ANTIRUMOURS
HANDBOOK

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Chapter 1
Introduction

A. The antirumours strategy

The ARS is a long-term process of **social change**. It seeks to prevent discrimination, improve coexistence, and harness the potential of diversity by triggering a change in **perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours** among the general population and specific target groups.

In order to reach these global goals, the antirumours strategy (ARS) focuses on three specific objectives:

▶ **To engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders** and citizens by implementing a local public policy and building a cooperative multi-level social platform within the framework of a long-term "antirumours city strategy"

▶ **To promote critical thinking and raise awareness** of the negative effects of stereotypes, prejudices, and false rumours by implementing innovative and participative actions to reduce them, and **challenging the negative narratives around diversity.**

▶ **To influence the political and social agenda** so that reducing prejudices and preventing discrimination is recognised as a crucial collective goal for society as a whole.

The ARS' innovative methodology combines the promotion of a public policy with a process of social participation to engage and involve a wide variety of civil society actors.

Rumours play an important role in the way stereotypes and prejudices spread and are consolidated. Contrary to what some might think, **the ARS does not involve a communication campaign that uses "objective data" to debunk rumours directly.** Instead, it seeks to explore and influence their root causes, taking into account specific socio-cultural contexts. It focuses on the importance of reducing stereotypes and prejudices by recognising their multi-dimensional and complex nature.

B. Origin and expansion

The ARS was first promoted in 2010 in Barcelona. It was one of the actions of the city's Intercultural Plan, which had been drafted through a participatory process involving over 3,000 people. As part of that process, five questions were asked, one of which sought to identify factors that prevent people of different origins and ethnic or cultural backgrounds from interacting in an entirely positive way. The majority of responses cited subjective factors like stereotypes, prejudices, and ignorance.

Given the importance that citizens themselves assigned to these subjective factors, the decision was taken to promote a strategy that specifically focused on reducing the stereotypes, prejudices, and false rumours that surround socio-cultural diversity.

The ARS was conceived, from the outset, as a long-term process. Rather than launching a communication campaign to dismantle prejudices with objective data – an approach that was considered simplistic and ineffective - there was a strong preference for a more qualitative approach, that would include an intensive ground strategy, and organised actions across different fields. These efforts would work towards the goal of prompting critical thinking and awareness amongst the general population.

From its beginnings, the strategy drew the attention of many cities and organisations both in Spain and abroad, as well as from the media and citizens. In 2013, an initial project to expand the ARS took the methodology to other Spanish cities, as well as the members of the Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities (RECI), linked to the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme. With funding from the Open Society Initiative for Europe, and the support of the Council of Europe and the Banking Foundation "La Caixa", the Barcelona experience was implemented in the cities of Fuenlabrada, Getxo, Sabadell, and Tenerife Island. More cities have since joined this group.

Based on the project's positive results, in 2014, the Council of Europe led a European project (C4i: Communication for Integration) to adapt and evaluate the antirumours methodology in more European cities (Limerick, Botkyrka, Nuremberg, Erlangen, Lublin, Patras, Loures, Amadora, Bilbao, and Sabadell), alongside the participation of Barcelona. The objective was to systematise the methodology and, above all, evaluate its impact in a more rigorous way than previous evaluations had allowed for. The results of the project were very positive and since then, interest in the ARS from other cities and international organisations has only grown.

Finally, in recent years, the ARS has also attracted interest from cities, governments, and organisations from non-European countries such as Japan, Canada, Mexico, Jordan, Morocco, Chile, Colombia, and the USA, among others.

C. Why an antirumours strategy?

At this point, we could (and should) ask ourselves why an ARS is necessary. For readers of this handbook, the relevance of combating prejudices and discrimination is likely obvious. The reason why such a broad and long-term strategy is necessary may not, however, be immediately apparent.

These days, learning how to live in diverse communities is a shared and global challenge. Avoiding segregation, discrimination, and racism is key when building inclusive and fair societies. History has shown that processes of social polarisation, and the increase of hate speech have very negative and even catastrophic consequences, and unfortunately, these processes are on the rise around the globe.

Some of us imagine that discrimination does not pose any serious problems in our specific environment. In reality, rumours, prejudice, and discriminatory attitudes abound in all cities even if the majority of the population is oblivious of their presence. **Populist, demagogic, and simplistic discourse has proliferated in recent years and reinforced prejudices. Such discourse often harks back to an idealised past, and creates barriers between "us" and "them", defined in** ethnic, national, cultural, economic, or religious terms. In some cases, these narratives are relatively weak, but in other cases, they find support from citizens who feel particularly disenfranchised and disappointed in a world where globalisation, inequalities, radicalism, and the decline of some stable institutions generate anxiety and uncertainty. "Others", those who are "different" are often held responsible for economic and social problems, and some groups in particular (refugees, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, Roma, etc.) are made the subject of the discourse of fear and hostility. This discrimination is associated with the violation of fundamental rights of individuals, and can also lead to hate crimes.

The ARS aims to tackle these simplistic narratives which democratic societies have been unable to challenge so far. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the ARS does not (just) aim to prevent and avoid major problems of stigmatisation and discrimination, but seeks to take advantage of diversity by generating urban environments where socio-cultural diversity "translates" into a positive resource for development at all levels. It is evident that prejudice and rumours play a significant role in hindering positive interaction. They create mental barriers to harnessing the talents, skills, and capabilities of all citizens, and they hamper innovation and creativity. Minimising prejudice and rumours brings benefits not only to the victims of prejudice, but to society as a whole.

Finally, we would like to highlight the fact that we live in what some have defined as an era of "post-truth". Although internet and social media bring new opportunities for increased connection between people, they are also highly effective channels for spreading false rumours and hate speech. The ARS seeks to prevent these attitudes from becoming "normalised" by encouraging an awareness of their negative consequences and calling for action. Responsibility for this issue is collective; governments, civil society, and citizens all have key roles to play.

D. Purposes and background of the handbook

This handbook responds to the need to **systematise the ARS approach and methodology. It also provides practical examples** to help cities, and other stakeholders, that are interested in learning more about this initiative and how to put it into practice.

The handbook should be read as an update and revision of the contents prepared as part of the 2013 antirumours project and especially the "Cities Free of Rumours" guide developed for the European antirumours project C4i. The lessons learned in recent years coupled with the growth in the number of cities that have joined the ARS and the interest it has generated since then call for an update and further systematisation of the strategy's guidelines.

