



Zaragoza

A new vision of urban citizenship and diversity

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1. Abstract & Takeaways

Key Takeaways

1

Already-existing migrant organisations and civil society structures like the '*Casa de la cultura*' were integrated into municipal solidarity city politics to ensure more sustainability.

2

Communal social workers in the field supporting migrants have been integral to the city's efforts.

3

The city included all migrant and ethnic minority groups – including those who have been living in the city for many years – into its solidarity politics.

What is unique about the city?

Inclusion despite high levels of debt: Although Zaragoza, the fifth largest city in Spain, ranks among the highest indebted municipalities in the country, it has been implementing a series of successful and welcoming inclusion policies since 2015, following a vision of a new diverse and intercultural urban citizenship.

What is the focus of local migration policies?

Diversity as a resource: The municipal plan's focus on cultural and social inclusion as a task for both newcomers and established residents set the ground for a new framing of diversity as a resource not a problem. Moreover, the idea of urban citizenship is central to Zaragoza's solidarity city politics. With this emphasis, Zaragoza aimed at meeting two particularities among city residents: first, the inclusion of a long-established but marginalised Roma population, and second, the dominance of a growing Latin-American migrant population.

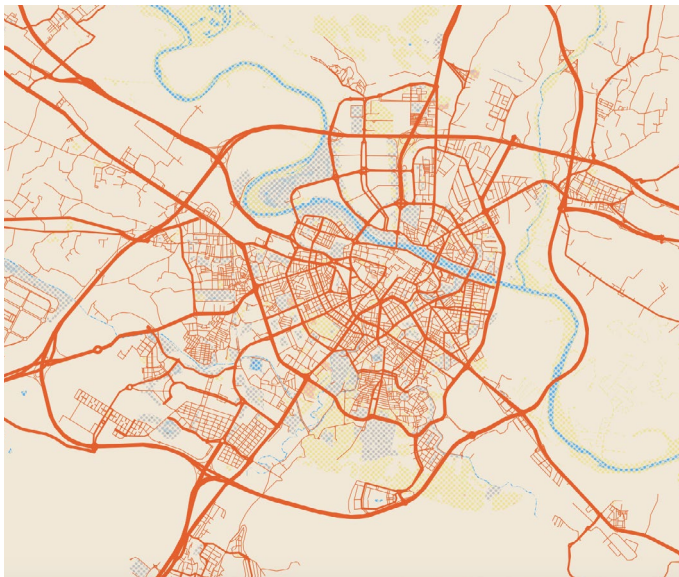
What are the key factors?

A municipal government and civil society collaborating: The strong collaboration between the municipal government and local civil society, especially from 2015-2019, enabled a comprehensive set of welcoming policies. These policies, such as the Urban Citizenship Programme, have

been designed in participatory processes with all relevant local stakeholders right from the start.

Political activities and advocacy beyond the city level?

Zaragoza is a member of the Spanish Intercultural Cities Programme, which publicly works toward diversity and a plural identity in its member cities. Over the last years, the municipalist movement has particularly influenced Zaragoza. This is proved by its membership in the ‘Network of Municipalities of Refugee Reception’ (Red de Municipios de Acogida de Refugiados - RMAR). Zaragoza also invests one of the highest proportions of its budget in international cooperation, when compared to other Spanish cities. Since 2015, 0,5% of the annual municipal budget has been dedicated to specific projects, or to general development aid in the areas of origin and refugee transit.



Population

716,040¹

Location

Zaragoza is situated in the northeast of Spain at the shores of the Ebro River. The city of Zaragoza, capital of the Zaragoza province and the autonomous community of Aragon, is the fifth largest city in Spain.

Mayor

Bis 2023 Jorge Azcón (Partido Popular – PP)

2. Local background and context

The municipal plan's focus on cultural and social inclusion as a task for both newcomers and old-established residents lay the groundwork for a discourse around diversity as a resource not a problem, and the idea of urban citizenship for Zaragoza's municipal politics. Since 2015 the municipal ZeC city council has drawn on the idea of a new diverse and multicultural urban citizenship, also making claims towards the local community to support and include refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities like the local Roma population.

Zaragoza, the fifth largest city in Spain, ranks among the highest-indebted municipalities in the country. The former mayor, Pedro Santistevé, who governed from 2009 to 2015, managed to reduce the municipal debts while doubling the municipal budgets for social housing. However, the socio-economic situation of Zaragoza is still tense. Further, Zaragoza has for a long time been a transit city for migrants, especially Africans,

