

Sabadell is a town in Catalonia and is the co-capital of Vallés Occidental region and, according to January 2013 data, has a total of 207,773 counted citizens. Close to the city of Barcelona (some 26 km) it is the fifth biggest city in Catalonia. In recent history, specifically the 19th and 20th centuries, the city spearheaded the industrialisation process in Catalonia, particularly the textile industry, becoming thus Spain's most important wool centre, acquiring "the Catalan Manchester" as a nickname.

During these years, urban development was at its peak and as such received a large number of new citizens originating from the rest of Spain, especially from Murcia and Andalucía. The first years of democracy saw the strengthening of urban cohesion between all the neighbourhoods that had blossomed as a result of demographic growth, giving way to one of the country's biggest cities. By the end of the 20th century the sector industry acquired greater importance, elevating the importance of commerce, businesses and financial institutions, absorbing a greater number of workers. As a result the urban landscape of the city undergoes a major overhaul, in which the Eix Macià is established as a service centre which brings together the city's commerce and business. By the same token, the city undergoes a transformation as different services and features: civic centres, day-care centres, libraries, parks and gardens. This transformation, and thanks to these features, resulted in an improvement in the citizen's standard of living.

As a response to 21st realities, the city has begun to tackle the challenges of new information and communication technologies, joining the "Cities of Knowledge" network. In light of this, it boasts a strong economic and social fabric, development in information industries, with a united and dynamic citizenry eager to aid in this development. As a result of hosting the Autonomous University of Barcelona and Tertiary School of Design, it also counts with a considerable student community. With the aim of becoming a reference point for an emerging information and knowledge society, the continuation of future projects necessitates private/public cooperation. Currently Sabadell has a significant degree of social cohesion in a variety of areas (cultural, environment, youth, etc.). Of these, a total of 56 have arisen in recent years. That over eight different religious groups with their 70 plus than associated centres of worship call Sabadell home speaks to the city's religious diversity (Sabadell religious diversity and convictions map <http://mapes.audir.org/sabadell/mapa.htm>).

As of 2000, Sabadell has undergone a significant shift in its demographic as a result of the foreign immigration which has affected Spain in general. As such Sabadell has welcomed citizens from countries all over the world, including Latin America, Africa and Asia. This translates into an increase of foreign population from 1% to 11.65%, 13.2% at its peak in 2010 (source: Local Registers, National Statistics Institute). With regards to the counted foreign population profile, and in accordance with Jan 2013 data, 43.6% of the afore mentioned citizens are of Latin American origin (mainly Bolivia and Ecuador), 30.9% are of African origin (generally Moroccan) and 7.11% of Asian origin (mainly China and Pakistan).

In light of this new sociodemographic and the challenges this reality poses, the town council established the Intercultural Council in 2006, which in 2007 was renamed the Office for New Citizens, offering welcoming, information and guidance services to newly arrived citizens. This office preceded the consequent Immigrants and Returning Catalan Residents law, approved by Catalonia's parliament in 2010.

In the current 2012/16 administration immigration and coexistence policies are managed by the Council for Civil Rights and Citizens, which sets out in its Plan Director 2011/15 goals the following with regard to foreign residents: (i) continue the development of necessary tools for the welcoming of recent arrivals, with the help of the local community; (ii) promote associationism while supporting a network of powerful speakers working towards inclusion, diversity and civil rights in a bid to strengthen civil society; (c) citizen education, providing tools to confront prejudices and stereotypes, showing proactiveness in the struggle against perceptions, encouraging critical thinking; (d) encourage association to projects promoting intercultural, inter-personal and inter-generational strategies which promote areas for association, experiences exchange and mutual understanding, placing high value on diversity.

Thanks to its intercultural policies, Sabadell is a member of the Spanish network for Intercultural Cities since 2012.

Town Council Website: <http://www.sabadell.cat/es/>