This handbook provides more information on the theoretical approach and reformulates the objectives of the ARS and some

aspects of its methodology. Some of the new initiatives, inspired by the ARS, that have arisen in recent years have overlooked the lessons that have been learned as the programme has developed. Consequently, some have failed to take key elements of the approach into account or have struggled to overcome some of the weaknesses identified in past experience. The handbook will, then, be useful both for cities that have been implementing the ARS for years, and for those that have just started, or are planning to do so in the near future. Each new city that has launched this initiative has enriched the global strategy with new ideas, experiences, and approaches.

The nature of the ARS's methodology leaves significant room for each city to adapt it to its own context and specific circumstances, as well as decide its own particular priorities and objectives. Each of implementation of the strategy opens new opportunities for collaboration with diverse actors, that in turn, adapt the antirumours approach to different areas and sectors. The principle of "contagion" brings new actors and actions that serve to inspire other cities, and adds to the common and shared knowledge.

Finally, a wealth of useful resources now complement the contents of this handbook, presenting knowledge generated both within the framework of the cities' ARS and by other projects, studies, and policies that have been developed over the years and have proven to be effective. The ARS does not intend to reinvent the wheel/start from scratch and much of its own success will be determined by its ability to take full advantage of previous successful initiatives in this field.

Taking into account the complexity of the theme, and the nature of this initiative, we are sure that we will continue to identify new weaknesses, as well as opportunities, that will force us to update some of the content of this handbook again. Without any doubt, this would be the best indicator of the success and vitality of this necessary initiative.

Chapter 2
The context of the antirumours approach

A. The humility of a great ambition

The ARS does not set itself the impossible task of entirely eradicating all of the stereotypes and prejudices that abound in human society. They are part of the human condition, and play a relevant role in our lives and in the way we relate to others. In addition, their origins, causes, and forms of consolidation are highly complex and multidimensional (social, psychological, cultural etc.) and thus are connected to many aspects of people's daily experiences.

It would be rather naïve to imagine that an isolated, local initiative could fix this problem. Therefore, setting clear and realistic goals is very important, particularly when such goals demand profound social change. **While it is important to build the ARS on a variety of actions, the key to success is a profound and long term approach aiming to change, for instance, the prevailing social norms of a given socio-cultural context.**

With this idea in mind, the ARS was designed to act "virally" growing and spreading – rather like a rumour – to as many people and actors in the political, social, economic, academic, and cultural life of our society as it could. **The success of the ARS can be measured in terms of its impact on reducing stereotypes and prejudices, but also in its ability to spread and to involve many different individuals**.

In this process, the ARS must learn from, and draw on, the experience of the myriad movements – both past and present – that have sought to promote human and civil rights, such as the feminist, LGTB, and of course many anti-racism movements.

B. The intercultural framework

The ARS was not conceived somewhere in an isolated office, detached from other policies and social dynamics. It was a developed within a framework of on-going social and political commitments to an intercultural approach to diversity – an approach described by the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme as follows

> "rather than ignoring diversity (as with guest-worker approaches), denying diversity (as with assimilationist approaches), or overemphasising diversity and thereby reinforcing walls between culturally distinct groups (as with multiculturalism), interculturalism is about explicitly recognising the value of diversity while doing everything possible to increase interaction, mixing and hybridisation between cultural communities."

Fighting discrimination, racism, and segregation is one of the crucial goals of the intercultural cities approach. It seeks to deal with the root causes of inequality, discrimination and lack of cohesion – the natural tendency of in-groups, defined by ethnic or cultural criteria – to secure benefits for the members of the group at the expense of other groups. The Intercultural Cities programme supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively and realise the "diversity advantage." The notion of the diversity advantage implies understanding and treating diversity and minority groups, such as migrants, as a resource for social, cultural and economic development, rather than just as vulnerable groups in need of support and services.

We can synthesise the intercultural approach into three basic principles:

Equality: Moving towards interculturality requires a clear commitment to equal rights and social opportunities for all citizens. This implies the need, among other things, to promote policies against exclusion and discrimination.

Recognition of diversity: The intercultural approach also involves recognising and valuing socio-cultural diversity, not from a passive perspective of strict tolerance, but as a structural reality that is part of the human condition and that brings with it complexities and opportunities that should be taken advantage of. It is not about over-emphasizing the differences, but recognising them and highlighting the similarities and common aspects that we share as citizens in a given context.

Positive interaction: In order to address both the complexities and the opportunities that diversity poses, it is important to experience diversity on a day-to-day basis and in all social spheres. This interaction is fundamental to recognise the similarities, and to relativize many of the differences that often separate people. It is a two-way process that is dynamic and reciprocal. Therefore, in addition to policies in favour of equality of rights, equal opportunities, and the recognition of diversity, it is fundamental to promote spaces for interaction, dialogue, and mutual knowledge. Positive interaction does not mean interaction that is free from conflicts and complexities. It is about approaching these conflicts and complexities on a day-to-day basis rather than hiding or ignoring them until they lead to much more significant conflicts.

To sum up, the ARS should be understood as a specific strategy or instrument within a set of political and social actions aimed at promoting the creation of more inclusive and intercultural societies. We can hardly have a positive impact through the promotion of an ARS if it is not part of a global commitment and a set of cross-cutting policies in favour of these objectives.

C. Applying the antirumours approach in other contexts

Initially promoted as a city strategy, the ARS has expanded, garnering attention from various institutions, organisations, governments, educational centres and companies, curious to find out how the approach can be adapted to other contexts.

Although the methodology set out in this handbook is addressed to cities - the most developed and evaluated ARS users to date - **the key elements of the ARS can be relatively easily adapted to other contexts.**

While the general objectives and principles of the ARS are the same, whether we are dealing with a school, company, organisation, neighbourhood, or a country, the methodology needs to be adjusted to each specific situation.

Indeed work has begun – within various city strategies – to adapt the approach to different spaces. The insights generated through these processes will be very relevant for actors looking to tailor the ARS to other contexts. There is a growing demand for the ARS to be adopted in a number of socially and culturally diverse countries. This line of action that will no doubt require fuller investigation over the coming years, and is perfectly aligned with the ARS' ambition to help variety of actors from across all fields to grow and engage.

D. Antirumours, anti-racism and hate speech

The ARS focuses on the way stereotypes and prejudice are created and above all on how to reduce them, or at least reduce their negative impact, in order to prevent discrimination and promote more positive interaction between people.

Denouncing the "pyromaniacs" of prejudice and hatred – although a very important task – is not a priority for the ARS. The strategy sets its focus instead on the promotion of the forest's daily up-keep as it were and the creation of firebreaks to prevent the spread of flames (hatred). It is a question of avoiding the normalisation of hate speech, and finding greater support and complicity among the citizens.

Why put the emphasis on rumours and not directly on racism or hate speech?