¹ Numbers 2020 <https://www.zaragoza.es/sede/servicio/publicacion-municipal/11779/>

heading north. The city also counts highly vulnerable cultural minorities and migrant communities, e.g. a large number of Nicaraguans, many of them not registered, and a notable Roma population. Due to the economic crises in many Latin-American countries in the 2000s, the influx of Latin-Americans has risen. In order to meet the interests and needs of an increasingly diverse population, between 2006–2009 (long before Santistevé and ZeC took office) the city council implemented the ‘municipal plan of social integration and intercultural conviviality’ (plan municipal de integración social y convivencia intercultural). This plan primarily focused on the ‘relationships and interactions between autochthonous Zaragozanos and a new migrant citizenship from diverse origins’ (Ayuntamiento de Zaragoza 2018: 9).² ‘For citizens, and for citizenship, Zaragoza should be a welcoming and warm reception city for those who just arrived – as much as for any inhabitant who was born here and has lived here for 40 years’ (Trinidad Lacarra, social worker, Casa de la cultura).³

Plural Urban Citizenship

Between 2009 and 2019, when Pedro Santistevé was mayor, Zaragoza’s policies on migration and inclusion were marked by the pan-European discourse on intercultural, diverse and plural urban citizenship of the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC), as well as by the municipal idea of social urban citizenship. Santistevé wanted to address two issues in Zaragoza: first, the inclusion of a long established but marginalised Roma population, and second, the dominance of a growing Latin-American migrant population. Like Barcelona, the municipality of Zaragoza offers empadronamiento (registering with the municipality) to every person who can prove that the centre of their life is in Zaragoza.

‘The people are diverse, they live here and we have to provide accommodation, we have to guarantee their rights. This is why empadronamiento is so important, because it offers access to the whole city’ (Luisa Broto & Jesús Domínguez Sanz, July 28, 2020).⁴ In 2019 the city government changed. Still, the leftist parties are still strongly represented in the city council with 15 of 31 city councillors. The current mayor, Jorge Azcón, is a member of the conservative Popular Party (Partido Popular; PP) supported by the coalition of citizens (Cs) and the ultra-right VOX-party.

From a city of passage to a place to stay

Before 2015, Zaragoza had been a ‘city of passage’ (ciudad de paso). Most migrants, especially those from African countries, who arrived in Zaragoza wanted to head to the industrial centres of the Basque Country, Catalonia, Madrid, and France – or to countries further north. This is because Zaragoza is located in the very north of Spain. The city of passage situation changed in 2015, when the newly elected left-wing Zaragoza en Común (ZeC) city council decided to become part of the seven city core group of the ciudades refugio (cities of refuge) network in Spain.⁵ Since then more migrants have come to stay in Zaragoza, as it has run several municipal programmes endorsing reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees (see Chapter 3) and the municipal so-

² <https://www.zaragoza.es/contenidos/derechosociales/diversidad-cultural/Diagnostico-ciudadania-diversa-a.pdf>

³ Spanish original: ‘Pero pensando pues eso, no solo en unos ciudadanos concretos, sino en ‘ciudadanía’, pensando que Zaragoza sea una ciudad acogedora y cálida tanto para un recién llegado como para el habitante que nació aquí y reside desde hace 40 años’.

⁴ Spanish original: ‘Las personas son de todo tipo, viven acá y hay que darles acomodo y hay que darles garantía de derechos. Por eso el empadronamiento es tan importante porque brinda acceso a todo en la ciudad.’

⁵ The other members of this central group of cities are – beside the network initiator Barcelona – Madrid, Valencia, Cádiz, Santiago de Compostela and A Coruña

6 Spanish original: 'Y cuando decimos que hay unas de paso es porque mucha población migrante de África, busca recursos en España, pero muchas veces es el paso hacia la Europa más allá de los Pirineos. Y hay que diferenciar la población latina que en su mayoría se queda aquí o también gran parte de la población rumana, de los que quizá tienen familia en Alemania o en Francia y están acá de paso. Entonces se trabajan esas diferentes fases. Y también hay que reconocer que vienen más personas porque las políticas de acogida de los últimos cuatro años dan más facilidades para que la gente se quede.'

7 Spanish original: 'Como no hay vuelos internacionales comerciales porque aún no están habilitados por las fronteras cerradas, no está llegando población de América Latina. Lo que está llegando es esa población que llegó a Madrid o Barcelona de diciembre a marzo de este año y ahora llegan a Zaragoza, y al tener la ciudad una ubicación estratégica, todas a 300 km, de Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao y Valencia, siendo también una ciudad más económica que las dos primeras, por el tema de alquileres... porque conseguir un alquiler aquí no es lo mismo que en Barcelona.'

8 See Plan Municipal para una ciudadanía diversa e intercultural (2019): <https://www.zaragoza.es/contenidos/derechosociales/diversidad-cultural/Plan-MCDI-marzo2019.pdf>; Interview Luisa Broto & Jesús Domínguez Sans, July 28, 2020.

