parents – rejected the proposal.³⁹ At the moment, more than 400 children attend courses at the mosque, which, however, does not have enough space. Courses are even held in the basement, with serious safety risks. As a consequence, the Islamic Council of Valencia asked the municipality for permission to enlarge the mosque’s premises in a garden adjacent to the main building. The municipality agreed and granted permission. The Autonomous Community has contributed financially to the new building, which is still under construction.

No public opinion surveys are available on attitudes towards Islam and Muslim communities in Valencia. Nevertheless, the contrasting reactions experienced by the Islamic Community in the Orriols district and the Islamic Council of Valencia in the Xúquer district highlight the presence of different and contradictory attitudes in the majority population. According to CAI, because of the controversial historical relationship between Spain and the Muslim world, Arab people are more likely than other groups to be victims of negative stereotypes and prejudice. Indeed, rather than being a problem specific to Valencia, this discriminatory attitude is regarded as characteristic of Spanish people in general.

³⁷ Neighbourhood associations actively supported the Islamic Cultural Centre request.

³⁸ CAI officials have no information about Chinese classes for children, and do not know which association has organised this activity.

³⁹ Such a refusal seems somewhat paradoxical considering that public schools in the district regularly organise visits to the Great Mosque in the context of their intercultural programmes.

For its part, the municipal administration seems to have an open attitude to the requests of Muslim groups, as indicated by the following examples: granting permission to build and financial support to the Islamic Council of Valencia; reserving a specific space for ritual slaughtering in the municipal slaughterhouse; and providing space for the Islamic burial ritual in the cemetery.⁴⁰ The request concerning the swimming pool represents an exception in this regard. The expectation is that neighbourhood associations and other organisations working on the ground will cooperate in addressing such matters.

CeiMigra has conducted a study on Muslim groups in Valencia, in the context of broader research on minority religions in the Valencian region (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007). The research is exploratory and descriptive, aiming to map Muslim associations in the region and account for their historical development, organisational structure and main activities.⁴¹ The study provides a directory of legally constituted religious groups in the region, as well as a glossary with definitions of the main concepts used in the book. Regarding Muslim organisations in Valencia, the study provides detailed accounts of the Islamic Community and the Islamic Cultural Centre. It also gives details on affiliations with national and regional federations.

General approaches and policies towards Muslim groups

The Municipality of Valencia has no explicit policy aimed at improving intercultural relations with Muslim communities. As mentioned above, the local administration appears to be aware of the relevance of immigrant associations, but no strategy of recognition is pursued. Participation as a keyword means enabling immigrant associations, including Islamic organisations, to take part in existing participative and consultative institutions and to contribute – together with autochthonous groups and organisations – to the development and well-being of the city. Intercultural dialogue, especially at district level, is considered to be particularly important. Nevertheless, the municipal administration does not intervene to actively promote such a dialogue, and the initiative is left to neighbourhood organisations and consultative platforms, such as the solidarity platforms.

The municipality does not have any formal or regular institutionalised contact with Muslim organisations. Contacts arise on specific issues and demands, and may be either with politicians, like the Social Policy and Integration Alderman Ms Torrado, or with CAI officials. In general, Ms Torrado is perceived as the person in charge of dealing with immigrant-related issues, including religious affairs. However, neither a person nor an office is formally responsible for contacts with religious communities.

In everyday practice, CAI has informal contacts with all of the Muslim groups and associations established in Valencia. Contacts have also been established with the recently arrived Pakistani community, due to the mediation of NGOs working with CAI.

No Muslims are among the elected municipal councillors. Regarding consultative institutions, as already explained, the strategy is to open them to immigrant participation, regardless of religion or ethnic background. In relation to the Commission on Immigration that the North–South Plan intends to establish, it is expected that immigrants will be represented essentially on the basis of their nationality. However, this institution has not yet been set up, as noted earlier.

⁴⁰ However, the municipality does not allow burial without the use of a coffin.

⁴¹ The research was based on qualitative interviews with the representatives of the main religious associations in the city (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007, pp. 327–349).