Maintenance requires raising awareness, promoting critical thinking, and proactively confronting prejudices on a daily basis. **The ARS does not primarily target the racists and xenophobes in our society but the majority of the population – few of whom could deny that they have participated at one point or another in spreading a rumour.**

Focusing on rumours has proven very effective in both attracting attention and including people who often do not feel challenged or targeted by more explicit anti-racist messages. In this sense, **rumours are the starting point, the gateway to addressing deeper issues about the causes and consequences of prejudice and its link to discrimination, racism, and hate speech**.

As a tool, the ARS complements and should be used in collaboration with other anti-racist strategies. In no case should the ARS be understood as a "light" anti-racist strategy. It is an approach that emphasizes a specific dimension of the prevention of all kinds of discriminatory attitudes (not just racism) and hate speech.

The ARS does not focus on the tip of the iceberg (hate crimes) but works away at lower levels, where prejudice is generated and learned. Given the complexity of its causes, and the importance of more structural factors at play in the social and power relations of our societies, the ARS appeals to the responsibility of certain actors and fields (politics, media, education, etc.) and to the collective and individual responsibility of all citizens.

Even if discrimination did not exist in a given social context (an unlikely scenario), stereotypes and prejudices would still prevent positive interaction between people of different backgrounds and profiles. A society where different groups were respected and tolerated but did not mix or relate to one another would not be taking advantage of the opportunities that diversity offers. In such a scenario, the ARS, and an intercultural approach more generally, would still be of great value.

Chapter 3
Theoretical basis

Before we begin to define the principles and methodology of the ARS, we must examine the **concepts of: stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination and their theoretical basis.** There are many lines of research into the nature, origins and consequences of these concepts. Current theories in the field of social psychology emphasize the multifaceted nature of their roots comprising cognitive, emotional, and social components. To be rigorous and effective when implementing an ARS, we must learn from the various disciplines that have expanded the understanding of not only the origins of rumours, but strategies for their successful elimination. We also need to acknowledge that the ARS arose within a specific socio-cultural context and its approach is obviously marked by its Western perspective, whereas stereotypes, prejudices and rumours are present in all societies. They are part of they human condition but their learning process is culturally specific.

A. Definitions: stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination

Stereotypes are beliefs that we hold about the characteristics of a specific group, especially those characteristics that differentiate them from other groups (gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, profession, physical appearance, etc.). These are generalisations that can be negative or positive, although we tend to generate more of the former, and even the latter can have negative consequences.

Prejudices are unjustified and mostly negative attitudes towards an out-group or its members. Prejudices represent an affective dimension of our attitudes. They include emotions and feelings that can take the form of dislike, mistrust, fear, or even hatred, although more ambivalent and even positive prejudices can also exist.

As overgeneralisations, stereotypes and prejudices do not allow the individualisation and recognition of diversity among the members of the stereotyped group. Although they may have some empirical basis, they do not correspond to each person in the group, and this makes them unfair and limiting.

The real problem with stereotypes and prejudices is their potential to influence our attitudes and behaviours toward other people. **They can have very negative consequences such as discrimination, an unjustified and negative behaviour towards members of groups based on their membership.**

Discrimination is obviously a very serious problem and can affect many areas of a person's life (work, education, health or access to housing among many others). There is a wide variety of categories based on which people might be discriminated against, including ethnicity (racism), place of origin (xenophobia), religion (islamophobia, anti-Semitism, etc.), gender, sexual orientation, age, social status and profession.

People belonging to stigmatised groups can internalise and accept those beliefs that are associated with their group, making them even more difficult to overcome. Additionally, research suggests that we do not need to believe a negative stereotype about our group for it to influence us negatively.

In short, **our attitudes towards members of out-groups can be determined by three factors: the cognitive, which implies a belief (stereotypes), the affective, which implies emotions and feelings (prejudices), and the behavioural, implying concrete actions (discrimination).**

B. Where do stereotypes and prejudices come from?

"Us" and "Them": social identity and the process of social categorisation: A line of research in social psychology considers stereotypes and prejudices to be derived from our tendency to employ **social categorisation, which consists of the natural cognitive process by which we place individuals into social groups**. It occurs when we think of someone as an immigrant (versus an autochthon), as a man (versus a woman), etc. It is part of the human condition, and happens spontaneously all the time, and is closely linked to our cultural roots and social context. Labelling people according to certain social categories makes our life easier, as these beliefs simplify a complex reality. However, it often has negative and unfair consequences.

Out-group homogeneity: When we categorise people into different groups we tend to exaggerate the differences between groups, but also stress similarities within the "other" group much more than in our own group. This process of homogenisation allows us to apply stereotypes more easily to others (immigrants, refugees, women, Roma, elderly etc.).

In-group favouritism: Another consequence of the process of social categorisation is "in-group favouritism", which consists of **the tendency to respond more positively to people from one's own in-groups than to people from out-groups**. In-group favouritism is found among many different types of social groups, in many different settings, across many different

dimensions, and within many different cultures. People tend to like others who express in-group favouritism better than those who are more egalitarian. Moreover, people are more likely to remember positive than negative information about in-groups, and are more critical of the performance of out-group members than those of the in-group. In referring to their in-group, people tend to identify its members with generalising positive traits and see negative behaviour as exception by ascribing it to individual members. In contrast, when talking about out-group members, this individualisation does often not occur.

In-group favouritism develops for different reasons, but the most important is simply **self-enhancement.** Being a member of a group that has positive characteristics provides us with **feelings of social identity** – *the positive self-esteem that we get as a result of our group membership*. Social identity can be a motivating factor of prejudice and discrimination. We are particularly likely to show in-group favouritism when we are threatened, and people express higher self-esteem after they have been given the opportunity to derogate out-groups.

One situation in which in-group favouritism is unlikely is when the members of the in-group are clearly inferior to other groups on an important dimension. Members of low-status groups show less in-group favouritism than do members of high-status groups, and may even display out-group favouritism.

An evolutionary basis? Some researchers argue that these processes have an evolutionary basis. This comes from the idea that our ancestors lived in small social groups that often had conflicts with other groups. Thus, our brain would have developed a great capacity and tendency for social categorisation. **We tend to like the people we see as more similar to us, because we believe they can offer us more support and solidarity**. By contrast, we tend to stigmatise and avoid those we perceive as weaker for social exchange or as a threat to our well-being.

However, such patterns are determined by the historical and socio-cultural context that ultimately determines which categories are considered more negative, exclusive, or threatening by the majority or more privileged groups. These categorisations often imply the marginalisation, stigmatisation, and discrimination (often through laws) of persons belonging to a certain group (immigrants, refugees, black people, women, gypsies, minority religious groups etc.).