9 Spanish original: 'Pues, con familias y una situación complicada, eran muy pocos los casos. De vez en cuando una reagrupación familiar, una persona venía antes y se ubicaba y el resto venía más en adelante, pero ahora es diferente. Desde el 2015 ya no, son familias, hay un incremento enorme de familias enteras que llegan a la ciudad, vamos, eso es exponencial.'

cial infrastructure for foreigners has become quite sophisticated. Luisa Broto, ZeC city councillor for social rights, and Jesus Domínguez Sanz, coordinator of the local ZeC group, point out that Zaragoza has even become a centre of attraction for migrants and refugees due to its progressive inclusion policies: 'When we say there are people in transit this is because many migrants from Africa are looking for resources in Spain, but this is often the passage to the other side of the Pyrenees. However, we have to distinguish between the Africans and the Latin-Americans; the majority of the latter (likewise most Romanians) come to Zaragoza to stay. [...] And we also have to recognize that now more people are coming [to Zaragoza] because our policies of the last four years offer more facilities and possibilities for people to stay' (Luisa Broto & Jesus Domínguez Sanz, interviewed July 28, 2020).⁶

To date, 80% of migrants living in Aragón are situated in the provincial capital, Zaragoza. Looking at the groups who arrive in the city to stay, the rising number of people from Latin-American countries, especially Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, is striking. Most seek asylum, international protection, family reunification or work. Of these the approx. 6,000 Nicaraguans, many of them unregistered, make up the highest number. Trinidad Lacarra, a social worker of the Casa de la cultura, highlights that since the international borders were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many migrants (e.g. from Latin-America) have begun to move from Madrid or Barcelona to Zaragoza because the life costs are more affordable: 'At the moment there are no international flights [...] so people are not arriving from Latin-America. Instead, Latin-Americans who arrived to Madrid or Barcelona between December [2019] and March [2020] are arriving to Zaragoza, because the city has a strategic location, 300 km from Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Valencia, and because the city (especially its housing) is more affordable than these [other cities]' (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 2020).⁷ The highest number of immigrants in Zaragoza is, however, from Romania. Romanians make up 34% of the foreign population of the city. Additionally, 14,000 Roma people reside in Aragón, most of them in Zaragoza. The economic crisis of 2008 has hit the Roma population harder than any other group in Zaragoza. The rate of unemployment among this group is 15% higher than among the rest of the city's residents. The Roma population is also the youngest group in Zaragoza: 30% are younger than 16 years old.

The labour data from 2017 shows an almost 12% higher unemployment rate among the foreign population. Immigrants earn 30% less than autochthonous city dwellers, with immigrant women as the lowest income group.⁸ Another feature of Zaragoza's immigrant population since 2015 is the important increase of families coming to Zaragoza: '[Before 2015] we had only a few cases. Sometimes a family reunification (one person arrives and the rest arrive later. Since 2015 it is different, we have an exponential increase of families who arrive together to the city' (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed October 19, 2020).⁹

A municipal council: welcoming and inclusive policies

Welcoming refugees and inclusive migration policies have been central to the Zaragozaan ZeC City Council, since the participatory municipal approach to all areas of politics aims at avoiding exclusion of non-citizens.¹⁰ When ZeC took office in Zaragoza, the idea of a diverse, inclusive, and intercultural urban citizenship became a key topic of urban politics – for refugees, migrants, and Zaragoza’s other cultural minorities like the Roma.

Another characteristic of the municipal movement is its close connection to local civil society. The municipal movement was born from social movements, grassroots-initiatives, and local NGOs. The ZeC met with an already-organised and pro-migrant civil society. As Luisa Broto, the former ZeC deputy mayor and councillor for social rights (consejera de derechos sociales) points out, the new elected municipal city government in 2015 was forced by civil society to express solidarity and develop welcoming reception plans: ‘We declared a city of refuge because we noticed tension in the city and a demand from civil society to respond; even now there are situations like the ongoing drownings in the Mediterranean of people trying to reach Spanish shores [...] there are protests every five minutes at the central square [of Zaragoza]. This social element continues. Yes, Zaragoza has a strong pulse.’ (Luisa Broto & Jesús Domínguez Sanz, interviewed July 28, 2020). The new municipal city council responded to a strong movement of solidarity in the local population, elaborating ways to question the restrictive asylum and refugee policies of the central government, as well as the closing down of borders at the EU level. Once in charge, the Zaragozaan city council and the municipality started research, programmes, campaigns, and projects in the areas of communal reception, inclusion, and raising awareness. The most important programmes are the communal reception programme Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora (Zaragoza, reception city), the awareness-raising campaign Migrar es un derecho (migration is a right) and the plan municipal para una ciudadanía diversa e intercultural (municipal plan for a diverse and intercultural citizenship). All these measures were discussed and developed in participatory processes that included the city government, the municipality, NGOs and other civil society initiatives like migrant and Roma organisations. Within this context, the Casa de la cultura (house of culture), a Zaragozaan organisation, has played a key role as it constitutes a unique mix of paid pro-migrant NGO staff and members of the municipality.