With regard to funding, the municipality has, on various occasions, supported the initiatives of Muslim organisations presented within its main lines of funding. Among the activities financed, CAI mentions Spanish and Arabic language courses, vocational training projects – including computer science – as well as psychological and employment support for women. In addition, the municipality makes a financial contribution to the organisation of religious celebrations such as Ramadan festivities. Moreover, public land was granted for the Islamic cemetery and the building of the Great Mosque in 1991, thanks to the interest of the then Mayor of Valencia, Pérez Casado. The mosque was built in 1992 with contributions from the Kuwaiti government (Baudes Fuster and Vidal Fernández, 2007). The Islamic Community has also received financial contributions from abroad, but from private donors and not from governments. According to the representatives interviewed, Middle Eastern business persons and entrepreneurs have contributed either money or furnishings. The municipality – and CAI officials in particular – do not consider such external contributions to be problematic.⁴²

The municipality has responsibility over the local police; however, no specific practices have been put in place in order to address Muslim organisations, nor is there any collaboration with them.

Good practice examples of improving relations with Muslim groups

As already mentioned, the city is not keen to undertake group-specific policy. Its integration approach aims to foster participation and integration in existing services and institutions. The same holds true for the Muslim community: no specific policies to improve intergroup relations between the Muslim minority and local majority population have been promoted.

An example of good practice mentioned by CAI is the cultural week of the Orriols neighbourhood, financed by the municipality through the District Board,⁴³ to which the Islamic Cultural Centre has always been actively committed. During this particular week, the mosque is open to all the people of the neighbourhood and information programmes about Islam are held.

In 2004, the municipality attempted to organise an intercultural week in the Ruzafa neighbourhood, which is another area of the city characterised by a significant immigrant concentration.⁴⁴ The intercultural week was an idea of the social policy and integration alderman in order to promote the opening of a youth centre in the district. Nonetheless, according to CAI officials, this initiative was far less successful than the Orriols cultural week.

As mentioned above, the Islamic Community in the Natzaret district promotes ‘open mosque’ initiatives, in close cooperation with neighbourhood associations. The Great Mosque also promotes such activities. The municipality regards this kind of initiative as being important for improving intergroup relations. As noted, the local administration provides financial support for the organisation of the districts’ cultural weeks.

⁴² In fact, in a visit to the Great Mosque, the people encountered did not seem to be aware of the contribution received from Kuwait. According to them, the mosque was built with money from the Valencian Muslim community.

⁴³ The District Board – comprising 11 people in total – is an administrative, non-elected board, set up to implement municipal policy at district level. In order to encourage local mobilisation and participation, there is a community worker on the board, who is a municipal official responsible for working with the neighbourhood associations to promote cultural programmes and activities.

⁴⁴ This was one of the first areas of immigrant arrival in the city. More recently, immigrants have moved into more peripheral neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, most of their commercial premises, such as Islamic slaughterhouses and Chinese shops, can still be found in Ruzafa.

CAI considers that the Chair of the Three Religions and CeiMigra contribute to improving intergroup relations in the city. However, the municipality does not have regular relations with these institutions, only informal meetings and contacts, and it does not provide any direct support.

According to CAI, these initiatives are important since they aim to develop positive exchange and dialogue between different cultures and religions. The kind of collaboration that has been emerging around the Orriols cultural week is regarded as particularly relevant, since immigrants have the opportunity to be directly involved in preparing common initiatives with other neighbourhood associations. In other words, they implement a kind of intercultural approach based on practical participation and involvement that is central to the city's integration policy.

Public communication

The municipality has no explicit strategy for public communication on Islamic issues in the media. As noted earlier with reference to immigration and interculturality in general, the Communications Officer of the Department of Social Policy and Integration, Ms Grande, pursues a low-profile approach in order to avoid public debates in the media. There is a perception that excessive emphasis or a sensationalist approach is likely to generate misunderstanding and even rejection.

In general, local media have no regular relations with Muslim organisations. As mentioned above, journalists favour institutional sources and complain about the lack of official representatives from the Muslim community. According to the study on the treatment of immigration by the Valencian press (Siurana Aparisi and Garcia Calandín, 2004, p. 86), the newspaper *Las Provincias* stands out as an exception. In an article about the ban on wearing the headscarf (*hijab*) introduced by French law, the opinions of five Muslim women living in Valencia were reported; two of them were the spokespersons of the Association of Muslim Students and of the Great Mosque. However, evidence from this study highlights that such good practices are still exceptional. This is confirmed by the field visit interviewees, who underline the lack of interest in the television media towards Islam, with the exception of cases of male chauvinism involving Muslims, which are always abundantly covered.