Social status, inequalities: Other lines of research have put the emphasis on specific social factors considered highly determinant in the process of creating prejudices. In this sense, it is argued that **social inequalities can create prejudices among members of different groups, and these prejudices are simultaneously used to justify those inequalities**. If people perceive that immigrants occupy low-skilled jobs, they can generate prejudices related to a supposed lack of capacity and negative attitude ("they are poorly prepared and lazy"). In turn, this prejudice contributes to the justification and consolidation of those inequalities (in rights, wages, access to more qualified jobs, etc.). Another cause would be **the willingness of the groups to maintain their social status, which would lead them to stigmatise those perceived as a potential threat to their position** (not only the most privileged, but each "level" with respect to their "inferior"). This situation would be aggravated in contexts where different groups perceive that they are competing for scarce resources.

The personality dimension: individual differences: Research focusing on the micro-level has aimed to identify individual differences that can help predict a person's tendency to be more or less biased. This is due to evidence indicating that people who share the same family and socio-cultural environment can show very different levels of prejudice and in-group favouritism. Some of the personality dimensions that have been used to classify these individual differences are:

▶ **Authoritarianism:** a personality dimension that characterises people who prefer things to be simple rather than complex and who tend to hold traditional and conventional values. It relates to the desires to protect and enhance the self and thus also relates to greater in-group favouritism, and in some cases prejudice toward out-group.

▶ **Social dominance orientation:** a personality dimension that refers to the tendency to see and to accept inequality among different groups. Some people believe that there are, and should be, status differences among social groups, and do not see these as wrong.

▶ **People who have a strong concerns for others**, or are focused on tolerance and fairness, display less in-group favouritism and less prejudice.

C. How do we learn stereotypes and prejudices?

Stereotypes and prejudices are closely linked to the social norms that exist in our environment, which determine what is considered "right" and what is not. We hold and express stereotypes and prejudices if we perceive that it is considered appropriate to do so, and if the people we care about hold them too. Expressing prejudices may not penalise us and can even contribute to self-esteem linked to our social identity. Social norms are different depending on the social and cultural context, and are not rigid but rather change and evolve. So in order to make a real impact on reducing prejudices, the goal must be to influence and change social norms by first identifying the mechanisms and actors involved in the propagation of these ideas.

Family and friends

In spite of the evidence, a very precise correlation between the influences of family on the prejudices of children has not been fully demonstrated. It is clear that families have some impact, but perhaps not as much as one might suppose. Apart from the family, friendships also play a very important role in the transmission of social norms. Curiously, it has been shown that even in the case of schools with a great diversity, even when strong friendships are established, the longest lasting connections are between students who are similar. Some argue that this is because maintaining relationships with people from negatively stereotyped groups requires an effort that ends up leading to distance and the weakening of the bond.

Media, social media, and the post-truth era

The media play a fundamental role in the transmission and generation of stereotypes and prejudices. Even the most "serious" or "responsible" media spread stereotyped messages and can have a bias or do a poor job of representing socio-cultural diversity. In addition, people tend to consult media that reinforce their ideas rather than challenging them. It is widely known today that online media companies use algorithms that filter searches and select the messages which best match personal interests reflected in one's online biography. In this way, even if we think that we are accessing a wide range of varied content, the reality is that the freedom of choice is significantly smaller, and our ideas (or prejudices) are rather reinforced than challenged by most of the content we "consume".

With the rise of social media and the great diversification of information sources, many intermediaries have been eliminated, allowing people direct access to a large amount of unverified information and opinion. As a consequence, subjective comments and opinion are taken to be the truth and of equal (or greater) value than other more robust sources. Social media are indeed a perfect vehicle to spread and multiply prejudices and rumours, and offer a simple and straightforward tool for preachers of hatred, racism, radicalisation, and terrorism to reach out and seduce potential followers around the globe. Here, tension arises between the need to combat hate speech and the need to protect the fundamental right of freedom of expression. At the same time, social media also allows connections to be made between people who share interests and knowledge. The ARS must take full advantage of this critical space with communication strategies, awareness-raising campaigns, and as a great networking tool.

Education, culture and sport

Schools represent a critical space when it comes to generating or reducing stereotypes and prejudices. They have the potential to trigger change in social norms and promote certain values and attitudes. However, developing strategies and pedagogical methods to overcome rather than reinforce social, ethnic, or cultural segregation takes considerable effort.

Social norms are also created and disseminated through culture (films, music, museums) and sport. Culture can reinforce our stereotypes (if films only show characters behaving according to stereotypes for instance), but it is also the main arena when it comes to challenging and questioning stereotypes, promoting critical thinking, facilitating spaces for positive interaction, and generating new shared identities that transcend prejudice.

D. And what about rumours?

During World War II two Harvard University psychologists - Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman - studied wartime rumours and came up with a mathematical formula that described the way a rumour works and suggested ways to control or eliminate a rumour. They published their findings in a 1947 book, The Psychology of Rumour. Allport and Postman define a rumour as follows:

A rumour, as we shall use the term, is a specific proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present.

The implication in any rumour is always that some truth is being communicated.

The most important element of this definition is that a rumour exists in the absence of secure standards of evidence but is taken by the recipient to be true. If we accept this point, then it stands to reason that in the presence of secure standards of evidence a rumour will not flourish. However, we cannot always decide easily when it is that secure standards of evidence are

present. For this reason we cannot always tell whether we are listening to fact or fantasy.

Allport and Postman identified the two main factors that determine the intensity of a rumour: importance and ambiguity.

Rumour travels when events have importance in the lives of individuals, and when the news received about them is either lacking or subjectively ambiguous. The ambiguity may arise from the fact that the news is not clearly reported, or from the fact that conflicting versions of the news have reached the individual, or from his incapacity to comprehend the news he or she receives.

The formula for the intensity of rumour would be:

$$R \sim i \times a$$

where,

R is the reach, intensity, duration, and reliance on a rumour;

i is the importance of the rumour to the hearer or reader, if true, and

a is the level of ambiguity or uncertainty surrounding the rumour.

This formula means that the amount of rumour in circulation will vary with the importance of the subject to the individuals and the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic at issue. Ambiguity alone does not sustain rumour. Nor does importance. So, the reach, intensity, duration, and reliance on a rumour would be roughly equivalent to the importance one attaches to the rumour if true, multiplied by ambiguity surrounding the rumour. Simply denying a rumour does not eliminate ambiguity; it may even increase it. Rather, eliminating ambiguity requires giving affirmative factual reasons for not relying on the rumour.

To this basic formula, Chorus (1953) added the critical sense. This means that if the listener's critical mind-set grows, the rumour's spread will weaken or stop.

$$R \sim i \times a \times \frac{1}{C}$$

Chorus contribution means that in order to reduce the intensity of rumours we should also focus on promoting critical thinking, one of the key objectives of the ARS.