¹⁰ <https://www.bdwi.de/forum/archiv/uebersicht/10250840.html> (German)

¹¹ Spanish original: ‘Sí. Cuando nos declaramos ciudad refugio fue porque realmente había una tensión en la ciudad y una respuesta ciudadana importante y ahora mismo se siguen manteniendo situaciones tan visibles como que hay muertos por naufragia porque intentan llegar a las costas españolas- ya sabes que España tiene una cantidad de costa impresionante y sobre todo en el estrecho con África y hay concentraciones cada cinco minutos acá en la plaza central y es un elemento que se mantiene ... la pura iniciativa social. Y en el momento que haya una demanda de algún tipo, porque se ha dado una situación ahora mismo con personas migrantes, ya sabes lo que ha ocurrido en Estados Unidos que ha hecho que se levante la gente. Zaragoza sí que tiene un pulso fuerte.’

¹² <https://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/sectores/casaculturas/>

3. Selected local approaches

3.1 Institutionalising local inclusion and migration policies – the Casa de la cultura

Another distinctive aspect of Zaragoza’s local migration and inclusion politics has been the close cooperation between the city council, the

municipality, and local civil society. A symbol for this and the institutionalisation of reception and inclusion policies is the existence of the 'House of culture' (Casa de la cultura) community centre.¹² Founded in 1998, today the Casa de la cultura is a municipal entity born out of and managed by social movements, NGOs and migrant-ran organisations: 'The Casa de la cultura is very important because it is governed by cooperative, antiracist organisations of all kinds of origins. The whole programme of Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora, is structured around the Casa de la cultura' (interview, Luisa Broto & Jesús Dominguez Sanz, July 28, 2020).¹³ '[W]e have a general management committee in the Casa de la cultura. Included are organisations like Caritas and SOS Racismo, more than 200 [civil society] organisations, the government of Aragón, and the City Hall of Zaragoza. However, this kind of management [by civil society organisation] does not mean that the municipal service does not bear responsibility.' Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 2020).¹⁴ The Casa de la cultura is thus highly important for local pro-migrant policies. All reception and inclusion programmes in Zaragoza – like the municipal reception programme 'Zaragoza, city of reception' and the 'municipal plan for a diverse and intercultural citizenship' – have been proposed, designed, discussed and developed with the participation of civil society organisations at the Casa de la cultura. The Casa is the main manager of these programmes. It has also provided the space for discussions and participatory processes regarding the development of these programmes.

Trinidad Lacarra, a social worker at the Casa de la cultura, calls the entity a 'pioneering service in Spain'. It is designed for any recent arrivals, migrant or other. It does not depend financially or ideologically on the Spanish state. It is subdivided into three areas, social rights, interculturality, and participation. There is a municipal employee for each of these, which are offered to the whole immigrant population.

3.2 Campaigning for raising awareness of migrants' rights

¹³ Spanish original: 'La casa de la cultura [...] es muy importante porque está regida por un patronato en el que están representadas todas las entidades sociales de todo tipo de países de origen, de cooperación, de antiracismo y todo el programa de Zaragoza acogedora en realidad está estructurado alrededor de la Casa de las Culturas.'

¹⁴ Spanish original: 'En la casa tenemos una junta general gestora que trabaja con el tema de la migración. Allí hay asociaciones, hay organizaciones como Cáritas y SOS Racismo, son más de 200 entidades y el gobierno de Aragón y el ayuntamiento de Zaragoza. Pero esta forma de gestión no impide que la responsabilidad sea del servicio municipal.'

¹⁵ <https://migrantesunderecho.org>

¹⁶ <https://aragonsolidario.org/>

¹⁷ <https://sosracismo.eu/sos-racismo-aragon-yodigonoalracismo/>

Since 2016 Zaragoza has run the awareness-raising campaign 'migration is a right' (Migrar es un derecho).¹⁵ The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness among residents about the situation and rights of migrants, and to describe migration as a fundamental right of all people.

The campaign has been run by the city council of Zaragoza, the 'Aragon Federation of Solidarity' (Federación Aragonense de Solidaridad, FAS)¹⁶ and the 'civic platform against racism and xenophobia' (Plataforma ciudadana contra el racismo y la xenofobia – SOS Racismo).¹⁷ It works with a corporate design in order to make it recognisable. Public events like concerts, exhibitions, poster campaigns, workshops, symposiums, conferences, and social media activities take place on world migrants' day (December 18th). The project has been divided into three phases with three corresponding mottos. The first, in 2016, was 'justice and migrants' rights' (justicia y derechos), the second (2017) was 'migration's root causes and migrants' rights' (las causas son muchas. El derecho. El mismo), and the third (2018), 'reception is integration' (acogida es

integración), highlighted the importance of cities for the reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees. On the website the latter motto is named as most important: 'The right to migration requires shelter and reception on arrival. The institutions of the municipality where the persons settle have a responsibility to integrate them. The citizens are responsible too.'¹⁸ The campaign poses the following questions to the residents of Zaragoza: What are you doing? Do you provide protection? Do you accompany anyone? Do you facilitate something? Do you help anyone? For Luisa Broto *Migrar es un derecho* also shows 'Zaragoza is a welcoming city and the City Hall has a commitment to cultural diversity and protection of arrivals.'¹⁹