As noted in the previous chapter, free press journals for Arab immigrants are few: *Raiz* and *Sí se puede* have editions in Arabic but these cannot be considered Muslim journals. According to the journalists interviewed during the field visit, the Islamic associations have an efficient internal communication system, producing numerous newsletters and information leaflets for internal communication; however, they have no external communication strategy or media directed to the wider public. This is confirmed by visits to the Islamic centres. The Islamic Cultural Centre represents a partial exception in this regard as it seems to be more interested in the media and communication at large. In May 2008, the centre organised a two-day seminar together with the Faculty of Philology, Translation and Communication of the University of Valencia on 'Islam in the Media', with the purpose of analysing how the media communicate about the Islamic world.⁴⁵ The two days were directed at professionals in the media – journalists and students of journalism and audiovisual communication – with the aim of preparing a handbook for journalists on how to communicate about Islam. Moreover, the Islamic Cultural Centre regularly publishes the proceedings of its conferences and seminars, usually with the support of various public and private institutions such as the University of Valencia, the Valencian Community, the Solidarity Platform of Benimaclet (the district in which the Orriols neighbourhood is located), and the Foundation for Pluralism and Coexistence.

⁴⁵ See http://www.webcciv.org/CCIV/Prensa/docs_de_prensa/islam_mc_jornadas.pdf (in Spanish, 24Kb PDF).

Summary and lessons learnt

Relations between the city and Muslim organisations seem to be largely positive, although the excellent cooperation in the Orriols and Natzaret neighbourhoods appear to contrast considerably with the experience of the Great Mosque in the Xúquer district, especially with regard to attitudes towards Arabic language classes for children. However, despite these instances of refusal and distrust, the mosque representatives consider their relations with the residents to be reasonably positive, and the mosque is open every week for schools wishing to visit it.

The non-interventionist strategy of the local administration appears to lead to very different outcomes. The municipality does not have any specific policy towards Muslim minorities, but – as in the case of immigrants in general – promotes participation and involvement in existing consultative and participative institutions such as the solidarity platforms. The divergent trajectories in the areas of the city where the main concentrations of Muslim residents are located indicate both the potential and limitations of such an approach. If cooperation and participation start at local level, they have the advantage of spontaneously linking different groups around common projects that are particularly important to the local communities. On the other hand, such participation is likely to depend on the real willingness of the resident majority to cooperate. Research on the factors leading to positive collaboration or, on the other hand, to more distant attitudes, is lacking but would be of great interest for policymakers. However, as revealed by the failure of the Ruzafa cultural week, municipal action may not necessarily be the solution. Participation can hardly be injected from the top down: nonetheless, a clearer understanding of the conditions that may foster cooperative attitudes could be of help in designing appropriate policies.

The examples of Orriols and Natzaret show that, despite a historical legacy unfavourable to Islam, prejudice and distrust may be overcome. The issue is how to encourage the diffusion of such positive experiences across the city.

Intergroup relations and radicalisation

Radicalisation within majority population

CAI officials describe the response of the autochthonous majority population towards immigration as being inspired by a sort of ‘peaceful but distant’ attitude. Radicalisation is not an issue in the city, although there seems to be more concern about possible growing resentment towards immigrants due to the current economic crisis.

There is no evidence on or research studies about the scale of such negative attitudes; nevertheless, they are perceived as a challenge that the municipality should be aware of, especially as they concern some groups more than others. This is primarily the case for black Africans, Arab people, Romany people and Romanians, who encounter particular prejudice, especially when looking for a house to rent.

Valencia 2000 is the only organisation that has assumed an openly anti-immigrant and racist stance. CAI describes it as a small group, mainly comprising young supporters of the Valencia football club, and in particular of the *Grupo Ultra Sul*, which is well known for its racist slogans against black football players.⁴⁶ Its headquarters is in the Orriols neighbourhood, and its actions are limited to the printing and distribution of racist leaflets in the streets. In the past, however, Valencia 2000 has been accused of launching a petrol bomb against the main door of the Islamic Community, without causing any harm. The neighbours called the police to condemn the attack.