Often rumours are born and spread successfully because they corroborate previous ideas or beliefs of those who accept them. Some people and groups take rumours for granted because they are compatible with their own interests, or with what they believe to be true.

At the same time, rumours are a way to manage anxieties and uncertainties through the generation and circulation of statements and assumptions that help us explain and understand ambiguous situations or uncertainty, reduce anxiety, and justify behaviour.

So often rumours also arise in the context of an actual or potential threat, both tangible and psychological, which gives people a sense of control and psychological comfort. Psychological threats can be personal or collective and are often related to identity.

In social contexts where ignorance, stereotypes and prejudices have generated feelings of fear and threat to collective identity, rumours can play a calming role.

Many rumours are at the same time fed by stereotypes and prejudices and increasing them.

Why do we accept and spread them?

► Many people believe them and we want to be part of the majority group and to avoid confrontation

► They are about a topic relevant to us and based on ambiguous information that help us understand something complex we can't understand

► They are told by someone who enjoys our credibility

► They are based on accepted stereotypes and prejudices

A conclusion that we can highlight is that although the rumour formula gives us a very interesting approach, it is clear that only by providing objective data the rumours would be eliminated. The contextual, psychological and emotional aspects, as we have seen in the case of prejudices, are very relevant and must be taken into account by the ARS approach. The objective and rigorous information and arguments are necessary, but in many cases they are not enough as the causes and naure of rumours and prejudices are much complex.

Chapter 4
The key elements of a city "antirumours strategy"

Before moving on to more practical information on how to implement an ARS, let us first focus on the main character-istics of a city's ARS. We can identify five main features that are common to, or necessary for, designing and implementing successful strategies. Specific local contexts may require that the emphasis of the strategy lies in one area or another, but we consider that this "ideal" list of elements should be found in any ARS.

A. Political commitment

A city ARS depends on a firm commitment to building a broad network of social partners into a long-term city strategy. To do so, **an ARS must secure real political commitment and support.** Moreover, the decision to promote an ARS must **be consistent with existing diversity policies** and cannot run counter to the discourses and policies being implemented by the municipality. Even in those specific cases in which an ARS is not led by a local government, the need to seek political support and involvement must be a key goal of the strategy.

Dealing with prejudices and stereotypes is not a "responsibility" of one single department. To have a deeper impact, **the strategy requires a team to lead it, as well as genuine cooperation and cross-departmental collaboration**. The departments of culture, education, economy, communication, and urban planning, among others, can do much in this field.

In addition, we should not forget that public administrations themselves can be strong disseminators of rumours. For this reason, apart from leading the process, we should also start looking at "ourselves" in the mirror, and identify our strengths and weaknesses. The training and empowerment of both politicians and civil servants are necessary for an effective ARS.

Finally, in order to guarantee strong political commitment and the sustainability of the strategy, securing broad political consensus among local political parties can also be seen as an important goal. Experience demonstrates that this is not always easy, but also that there are different ways to face this challenge. On the other hand, successful experiences prove that if you really start working to achieve political consensus from the very beginning, the results can be extremely positive.

B. Engagement and participation: a strategy owned by the whole city

A city council cannot hold exclusive responsibility for the complex and multidimensional task of fighting prejudices and dismantling rumours. In order for a strategy to be efficient and sustainable, it must find and engage with a number of social allies and citizens who are committed to reducing prejudices and breaking the chain of false rumours that demean citizens and threaten their fundamental rights. This very process represents an opportunity to manage diversity in a way that allows society as a whole to benefit from its potential advantages in terms of social, cultural, economic, and democratic development.

However, in order to engage these people, municipalities should be open to exploring new ways to collaborate with local actors and citizens. This cannot be seen as yet "another" policy launched by the municipality, but rather as a social movement involving the municipality (leading, co-ordinating, supporting) and a large number of local actors across a variety of areas concerned, i.e. social, cultural, sports, religious, youth, business, religious, schools, universities, media, etc. Involving local opinion leaders and role models will contribute to communicating the ARS.

Building an anti-rumour network is key to the approach. A network is not just an instrument for "participation", but the strategy's engine. It provides us with insights into the reality of rumours, and helps us determine what the rumours are about and how best to debunk them. Belonging to a network also generates a sense of solidarity among the actors and organisations involved - being part of a joint effort gives network members legitimacy and relevance.

Involving many actors and working on a collaborative basis is mostly a matter of results. As we know, prejudices and rumours are based on emotions rather than facts. If we are to change perceptions, this must be taken into account; simply spreading factual data will never prompt a real change. **The need to influence "emotions" in order to dismantle prejudices requires more direct, creative, and spontaneous social interaction in which committed people (the so called antirumours agents) and local grass-root organisations may be much more effective than municipal officers.**

Finally, we cannot forget that the ARS is not just about doing "new things," but also about **identifying and mapping already existing antirumours projects and initiatives**.

C. Attracting and seducing, rather than blaming, the "ambivalent" majority

The antirumour approach does not set its sights on those who are most engaged or committed to fighting discrimination, nor does it go after the self-confessed racists. Instead it targets all those in the middle of the spectrum: the "ambivalent" majority.

This majority do not usually pay attention to overtly anti-racist campaigns, because they do not consider themselves to be racists and so do not feel targeted or challenged. However, a reference to rumours generates more interest and direct identification, since many people recognise rumours and accept that they "use" and even "believe" some of them.

If we are to attract the attention of the ambivalent majority, we cannot blame them from a position of moral superiority, and we must be especially careful to avoid "teaching" the "real truth" and telling people how ignorant or racist they are. This does not work, nor is it true. "We" belong to this majority: municipal staff, politicians, professionals, teachers, NGO volunteers, or citizens in general, including migrants, refugees, etc. Acknowledging that we all hold prejudices is a crucial starting point for the ARS.

We are convinced that **an ARS should not be about blaming but rather attracting the majority and** increasing their capacity to stop reinforcing the rumours' spirals. It is also about making people aware of the negative consequences of their prejudices and encouraging them to be more proactive about recognising and reducing them. We should not expect citizens to shoulder all the responsibility, nor should we rely solely on city officials. We also have to identify and denounce those who contribute to creating, spreading, and consolidating prejudice and rumours, or those who seek some kind of political, economic, or social benefits from doing so. In addition to identifying them, we must try to counter and minimise their influence on public perceptions.

D. Creativity at all levels: the strategy's core identity

The antirumour concept itself shows how important creativity is for this strategy. One of the main weaknesses of some traditional awareness-raising initiatives is their inability to reach and engage mainstream audiences, and not just those minorities that are already sensitive to the issue. In order to expand the target audience we recognised that the strategy would, from the outset, need to be both creative and innovative at all levels: addressing, for example, how local governments launch awareness-raising campaigns; how we approach citizens' participation; how we engage local actors; and what communication content and tools we use in the campaigns.