3.3 Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora: the communal reception of new arrivals

¹⁸ The original text in Spanish: 'Para hacer efectivo el derecho a la migración tiene que existir un refugio de acogida. Las instituciones, el municipio que es donde las personas se asientan, tienen una responsabilidad en la integración de todas las personas. Y por ello toda la ciudadanía es también responsable'.

¹⁹ Spanish original: 'es también una representación de que Zaragoza es una ciudad acogedora y del compromiso del Ayuntamiento con la diversidad cultural, con las personas que tienen que dejar su hogar y buscar un sitio donde rehacer su vida y del derecho internacional que las protege' (<https://arainfo.org/zaragoza-pone-en-marcha-un-nuevo-programa-municipal-para-atender-a-personas-en-busqueda-de-refugio-recien-llegadas-a-la-ciudad/>)

²⁰ <https://zaragozaencomun.com/ciudad-acogedora/>

²¹ Spanish original: 'Hemos hecho un trabajo muy importante de reivindicar al estado para poder gestionar la acogida directamente y no por intermediación. Zaragoza tenía capacidad para hacerlo.'

²² Spanish original: 'A partir de ese año [2017] el sistema nacional de acogida se bloquea, lo que hace que muchísima gente se quede en lista de espera, con demora de meses... por ejemplo tenemos a gente en viviendas esperando que les llamen hace un año.'

²³ Spanish original: 'Una de las cosas que nos parece importante en el tema de acogida es que las personas tengan la información para ser autónomas. Eso, autonomía como ciudadano y ciudadana de la ciudad de Zaragoza, unos derechos que tiene cualquier habitante de esta ciudad, para eso también trabajamos. Eso tenemos muy claro.'

²⁴ <https://www.ayudasrehabilitacionzaragoza.es/>

In August 2018, the city council and municipality launched the communal reception and inclusion programme 'Zaragoza, reception city' (Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora).²⁰ The programme, like the Nausica programme in Barcelona, involves a holistic approach to communal reception.

'We have done very important work by asking the [Spanish] state to manage reception directly and not through intermediation. Zaragoza has the capacity to do it' (Luisa Broto & Jesus Dominguez Sanz, interviewed July 28, 2020).²¹ As in Barcelona, social movements, NGOs, and grassroots initiatives were consulted during the trajectory, design, development, and execution of the programme. Also like Barcelona's Nausica programme, measures were developed for reception and social and economic integration. The target groups were refugees in vulnerable situations: those who applied for the state programme for international protection but were rejected or were awaiting response. Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora addresses the defects of state-driven reception programmes, as Trinidad Lacarra points out: 'Since 2017 the national system of reception had been blocked. A great number of people were stuck on waiting lists, with delays of months ... we have people here who are awaiting their call for more than a year' (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 202).²²

The main aim of the Zaragoza reception programme is for participants to achieve social autonomy: 'It is important to us that arrivals obtain the information needed to be autonomous – a right of any inhabitant of the city' (ibid.).²³ The Casa de la cultura coordinates and executes the programme. It provides legal advice and accompaniment, translation and interpretation, and money for clothes and food. Furthermore, the city council and the Casa de la cultura collaborate with 'Zaragoza housing' (Zaragoza vivienda)²⁴ to house refugees and asylum seekers who participate in the municipal reception programme. The organisation has provided two floors for 10–12 people each, and the City Hall offers alternative accommodation in emergency cases. Since Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora was launched, the Casa de la cultura has taken care of 717 asylum seekers and international protection applicants, most from

Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, El Salvador and Ukraine. Since the Casa de la cultura and the municipal reception programme have become famous all over Spain and beyond, many migrants and refugees hope to access the programme or other support services offered. Combined with Covid-19 restrictions, the organisation is overloaded with requests for support.

3.4 The urban citizenship programme

‘Everything we did, we did with the local administration, collectives and civil society organisations. There is a culture of empowerment and participation’ (interview, Luisa Broto & Jesús Domínguez Sanz, July 28, 2020).²⁵ Zaragoza’s most comprehensive inclusion policy is the ‘municipal plan for a diverse and intercultural citizenship’ (Plan municipal para una ciudadanía diversa e intercultural). It has an operation time of three years (2019–2022). It is the successor of the ‘municipal plan of social integration and intercultural conviviality’ (plan municipal de integración social y convivencia intercultural) and an institutional expansion of Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora and Migrar es un derecho.