Apart from these demonstrative actions, Valencia 2000 does not seem to have any influence either on the local political discourse or on the attitudes of the population. In the Orriols district, it is marginalised and has no influence. In general, the Muslim associations interviewed in the field visit, as well as CAI and other NGOs encountered during the visit, view Valencia 2000 as a highly isolated group. However, no formal research on radicalisation and extremist groups in the city is available.

General approach, policies and measures towards these groups

The municipality has no explicit policy on radicalisation, as this is not an issue in the city. As a consequence, no officer or board in the local administration structure has explicit responsibility for this matter.

Valencia 2000 and similar groups are marginalised by the administration, which does not consider them either as a real threat or as a relevant interlocutor with which to start a dialogue. The incidents mentioned above are regarded as cases of ordinary criminality to be pursued by the police. No special policy or communication strategy is deemed necessary.

Relations between groups

As noted, CeiMigra is an important initiative by a Catholic organisation, aiming to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and thus indirectly to counter radicalisation against ethnic and religious minorities. The Chair of the Three Religions can be viewed in a similar vein, as it also aims to foster tolerance and dialogue. Although these initiatives do not directly address anti-immigrant groups, their engagement in improving intergroup relations clearly militates against racist organisations such as Valencia 2000. Catholic religious organisations play a crucial role in these initiatives, as well as – in the case of the *Cátedra* – the Jewish and Islamic associations.

⁴⁶ Despite these openly racist attitudes of Valencia supporters, the Valencia football club has never been sanctioned. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2006) report on racism and intolerance in Spain complains about the inadequate response of the Spanish football authorities to racist behaviour.

Another active party militating against racism and xenophobia in the city is the Alternative Forum for the Protection and Rights of the Social Integration of Immigrants. As explained, this is a platform of immigrant associations that, since its inception, has assumed a demanding attitude, organising protests to put pressure on the municipality on specific issues, such as the regularisation of sub-Saharan immigrants camping under the Río Turia bridge (see previous chapter).

As noted, the city has informal relations with all of these organisations.

Radicalisation within migrant and/or minority population

According to all of the actors interviewed during the field visit, no radicalisation tendencies have emerged within the immigrant or minority population in the city. Only the case of a radical imam in the Ruzafa worship room is mentioned. However, this imam was promptly isolated and marginalised by the community and he no longer attends the mosque. Leaders of the Muslim associations interviewed during the field visit maintain strong social control over their members. Religious radicalisation is not considered to be a problem.

After the March 2004 train bomb attacks in Madrid, a small group of fundamentalist terrorists were arrested in a village near Valencia. According to CAI officials and other interviewees, these people had just arrived in the city. They had no relation with established Muslim organisations in Valencia or in the region. Thus, this event is not considered to be indicative of any radicalisation tendency in the resident Islamic community.

General approach, policies and measures towards these groups

The municipality has no policy against radicalisation within immigrant groups because this does not seem to be a problem in the city. Immigrant associations are mainly sociocultural organisations based on nationality. Even when they take a more politicised stance, as in the case of the Alternative Forum, this has never had any radical tendency. Likewise, religious organisations, and in particular Islamic ones, do not perceive radicalisation as a problem; in any case, internal social controls appear to be sufficient to discourage any such attitude. No intervention on the part of the municipality is deemed necessary.

Relations between groups

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives are considered the best examples of a sort of pre-emptive mobilisation against possible radicalisation tendencies between immigrant groups. In particular, the Chair of the Three Religions has sought to institutionalise relations between the three monotheistic religions. Regarding the Christian part, although the founding organisation was Catholic, over the years Protestant and Orthodox representatives have also been involved. All of the persons interviewed have cited cooperation and dialogue as crucial assets in combating any form of radicalisation.

