

APRIL, 2019

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PARMA AND FREDERICTON DEVELOP A NEW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MODEL TO INCREASE INCLUSION

Following an exploration of the two cities' priorities, Parma and Fredericton are focusing their IUC cooperation on increasing female participation in local government leadership and creating a transferable public engagement model that actively addresses the issue of inclusiveness for marginalised groups.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Parma, situated in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy with a population of just under 200,000, and the City of Fredericton, located in Canada's eastern province of New Brunswick with around 60,000 inhabitants, established their IUC pairing in June 2018. At the outset, the cities expressed interest in cooperating on the topic of greater inclusion. Discussions were held to decide what form the commitment to inclusion could take, with an agreement reached that the pairing would focus on gender equality in local government leadership, as well as creating a public engagement model to address inclusiveness for marginalised groups.

Aided by the University of Parma, the pairing is developing a methodology to assess and identify obstacles to the development of women's careers in public administrations. It is

foreseen that this methodology will not only be transferable to other countries, but also will be applicable to other marginalised segments of the population.

Once the methodology is agreed upon, defined data sets will be collected to allow comparability. The final stage will involve an assessment to determine barriers to the professional progression of women, with an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two cities.

Both cities have found the cooperation to be open and productive, with study tours helping the cities to gain a greater understanding of their partner's mode of working. Through their work, the pairing is strongly contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5, which promotes the achievement of gender equality.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

At the start of the pairing the topical choice of “inclusion” was clear, but less so how this would manifest on a practical basis.

Fredericton was interested in finding ways to better include marginalised groups and had a strong desire to increase citizen engagement, particularly among young people.

Parma was already quite advanced in the field of citizen engagement, having long-enjoyed a rich civic culture of participation.

The City of Parma uses the system *Consigli dei Cittadini Volontari* (Volunteer Citizen's Councils), in which members of the public can put themselves forward to act as a voluntary councillor for their neighbourhood. Residents in the neighbourhood can then vote online for the candidate they would like to represent them.

Inter-city discussions led to the conclusion that this system, rooted as it is in Parma's civic tradition, was difficult to transfer to the context of Fredericton.



Parma was motivated to investigate barriers that women faced in terms of advancing professionally within the municipality (the city already has legislation in place that requires 40% of management within the municipal government to be filled by women).

Gender equality was proposed as a topic that both parties could collaborate on.

At first, Fredericton had doubts whether the topic could be applied to their context in the same manner, as the municipal structure,

cultural legacy and professional attitudes differed in the two cities.

Juan Estepa, Manager of the Department for Heritage and Urban Design, Growth and Community Services of Fredericton City Council, decided to explore the issue in greater depth, discussing with partners in Parma to learn more about their vision.



Following this investigation, it was determined that focusing on the issue of gender equality would also be of great benefit to Fredericton.

The aim of the pairing is to develop a methodology to assess and identify obstacles to the development of women's careers. This methodology will be designed to be both transferable to other countries and applicable to other marginalised segments of the population.

The city authorities reached out to the University of Parma for support in designing the methodology. The university agreed, assigning the task to a professor of developmental psychology as well as staff from the department of statistics.

Although the cities work in different languages and have a six-hour time difference, these issues have not affected the cooperation in any meaningful way. Indeed, the cooperation has benefitted from a positive attitude from all involved.



RESULTS AND IMPACT

The tool and methodology being developed by Parma and Fredericton will examine the impact of legislative intervention on barriers to female participation in local government leadership positions.

The first step in defining the methodology has been to collect feedback from both cities on the experiences of women working in the public administration. The second stage will involve the collection of data sets on agreed criteria that will allow for comparability between the two city contexts.



Finally, the data will be analysed to determine the main elements that prevent women from advancing (or indeed beginning) their career within the public administration. This comparison will allow for a determination of the commonalities and points of divergence between the two cities.

The University of Parma's input, particularly the department of statistics and the involvement of an expert in developmental psychology, will be vital to ensure that the methodology is robustly applied and that the correct conclusions are drawn from the gathered data.

Based on the results achieved, the cities will adjust their current programmes, or create new programmes to act on the knowledge gained.

A series of study tours have been carried out as part of the cities' cooperation. A delegation from Fredericton has so far made two trips to Parma, seeing the Italian city's community participation meetings up close, learning more about their youth engagement work, and visiting some of the city's historic landmarks.

Parma visited Fredericton in September 2018, learning more about how the Canadian city approaches social inclusion, particularly towards vulnerable groups.

These study tours have been hugely valuable, allowing the two cities to exchange in a way that is not fully possible through digital means.

As a result of their cooperation, the pairing is contributing in a tangible way to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5: gender equality.

As the methodology being developed is also intended to be applicable to other marginalised groups, the pairing is additionally contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1: no poverty.





LESSONS LEARNED



Having a positive attitude is fundamental. Even small set-backs seem difficult to overcome when the pairing lacks the right temperament. Having the will to make the cooperation work is needed from the outset.



Study tours allowed the pairing to really get to know each other and to better understand their partner's way of working. Holding in-person visits is illuminating in a way that goes beyond digital interaction.



Successfully undertaking a partnership involves a certain amount of self-reflection and the openness to try new approaches. It can be easy (and perhaps, on the surface, logical) to dismiss certain approaches as not applicable within a given context, but upon deeper investigation there is often much that can be applied. Often cities are not as different as they think!



Involving partners from outside of the local administration - in this case the University of Parma - is hugely beneficial. New partners bring expertise and ideas that can enhance the cooperation project.

THE IUC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme enables cities in different global regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of research and innovation, community groups and citizens. Through engaging in the IUC, cities will have the chance to share and exchange knowledge with their international

counterparts, building a greener, more prosperous future. The IUC programme is an opportunity for local governments to learn from each other, set ambitious targets, forge lasting partnerships, test new solutions, and boost their city's international profile. Its activities will support the achievement of policy objectives as well as major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.



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