The plan was approved in March 2019 by Zaragoza’s city council after a two year highly transparent and participative process regarding its design and development. This process included the city council, the municipality, big NGOs, and civil society groups. The plan had been proposed by the local civil society in 2017:

‘I’m going to tell you about a plan designed, agreed on and promoted by civil society actors. They launched a petition to the administration, who made it happen. So, there was a process of participation [...]. The big associations would participate too. We did not want a plan by migrants’ organisations only, but rather a process in which the city councillors for education, health, urban planning, and civil protection would participate too – a very holistic participation’ (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 2020).²⁶

²⁵ Spanish original: ‘todo lo que se hizo no sólo se hizo con la administración local sino con organizaciones y colectivos de la sociedad civil. Es también una cultura de empoderar a los colectivos para que reclamen. [...] La manera de anclar las políticas que desarrollamos era a través de la participación.’

²⁶ Spanish original: ‘Te hablaré de un plan que se ha diseñado y consensuado por los actores de la sociedad civil. Lo que me gusta también es que el plan ha sido promovido por estos actores a petición a la administración y que la administración local lo ha respondido y ha podido efectuar. Entonces, hubo un proceso de participación [...] también han participado asociaciones muy grandes. No queríamos que fuera un plan de organizaciones inmigrantes, sino que ha sido un proceso en el que participaron Educación, Sanidad, Urbanismo del ayuntamiento, Protección Civil, osea, una participación muy integral’.

After the civil society organisations had launched the petition and the city council agreed on it in 2017, the participative process began in 2018. It included the consultation of diverse institutional and civil society actors for a profile of the foreign born and autochthonous groups living in the city. Once the description was created, a draft of a plan was proposed, which was revisited by the actors included, and then presented to the political parties represented in the city council. After the city council had approved the plan in March 2019, a core group (grupo motor) was built including representatives of the ‘civic platform against racism and xenophobia/SOS racismo’, the migrant and Roma associations, the management committee of the Casa de la cultura and other municipal staff. The core group planned the implementation and execution of the municipal plan. The action plan was subdivided into four thematic axes: reception (e.g. Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora), culture (the creation of programmes on cultural diversity), openness (e.g. Migrar es un derecho), and participation (initiate inclusive labour politics, reinforcement of social housing programmes etc.). In each area challenges, aims and milestones (e.g. to end hate, racism, and xenophobia) were formulated

27 Spanish original: 'Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora tiene retos, por ejemplo: potenciar la casa de la cultura como espacio especializado de acogida en la ciudad de Zaragoza; fortalecer los programas y servicios existentes ya, y pues aquí es lo que hablamos del programa de acogida municipal, del refuerzo y promoción grupales, porque trabajamos haciendo acciones de manera individual pero también en grupo porque entendemos que toda la fuerza que aporta el grupo, no la aporta la intervención individual, entonces hacemos acciones grupales dirigidas fundamentalmente, y no nos da el cuerpo, necesitamos refuerzo.'

28 Spanish original: 'Un plan que apuesta por la acogida, por la inclusión, la participación, la interrelación y la convivencia como ejes fundamentales a partir de los cuales construir ciudadanía, una ciudadanía diversa, plural y con múltiples voces que nos enriquecen' (<https://www.zaragoza.es/contenidos/derechosociales/diversidad-cultural/Plan-MC-DI-marzo2019.pdf>; p. 9).

29 Spanish original: 'El plan ponía por escrito las necesidades que se estaban detectando, dar soluciones concretas para esas necesidades, para darle coerción para lo que está en la ciudad. Integrar, desde el proceso de acogida, hasta el proceso educativo, sanitario, como algo muy integral de la ciudad. La respuesta a la pregunta de cómo queremos vivir en nuestra ciudad.'

30 Spanish original: 'Lo que hicimos con las organizaciones de allá fue decir 'qué puede hacer el ayuntamiento?' No podemos hacer más de lo que estamos haciendo en Zaragoza pero sí podemos apoyar en origen. Podemos apoyar los proyectos que están haciendo en los campos de refugiados de Lesbos y por eso creamos esas subvenciones para apoyar específicamente allí.'

31 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about>

32 National Spanish network Intercultural Cities Programme Network (ICC) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/participating-cities> [The global city network ICC, created in 2008 by the Council of Europe, by now consists of 140 cities all over the world. In 2010, the then City Council initiated the 'Barcelona Interculturality Plan' that generated fundamental courses of action like confidence, mutual acknowledgement, effective communication, dialogue and debate, education and exchange, pacific mediation

and special programmes were developed. Trinidad Lacarra describes the action plan for the area of reception policies:

'Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora faced challenges [established in the action plan], for instance: to enhance the Casa de la cultura as a specialised space for reception in the city of Zaragoza; to strengthen the existing programmes and services' (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 2020).²⁷ The introduction on the website of the Zaragoza City Hall points out that the 'municipal plan for a diverse and intercultural citizenship' considers 'reception, inclusion, participation, interaction, and conviviality as the fundamental axes for constructing citizenship, a diverse, plural, and polyphonic citizenship, which enriches our lives'.²⁸ Trinidad la Carra, too, highlights the holistic urban citizenship approach of the municipal plan for a diverse and intercultural citizenship:

'The plan has noted our needs, and proposes tangible solutions for cohesion and inclusion – from reception to education and health. [It is] the answer to the question of how we want to live in our city' (Trinidad Lacarra, interviewed on October 19, 2020).²⁹

3.5 International cooperation

Zaragoza is one of the Spanish cities that invests most in international cooperation. Since 2015, 0.5% of the annual municipal budget has been dedicated to projects or to general development aid in the areas of origin and transit of refugees, e.g. Lebanon or the refugee camps in Lesbos (Greece). Here, too, the city hall and municipality collaborate with social organisations and NGOs in these regions of origin and transit.

'We asked the organisations over there, 'How can the City Hall help?' We can't do more than what we are doing in Zaragoza, but we can help where people come from. We can support the projects in the refugee camps in Lesbos. So we created these subsidies in order to help there' (Luisa Broto & Jesús Domínguez Sanz, July 28, 2020).³⁰

4. Advocacy and network activities

Intercultural Cities Programme

The discourses around diverse and intercultural urban citizenship in Zaragoza reflect the narratives and requirements of the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) global network. The ICC was founded in 2008 with the support of the European Council.³¹ Since 2017 Zaragoza has been a member of the ICC Spain Network of Intercultural Cities (Red de ciudades interculturales – RECI).³² From this time forward practically all local solidarity cities' strategies and programmes in Zaragoza are based on the following definition by the RECI manual 'The intercultural city step by step' (La ciudad intercultural paso a paso):³³

‘The intercultural city has a diverse population that includes persons of different nationalities, origins, languages, or religions/faiths. Most citizens consider diversity a resource not a problem, and accept that all cultures change when assimilating. The city authorities publicly defend respect for diversity and plural identity. The city actively fights prejudice and discrimination and guarantees equality of opportunities for all, adjusting its structures, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population without betraying the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Together with companies, civil society and the professionals of public services, the intercultural city develops a series of policies and actions to strengthen and improve interaction between diverse groups. A high level of trust and social cohesion help to prevent conflicts and violence, increase the efficiency of politics, and make the city attractive to both persons and investors’ (European Council 2010.)³⁴

At the transnational and European level Zaragoza additionally forms part of the Eurocities network as well as of the Eurocities work group Migration and Integration, and is a signee of the Eurocities statement on asylum in cities.

The municipal movement

The second strength of Zaragozan politics is the Spanish municipal movement. Municipalism aims at democratising the local level and urban society through the expansion of citizen participation and control (e.g. through the communitarianisation of water and social housing). Municipalism entails an idea of urban citizenship. In contrast to the cultural-ethnic notion of diversity of ICC urban citizenship discourse, municipalism politicises urban citizenship as a question of social and political rights. Municipal programmes are developed with the active participation of neighbourhoods, social movements and local NGOs. Inclusive municipal migration and refugee politics have become a main topic for the municipal movement in order to avoid excluding non-citizens. In the summer of migration of 2015, the municipal movements, led by Barcelona’s mayor Ada Colau and the Barcelona en Comú (BComú), extended the narrative of non-exclusion to the transnational level by harshly criticising the closure of EU borders, expressing solidarity with civil rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and demanding the Spanish central government to grant more autonomy to Spanish municipalities for reception and inclusion of refugees and migrants. The letter ‘We, the cities of Europe’, initiated in August of 2015 by Barcelona’s mayor Ada Colau and Madrid’s mayor Manuela Carmena, was endorsed, in the first place, by the other municipal city councils of Valencia, Zaragoza, A Coruña, Cádiz, and Santiago de Compostela. These cities proclaimed themselves ‘cities of change’ (ciudades de cambio), forming the core of the Spanish City of Refuge initiative – the ciudades refugio network.

in conflicts and cooperation and coexistence. The ICC network aims at bringing together various stakeholders (business, civil society, public service professionals) within a city in order to develop policies and actions to encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups, to help to prevent conflicts and violence and ‘make the city attractive for people and investors alike.’