Creativity is not just about producing "creative" products and tools. It has a much deeper significance, as it requires rethinking how we do things, how we collaborate and work as a network, and how to design and implement awareness-raising campaigns that have a real impact. If we wish to attract the attention of the majority, we need to reach them, wherever they are: in public spaces, in schools, in sports facilities, at work, and, of course, on social media.

We need creativity to reach out to a wider audience but also to work intensively with specific target groups, e.g. pupils, employees of a big company, or residents of a specific neighbourhood.

Finally, if we want to engage and motivate people to take an active role in this process, this experience must be exciting, motivating and, especially, useful and effective.

E. Rigour, results and sustainability: much more than spreading antirumors data

Attempting to eradicate stereotypes and prejudices is far from an easy task. An ARS must be based on rigour and be oriented towards real, concrete results and impact. At the same time, we should be cautious not to inadvertently reinforce prejudices and rumours, instead of dismantling them. We know our attitudes have three closely related dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural. The ARS cannot just provide factual information to contrast with and refute stereotypes and rumours. It

must take a multi-dimensional perspective, and address the emotional component of rumours, e.g. by making us aware of experiences we share with or like about members of the group that is targeted by rumours, while fostering opportunities for social interaction that help us to change our attitudes.

Commitment and goodwill are essential for participating in projects like this, but they are not sufficient to ensure rigour and the desired impact. Experience from Barcelona, and other cities, has shown the need to **empower all those involved in the strategy**, starting with municipal staff, committed organisations and, of course, future antirumour agents. Given the complexity of our task in dismantling prejudices and stereotypes, it is essential to **provide training and different capacity-building methods**. There is a need to understand the context and learn the necessary skills to better confront prejudices and design effective strategies.

A serious and rigorous **evaluation of the campaign's impact is a crucial and complex process that must be included in the strategy from the very beginning**. What are our goals? What changes do we want to see? What are the indicators that can help us check that this change is taking place? How are we going to get this information? It is better to establish this at the beginning of the process; momentum can be lost in implementing activities and building networks if we are unable to demonstrate that they helped reach the expected results and had a real impact. If it is impossible to demonstrate that the campaign has had a positive impact, there will be no evidence to defend its sustainability.

Given that the ARS is not looking for quick and "easy" results, but a deeper and long-term social change, it is crucial that its sustainability be guaranteed. There are no shortcuts in this project, which means that a six-month communication campaign cannot ensure real social change. If we are to have any chance of prompting the kind of social change we hope for, we need to be ambitious, creative, rigorous, and patient, as some changes can take years.

Chapter 5

The antirumours strategy step by step

n this chapter, we will delve into the methodology that must be followed in any ARS at a city level in order to guarantee a proper implementation. The first four actions are necessary in order to launch the strategy. Once the launching phase is completed, we will be in the position to start designing and implementing antirumours actions. The evaluation of the strategy must be included in the strategy from the very beginning and in the case of monitoring and assessing particular campaigns/projects or actions, the evaluation must be designed before their implementation. Together with sustainability of the strategy, this will be dealt with in the chapters 6 and 7.

Launching phase	Preparatory actions	Evaluation
	Antirumours diagnosis	
	Engaging key and motivated actors: the basis of the future antirumours network	
	Training antirumours agents	
Implementation phase: Antirumours actions	Communication strategy and dissemination	
	Attracting new allies: the network growth	
	Knowledge and critical thinking	
	Participative awareness and empowerment actions	
	Promoting positive interaction	
	Confronting prejudices and rumours	
	Antirumours creative labs	
	Spaces free of rumours	
	Reaching new levels of influence	
	Cooperation and exchange with other cities and the global project	
Sustainability		

A. Launching the strategy

1. Preparation of the strategy

a) Taking the decision

There is a need for someone (usually a politician if we focus on local governments) to take the decision to launch an ARS. For the success of the strategy, it is important to know who is taking this decision and why. What are the challenges, worries, and reasons that make someone take this decision? And what are the main goals and the expected results? The initiative could come from a technical proposal from municipal officers followed by a political decision or it may be a political initiative from the beginning.

b) Political commitment and consensus

In either case, political commitment and support is needed to build a broad network of social partners and achieve a cross-department collaboration, which can be achieved through an explicit endorsement from the mayor and other local politicians, by having politicians participate in preparatory meetings and workshops, or by mentioning the ARS in public statements and political declarations, for instance on the occasion of event and celebrations related to diversity, inclusion, anti-discrimination, or immigrant and refugees issues.

In many participant cities of the European C4i project, mayors and deputy mayors participated in the first meetings with external antirumours experts to get a better knowledge of the ARS approach. In **Getxo**, the whole government participated in a capacity building workshop, which was also very useful to promote a cross-department "culture". Soon after **Erlangen** decided to launch the ARS it came to a government transition after the local elections. In this case, both the leaving and the future mayor participated on the meetings.

Commitment has to translate into the allocation of human and economic resources. Including the ARS in wider municipal strategies can be one way of doing this, as many cities have shown.

In **Barcelona**, the ARS was one of the specific actions of the city's Intercultural strategy approved on 2009 after a one-year participative process with more than 3000 people, local organisations and different social initiatives. Moreover, the Intercultural Plan of the city was a result of the political consensus on the Immigration Municipal Plan that included all political parties present in the local parliament. Both

factors provided a solid political commitment and consensus for the ARS. Many other cities, such as **Bilbao** or **Logroño** have included the ARS within long-term strategic municipal plans, with dedicated budgets and monitoring indicators.

Since the antirumour approach deals with sensitive and complex issues, its goal is to build a long-term strategy. Reaching a political consensus among as many political parties as possible demands a considerable effort but pays off in the end. Such efforts have a twofold goal: on the one hand, to reduce the likelihood of the strategy becoming a "political football" when media are hostile towards immigrants or an anti-immigrant party forms part of the political scene; on the other, to enhance the sustainability in case of a political change. Cross-party support minimises the risk of polemic debates, using immigration or diversity issues in a populist way to achieve electoral gains. Without it, it is not only the sustainability of the strategy that would be at risk, but also the capacity of the team to lead the process successfully.

The city of **Botkyrka** in Sweden is one of the best examples of how to achieve political consensus. To reduce a potential "politicization" of the ARS that would divert attention from the real issues, leaders sought and secured the support of both the Social Democrats and opposition Conservative Party. The deputy mayor responsible of the ARS and the leader of the opposition participated together in the first meetings and capacity building workshops, together with representatives of the other political parties from the opposition. Similar cross-party support was achieved in **Bilbao** and **Sabadell** based on a consultation that included all parties from the outset.

