

Network Anti-Rumours Xarxa Anti-Rumors

Barcelona (Spain)

EU-MIA REPORT SUMMARY

Introduction

The Functioning Practice 'Network Anti-Rumors' was carried out in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. The practice was investigated by the EU-MIA consortium partner FIERI.

Operational context

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia – one of the most important 'Autonomous Communities' of Spain – counts over 1.5 million inhabitants. The foreign population, as of 1 January 2013, represents 17.4% of the total population. Immigration from Latin America started between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, when the city began to attract a considerable amount of Peruvian, Ecuadorian and Dominican women for housework, care work and catering. A large number of labourers also arrived from Latin America for work in the construction sector, particularly flourishing over the years in which the city has completely changed its appearance through works of urban regeneration. From the 2000s, cultural, scientific and research activities increased, attracting more high-skilled immigrants from many European countries. Such a rapid evolution brought important changes in the local society. This transformation has laid the foundations for a different approach of the city integration policies, less focused on shelter and assistance issues and more centred on interculturalism.

The Functioning Practice

The *Xarxa Anti-Rumors* was created as a communicative and social impact strategy in July 2010, as planned by the eighth strategic area of the *Plan Barcelona Intercultural*. It established "the planning of a city strategy against negative rumours without foundation undermining the coexistence within a context of diversity, starting from network initiative with many subjects and social actors, promoting the role of an active anti-rumours agent". The name *Xarxa* ("network" in the Catalan language), actually, identifies only one of the lines of action of the Anti-Rumours Strategy, even if it is used to indicate the whole strategy.

Objectives

The *Xarxa Anti-Rumors* was created as a communicative and social impact strategy in July 2010. The name *Xarxa* ("network" in the Catalan language) actually identifies only one of the lines of action of the Anti-Rumours Strategy, even if it is frequently used to indicate the whole strategy. The interculturalist approach of the City of Barcelona calls for the removal of all those elements representing an obstacle to social cohesion, such as processes of fragmentation and social segmentation, permanence of prejudices and stereotypes that could give rise to racist behaviours, discrimination practices and populism. The three principles underpinning the FP are:

- The equality principle,
- The principle of acknowledgement of diversity, and
- The principle of positive interaction

The purpose of the Strategy, therefore, is to maintain social cohesion and to favour interaction and intercultural coexistence through the fight against rumours, stereotypes and prejudices about the cultural diversity in Barcelona.

Partners

The Anti-Rumours Strategy is a project promoted by the Municipality of Barcelona. The practice is also greatly based on the existence of a wide network. In 2010, the network involved about 65 people, counting associations, municipal subjects and individuals. They were all active in the city, dealing with immigration, interculturality and cultural dynamisation issues. Presently, there are about 400 network members formally involved.

Chronology and funding

The practice is totally financed by the Municipality and it has experienced a considerable increase in the available budget over the years. The Anti-Rumours Strategy, as said, was launched between 2010 and 2011. The first concrete action was the publication of a handbook for fighting against rumours and the stereotypes in Barcelona. Such a practical tool, that was the result of an initial study conducted by the Municipality, collects the 12 most diffused rumours on immigration identified in Barcelona. Further communication tools and equipment, aimed at those 12 specific rumours increased during the years. Currently, the core of the Anti-Rumours Strategy involves: a) Training of anti-rumour agents (about 700 people have been trained), b) Catalogue of anti-rumour activities, c) Handbook for fighting against rumours and stereotypes, d) Anti-Rumours comics “Blanca e Rosita Barcelona”, and e) Anti-Rumour videos.

Outcomes and the next steps

The amount of services and activities provided by the Catalogue has increased over the years, also thanks to a growing flow of funding. This increase in the supply has also caused a considerable growth in the demand of services and activities by several city actors. Since the start, the Strategy has been experiencing a very active participation and involvement of the associations of the network. The network has also grown thanks to its wider openness. There has been a shift in the attitude and in the strategy of the City which decided to open-up to many associations which were less well known, but sometimes closer to specific communities or present in particular neighbourhoods.

The demand for materials and services provided by the Catalogue of activities has often been higher than the supply. There is, thus, strong interest and involvement of external subjects, such as neighbourhood associations, schools, public help desks and other actors involved in training.

In the last years, the FP has widened its scope both outside and inside the city. The national and international resonance of the Strategy has quickly become broader and broader. Many local administrations, both Catalan and Spanish, have contacted the Technical Office of the Municipality for a possible portability of the practice. An agreement has recently been signed with the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (the local Government) for sharing means and tools of the strategy at the level of Autonomous Community. The Strategy has raised some interest also at the European level and was selected as a European good practice.