³³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/participating-cities>

³⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/1680301b-76dcpis.upf.edu/~ricard-zapata/~ricard-zapata/MANUALPIgritim.pdf>; p. 62 [translation by the author]

³⁵ <http://www.femp.es/comunicacion/noticias/red-de-municipios-de-acogida-de-refugiados-de-la-femp>; <https://arainfo.org/el-ayuntamiento-de-zaragoza-se-suma-a-la-red-de-municipios-de-acogida/>

Spanish Cities United: Network of Municipalities of Refugee Reception

On the national level, Zaragoza is also a member of the ‘Network of Municipalities of Refugee Reception’ (Red de Municipios de Acogida

de Refugiados - RMAR).³⁵ This network, specialising in issues of migrant reception, was launched in 2016 as a sub-network of the Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias, FEMP ('Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces'). RMAR appears less critical and militant than the ciudades refugio network. It was nonetheless born from the observation that EU and national governments are unwilling to properly welcome refugees. The network has several objectives, such as the development of a protocol for the reception of refugees common to member cities, improving access to social services and empadronamiento (registering with the municipality), raising awareness among the local population of the plight of migrants, and sharing of information and experience between municipalities and local governments. It maintains a close collaboration with organisations specialised in migration like the 'Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid' (CEAR)³⁶, ACCEM³⁷, the Spanish Red Cross³⁸, the UNHCR³⁹, and Amnesty International⁴⁰. The network positions itself as an intermediary between the Spanish government and local governments and municipalities. This was the case when the Aquarius civil rescue ship, managed by 'Doctors without borders' (MSF)⁴¹, arrived in the port of Valencia in 2018. The Spanish municipalities network had gathered the proposals of more than 300 volunteer cities and municipalities to receive the 629 people on the Aquarius. Before, the rescue ship had to cruise for days in the Mediterranean, since no EU member state was willing to receive the vessel. Luisa Broto & Jesus Dominguez Sanz highlight the importance of networking and cooperation between ciudades refugios in Spain as well as on the transnational level:

'We have established connections [...] e.g. to Valencia, Cádiz, Barcelona. Since 2015 we've had three meetings of the ciudades refugios, and an international meeting at the European level that took place at the Vatican proposed by the Pope, where the motto was: 'refugees are your brothers'. We participated in the conferences that happened there. This tightened our connections, we fraternised with other municipalities, wove beautiful ideas, and exchanged experiences between cities.' (interview, Luisa Broto & Jesús Dominguez Sanz, October 19, 2020).⁴²

³⁶ <https://www.cear.es/>

³⁷ <https://www.accem.es/>

³⁸ <https://www2.cruzroja.es/>

³⁹ https://www.acnur.org/es-es/#_

⁴⁰ https://crm.es.amnesty.org/unete-a-amnistia/?origen=ban-nersocio_top

⁴¹ <https://www.msf.org/>

⁴² Spanish original: 'Hemos establecido lazos con ciudades [...] Valencia, Cádiz, Barcelona. Hemos hecho a lo largo de estos años 3 encuentros de ciudades refugio, encuentro internacional a nivel europeo que fue en Italia, en el Vaticano, propuesto por el Papa, donde la consigna es 'los refugiados son tus hermanos' y participamos en las conferencias que allí se llevaron a cabo. Se estrecharon lazos, que era lo que también queríamos y hermanamos municipios de apoyo y se tejieron ideas super bonitas y se transpasaron experiencias entre ciudades.'

5. Update: What is new in 2023?

- ◆ The governing conservative party Partido Popular (PP) won the municipal elections in May 2023.⁴³ It won 15 of the 31 seats in the city council and appointed the new mayor, Natalia Chueca. Compared to the legislative period (2009–2019) of the left-leaning ‘Zaragoza en Común’, which had a special focus on diversity and participatory and solidarity-based welcoming and migration policies, the PP government has not focused on municipal migration policies in recent years.
- ◆ In the run-up to the 2023 municipal elections, the left-wing group around the party ‘Zaragoza en Común’ has criticised the stagnation of the programme Zaragoza, ciudad acogedora (welcoming city of Zaragoza). It demands the continuation of the programme from the funds available for this purpose in the city’s budget for development cooperation and international solidarity. Zaragoza should once again live up to its reputation as a welcoming city for migrants and refugees.⁴⁴
- ◆ However, in 2021, former mayor Jorge Azcón (2019–2023, PP) addressed a letter to the Spanish president, Sánchez, calling for the city of Zaragoza to be a city of refuge for particularly vulnerable Afghan refugees. He recalled the municipal programme for hosting refugees developed by the ‘Casa de las Culturas’ (see inspiring approach).⁴⁵

⁴³ <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/aragon/zaragoza/2023/05/28/resultados-zaragoza-elecciones-municipales-escriutinio-2023-1654496.html>

⁴⁴ <https://aragondigital.es/politica/2023/05/17/zec-e-iu-piden-que-zaragoza-vuelva-a-ser-referencia-como-ciudad-acogedora-de-refugiados/>

⁴⁵ <https://hoyaragon.es/noticias-aragon/azcon-ofrece-a-sanchez-que-zaragoza-sea-ciudad-refugio-de-afganos/>

The **Moving Cities** project provides an in-depth research of progressive cities in Europe, exploring their most inspiring and successful approaches to migration policies. Find more city reports at www.moving-cities.eu.

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