Communication strategy concerning radicalisation

The municipality has not developed any communication strategies to counter radical groups since these are not considered a problem. Nevertheless, all of the actors interviewed have shown a certain awareness of the risks associated with a diffusion in the population of more subtle feelings of resentment against immigrants because of the current economic crisis. In this respect, the Communications Officer of the Social Policy and Integration Department, Ms Grande, emphasised the necessity of adopting a low profile and a prudent communication strategy. Too much emphasis on immigrant policy projects and initiatives may convey the wrong idea that considerable money is spent on foreign residents, which is not the case.

The media, for their part, do not seem to have a strategy for reporting on radicalisation. There is some concern about how the media report news on immigration and religious minorities. As mentioned above, a 2003 study highlighted that use of the word *moros* has not been banned from the city local press, despite clearly conveying prejudice and discriminating attitudes against north African, Arab immigrants.

Radicalisation: Summary and lessons learnt

Radicalisation does not seem to be an issue in the city. More subtle feelings and attitudes of refusal and discrimination appear to be more relevant, although these are not organised by any kind of association. Such attitudes affect more visible groups, such as black people, Muslims and the Romany population. Islamophobia has deep historical roots in Spain, and it may account for the distrust that some Islamic organisations have encountered in the receiving society – for example, with regard to Arabic language classes.

Nevertheless, a number of positive experiences emerge, especially in some neighbourhoods such as the Orriols district. Likewise, in the Natzaret area, a fruitful and positive collaboration between the Islamic Community and neighbourhood associations has developed over the years. Such cooperation appears to be crucial to countering possible radicalisation tendencies in the immigrant communities. However, no evidence of such negative attitudes, either of a political or religious kind, was reported during the field visit. Just a few isolated cases were mentioned.

Key challenges and lessons for CLIP

Participation is the keyword in the Municipality of Valencia's approach towards immigrant associations. Intercultural dialogue is expected to stem from the participation of such associations in the mainstream consultative and participative institutions, as highlighted by the North–South Plan 2009–2013, which is the main policy document of the local administration in this area. Ad hoc commissions and bodies are regarded less favourably, since immigrants are expected to contribute to the city's general well-being and development.

The positive experience of the solidarity platforms established at district level appears to be the main result of such a strategy. Immigrant associations are actively engaged in neighbourhood projects and events – especially in Orriols and Natzaret, two areas characterised by significant proportions of foreign residents. However, not all of the participative institutions formally stipulated by the North–South Plan 2009–2013 have yet been implemented, and it is not clear on what basis immigrant associations will be selected and admitted to these institutions.

In this policy context, it is not surprising that no specific policies for Muslim associations have been put in place. The municipality does not have any specific policy towards Muslim minorities, but – as in the case of immigrants in general – it promotes participation and involvement in existing consultative and participative institutions, mainly the solidarity platforms. The non-interventionist strategy of the local administration appears to have led to several different outcomes, with experiences of positive collaboration but also cases of distrust and refusal. Cooperation and participation at local level have the advantage of spontaneously linking different groups around common projects that are viewed by the local communities as particularly important; at the same time, much is likely to depend on the real willingness of the resident majority to cooperate.

So far, the municipality does not seem to have considered how to encourage the diffusion of positive experiences of participation and cooperation across city neighbourhoods, or how to foster new forms of participation and engagement, especially of religious groups. At the moment, interreligious dialogue is left to civil society organisations, where the institutions of the Catholic Church play a predominant role – for example, in establishing the Chair of the Three Religions and CeiMigra. While all of the people interviewed acknowledged the relevance of these initiatives, the demand for more neutral mediation also emerged, both on the part of new and old religious minorities.⁴⁷

The lack of a radicalisation trend could be interpreted as an indicator of an overall positive and peaceful social context. Nevertheless, concerns have been expressed about more subtle feelings and attitudes of refusal and discrimination, particularly against more visible groups such as black people, Muslims and the Romany population. In this context, the need for a strategy aiming to consolidate positive experiences of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation – as well as to start new ones – is likely to gain more prominence on the municipal immigrant policy agenda.

⁴⁷ The Evangelical Church, for instance, has expressed such a need.

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Association of Ecuadorian and Latin American Immigrants (*Asociación de Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos y Latinoamericanos, RUMIÑAHUI*)

Association of Ukrainians (*Asociación de Ucrainianos en Valencia, Ukraina*)

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