In seeking to set up a broad political coalition, many cities have found it very useful to explain that the ARS is a global strategy, promoted by the Council of Europe and implemented in several countries. Mayors may find easier to reach political consensus to joint an innovative approach to prevent discrimination and build more inclusive, fair and intercultural cities, when they can prove that this strategy has strong international recognition, and is being implemented by cities governed by different political "colours".

Although in order to achieve the maximum impact, it is desirable that municipalities take the lead on promoting the ARS as a public policy, there are some exceptions to take into consideration: where local NGOs are the first to become active, and later trigger or pressure local governments to join in. For the impact of the ARS it is however crucial that at some point there is the commitment of a public body backing up the strategy.

In **Limerick**, the NGO Doras Luimní piloted the antirumours strategy by integrating it in its daily work, and sharing the approach with other social entities and citiznes. It thereby engaged with the local authorities and inspired city councils to launch an ARS under the leadership of, and "pressure" from other social and NGO actors.

The Spanish NGO "Andalucía Acoge" piloted a "Stop Rumors" project and implemented antirumours actions in many Spanish cities where local authorities had not decided yet to develop their own ARS.

c) Human resources and budget

The ARS is not an expensive strategy or policy as it relies significantly on building a strong social network with many volunteer contributions, as well as on creativity and taking advantage of what is already happening and being done in the city. However, it does require some resources. It is important therefore that before launching an ARS, we already have a clear idea of its needs, but also of its budget and human resources.

To guarantee a proper development of the ARS, a team of at least 2-4 people is needed, one of which would ideally work on a full time basis. Many cities externalise parts of the daily coordination of the ARS to external experts or a local organisation. It is important, however, that at least one municipal civil servant has the responsibility of its general coordination. Otherwise the city may lose touch with the ARS, and jeopardise the municipal commitment to the ARS. New cities that want to launch an ARS should take this into account, because it might imply a smaller impact. However, a mixed team of municipal technicians and external professionals is highly desirable.

The budget will depend on the possibilities of the municipality to provide human resources itself, and its ambition. Some basics that need to be covered are:

▶ The first capacity building workshops (at least three sessions of three hours)

▶ The first antirumours agents training sessions (at least one training of 25 people of 8-12 hours)
▶ The coordination of the network (one part-time person)
▶ The production of information material and communication tools
▶ The implementation of some first antirumours activities and events (depending on the priorities and capacity to internalise this within the existing budgets of different departments)

The average budget per year may vary a lot depending on these circumstances and the country. Cities may be able to provide more human resources and internalise more expenses. Some started with just 10.000€ and providing a part of the necessary staff, and managed to increase the budget after demonstrating some exciting short-term initial impact. But in order to guarantee a proper development of the ARS, it would be desirable to have at least two people working part time and between 30.000€ and 50.000€ for training, materials, and activities. A part of the budget also needs to be set aside for the evaluation, as we will see later. Many cities have managed to increase this budget after a positive impact was demonstrated during the first years. Currently, in the eighth year of its implementation, the city of Barcelona spends 150.000€ per year for its ARS.

Finally, we need to emphasise that ARS rely significantly on the contribution of many volunteers and local actors that get involved and participate in the antirumours network, and include the antirumours approach in their activities. The "contagious" effect of the ARS has proved to be very effective for achieving impacts that were greater than expected, as we will see later based on some examples.

d) Capacity-building of the core team

Once the decision to embark on an ARS is taken, it is very important to determine who will lead the process within the institution. The profile for leading a successful strategy requires skills in 1) managing engagement and participation processes, 2) providing a collaborative working environment and 3) fostering creativity and innovation. When we are trying to innovate and lead a process that aims to achieve a paradigm shift, the persons leading this process are crucial. Moreover, the core

team that will be in charge of the daily decisions and coordination of the ARS needs to be built. It is desirable that at least 2-4 people form this core team.

Once the right people have been identified, the next step is to empower the team. What does an ARS really deal with? What are the main theoretical concepts? What kind of methodology is to be employed? What examples from existing initiatives can be built on? A good starting point is holding an introductory workshop led by external experts lasting at least 3 hours, to get a deeper knowledge of the ARS approach and methodology; and of course, inspiration from more experienced antirumours cities. It is also necessary that more people from different municipal departments and key social actors are invited to attend introductory presentations and capacity building workshops, to start motivating and involving them, and to promote cooperation.

To sum up, in order to ensure the proper launch of the ARS, at least two internal meetings (with politicians and core team) and two workshops involving potential partners from the city administration and external social actors should be organised. The antirumours experts can provide an "antirumours introductory tool-kit", and the core team can also share existing materials and tools (manuals, practical guides, videos etc.) to deepen their knowledge and start being inspired by the methods, lessons learnt, and practical examples from other cities.

e) Cross-department cooperation

An ARS is not a single department's policy. It affects all local policy areas and needs many allies from across the whole administration. Getting an entire city council engaged in an ARS from the outset is without any doubt a very ambitious aim, but having key areas such as education, culture, sports, as well as economic development, urban planning, and the local police involved at an early stage is important.

It should be a goal to build a true "anti-rumour administration" with a view to fostering debate, sharing know-how, and providing internal training and capacity building. Political commitment from the mayor or the deputy mayor in charge of the ARS is important in order to foster this cross-department collaboration, and defending its importance in local government meetings.

In cities including Nuremberg, Botkyrka, Patras, Loures, Amadora, Jerez, Logroño and Cartagena, representatives from many municipal departments attended the first capacity building workshops. The capacity of the core team to engage and motivate other departments at the very beginning is crucial to avoid a perception of the ARS as the responsibility of one single department.

Another opportunity to engage different departments is to ask them to participate in the antirumours diagnosis, identifying the main challenges and rumours they face regarding diversity issues and specific groups.

Finally, sharing with other departments inspiring antirumour actions implemented by other cities may be very useful to convince them of their responsibility and the opportunity that the involvement in an ARS represents. As the experience of many cities has shown, when cross-departmental work is successful, it allows some of the most relevant antirumours activities to be implemented by different departments that emphasise different topics. The city of Montreal, one of the newest cities to implement the ARS, has put the emphasis of its first actions on the labour market, and examining how to reduce unemployment rates, which are especially high among migrants.

One of the main obstacles of the ARS is to remain limited and enclosed within one single department, and thereby jeopardising its impact. Cross-departmental cooperation is not easy at the beginning and may take some time, but is definitely worth the effort.

