

GENEVA, CITY OF DIVERSITY

Municipal policy of the City of Geneva
on diversity

30 July 2014



A committed city

Geneva is a unique city. With nationals from nearly 190 countries, it has always had a multicultural identity. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences of its inhabitants make for a highly cosmopolitan society. In this internationally renowned university city, multilingualism is firmly established both in the private sphere and in public life. The heart of a cross-border urban area and home to nearly a million people, it enjoys an economic dynamism based on the vitality of its inhabitants. It is thanks to their contribution that Geneva is the city we know today.

The stakes are high, because it is in cities and large urban centres that differences show themselves most intensely, creativity and innovation abound, and ideas and opinions confront one another. Cities therefore have a fundamental responsibility in terms of social cohesion.

With 20,000 new arrivals making their homes on the municipal territory each year and 48 % of its population not having Swiss nationality, the City of Geneva is a place of exchanges, encounters, and sometimes friction. It is a shared living space where a public policy that recognises diversity and opposes discrimination and stereotyping makes sense.

The local authorities intend therefore to make diversity a strength, a positive force for building this shared living space. A model of shared success. This realistic and positive vision of diversity underpins a policy which seeks to develop the city hand in hand with those who make it what it is: its residents.

For the authorities, it is not a question of elaborating a "policy of integration of foreigners and/or migrants". Integration implies that there is a standard which some people fall short of achieving. Seeking to integrate individuals is tantamount to considering them as the targets of a public initiative whose success - or more often failure - can be measured and evaluated.

On the contrary, the authorities of the City of Geneva consider the inhabitants of the municipal territory to be fully-fledged participants in the life of the City, regardless of their origin, residence status or length of stay. The City recognises their active contribution to the future of Geneva. Foreign nationals do not form an isolated part of the rest of the population. In this sense the Administrative Council upholds a different policy, distinct from the legislative framework outlined by the Federal Assembly and its application to cantons. For the City's executive, Geneva is and must remain an open city, respectful of every individual, where residents feel at home and play their part in social cohesion and a shared future.

The principles of a policy of diversity

The municipal policy on diversity translates the European Convention on Human Rights into actions. Accordingly the City of Geneva treats inhabitants of the municipal territory equally, without distinction as to their length of stay, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation.

Based on the principle of social inclusion and without denying the difficulties and tensions of living together, the municipal policy on diversity focuses on what brings people together and not on what divides them. It recognises the resources and dynamism of linguistic, ethnic and national communities, while forging an identity based on the shared values of human rights. The political will of the Administrative Council is to promote a city which is both diverse and united.

The participation in citizen, political and associative life is encouraged. In this way, municipal policy strengthens the sense of belonging to the place of residence, as do interactions between residents themselves.

The plurality of identities is considered to be the foundation of our society. Recognition of this principle is a prerequisite for social cohesion. No one should be forced to disown their identity, or their linguistic, cultural or religious inheritance, since the freedom of every individual is respected.

It is on these principles of equality, social inclusion, participation and plurality of identities that the values and spirit of the City of Geneva are based. The Administrative Council undertakes to apply these values in accordance with six strategic guidelines.



A 6-point policy

A welcoming city: the City of Geneva adopts a friendly and systematic welcome policy, emphasizing straight away that new city residents are welcome.

A participative city: the City actively encourages the fruits of open citizenship, allowing everyone to contribute very quickly to the life of the community and the greater good of their city.

An accessible city: the City of Geneva conducts a policy of accessibility to municipal public services. From a sense of fairness, it minimizes the obstacles (particularly administrative and linguistic) its residents may encounter.

A non-discriminating city: the City of Geneva militates actively against popular misconceptions, stereotypes and discrimination of any kind. To this end, it promotes public initiatives and supports the efforts of third-party institutions and associations.

A listening city: the City of Geneva, conscious that the rapid ebb and flow of migration can give rise to recoil and rejection, pays particular attention to these expressions of malaise and promotes a policy of responsiveness and awareness-raising.

A responsible city: as an employer and service provider, the City of Geneva undertakes to put in place a staff policy that reflects the city's diversity and gives employees the tools that will enable them to feel at ease in a complex environment and meet the needs of a varied public in the best possible way.

This document testifies to the Administrative Council's belief in a city of diversity and its determination to develop its work and services in that perspective.

*The Administrative Council
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