Taking the decision | Political commitment | HHRR & budget | Cross-department cooperation | Political consensus | Leading team & capacity building
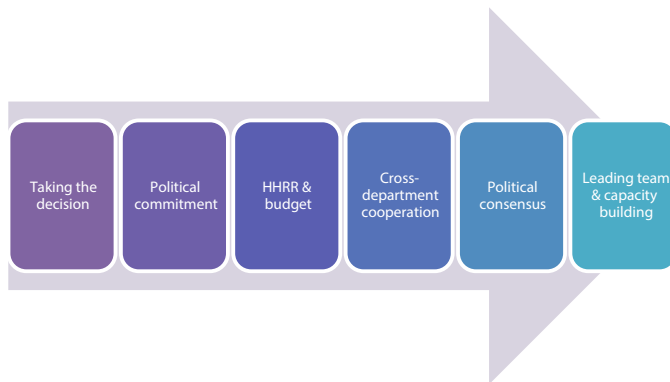
2. Antirumours diagnosis

We have already mentioned that before designing an ARS we need to focus on a proper diagnosis the city's main challenges regarding diversity issues, and should identify the existing initiatives and the key social actors that have important roles and expertise surrounding these topics. This diagnosis can focus on four specific areas.

a) Context and challenges

First, we need to identify the main characteristics of the city context that are relevant to the desired goals. Many cities will likely already have this information but it is worth focusing on collecting information on the following questions:

- ▶ What has been the evolution of the city's population diversity?
- ▶ What are the current challenges?
- ▶ What is the policy framework of the local government for dealing with diversity management (main principles, goals, plans and specific policies)? How about the municipal structure – is there a specific department dealing with diversity policies?
- ▶ What is the level of cross-departmental collaboration? Are there formal structures to manage this collaboration?
- ▶ Is there a culture of collaboration between the government and local civil society?

b) Existing initiatives and key actors

An ARS is not about building a new approach with an innovative methodology from scratch; there are many valuable initiatives, projects, and committed people in every city that need to be identified and involved in order to avoid overlaps and to build on existing know-how and experience. The ARS seeks to build a global umbrella framework to promote better collaboration among different stakeholders, make the most of what already exist, and attract new actors and allies to have a greater impact.

Building the ARS from these projects and actors that are already doing great work on challenging prejudices, preventing discrimination, and promoting intercultural relations is very important. They are the first ones to be involved, and to be convinced that being part of the ARS will increase the impact of their work and contribute to a more ambitious and collaborative city strategy.

Following on from this analysis of the context and the state of affairs in terms of existing actors and initiatives, there are two additional steps of the diagnosis: to identify and analyse the main rumours that have the strongest negative impact on coexistence and discrimination, and to collect antirumours arguments addressing them.

c) Identification of main rumours

Probably the most relevant and original characteristic of the anti-rumour strategy is the focus on rumours. Rumours are "human" and are so present in our daily lives that launching a public policy and a city strategy that focuses on these ambiguous and complex "entities" seems an intimidating starting point.

However, there are different methods to identify rumours. It is important that this research provides solid information, but it is not always easy to conduct ambitious scientific research, for example by consulting a great number of citizens. This is why we often need to prioritise and identify key target groups that may have a more profound knowledge of which rumours are being spread around the city. However, even if we do not have enough resources to conduct a more ambitious research, we need to be sure we listen to the perceptions and opinions of a wide and diverse range of citizens and social actors. In order to do so, we need to combine different approaches that will produce different types of positive outcomes.

In the early days of ARS, the focus was very much put on rumours circulating among natives about immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. While this is still necessary, we identified a need to widening this approach by using the identification of rumours as a pretext to tackle more complex and multidimensional challenges regarding different socio-cultural diversity issues. We could say that rumours are the symbol and the primary source of the project but also an excuse or an easy door to open in order to deal with more complex challenges related to prejudices and diversity issues. Through rumours, it is possible to attract the attention of many people who are more reluctant to directly acknowledge their prejudices or who do not feel challenged by an anti-racist approach, since most of us do not consider ourselves as racist.

People are more receptive to discuss the rumours they «heard» in their environment, or even to confess their participation in their diffusion. We have all been victims of rumours or helped to disseminate them on occasion. This reality allows for greater empathy and favours a greater awareness of the negative consequences rumours have and of their important role in the generation of discriminatory and racist narratives and practices.

This is why we need to start with identifying the main rumours about diversity issues and those affecting the most stigmatised groups. In this process, the participation of migrants and culturally diverse citizens is key. However, we should bear in mind that the process of identifying rumours focuses on diversity issues and not on specific groups – avoiding, thus, the reinforcement of "us and them" attitudes. We also want to know the rumours that specific minority groups might have about the majority and other minority groups.

We should not forget that the anti-rumour strategy is based on the understanding that we all hold prejudices and use stereotypes. However, in a context in which some minorities are particularly targeted by populist and xenophobic discourses that stigmatise and blame them for many problems in society, we should put more emphasis on the rumours that affect them. Finally, in order to better understand the impact that prejudices have on human relations, we also need to raise awareness on prejudices dealing with all kind of sociocultural diversities which are often interconnected, such as gender issues, social status, age etc.

Target groups

There are three different target groups we want to reach with the process of identifying rumours:

▶ **Internal**: It is very important to target municipal employees, as many of them have a direct contact with citizens, but also as a way to engage them and raise awareness on these issues (municipal staff across different departments, social workers, mediators, politicians, teachers, etc.).

▶ **Key city "intermediate" actors**: people from different fields whose profile and professional work makes them more exposed to rumours from many citizens, such as representatives of associations and communities (neighbours, cultural, immigrants, sports, parents, business, youth, etc.), more informal community leaders, and people from sectors like education and health, etc.

▶ **Citizens in general**: even if we cannot conduct a large citizen survey, we need to make sure to facilitate some spaces in which we can listen and debate directly with some citizens with different profiles, backgrounds, and from different neighbourhoods of the city.

Methodology

The identification of rumours should be seen as work in progress. We can start with the identification of the main rumours (5-10) at the level of the whole city. However, once we start focusing our actions and campaigns on specific targets and goals, we will have to dig deeper into the specific rumours and keep checking their evolution as new rumours may appear after some time.

Identifying rumours must be seen as a great opportunity to create spaces for active listening to citizens' perceptions, emotions, and anxieties. Making people feel free to express their opinions without being judged is crucial to insure the ARS is not based on a blaming approach but on promoting reflection, opening debate, and stimulating critical thinking.

There are specific methodologies that have been used to identify rumours, especially under the framework of the European C4i project led by the Council of Europe, and this is great for comparisons among cities. However, the experience has shown that it is sometimes fruitful to combine more traditional approaches (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups) with more participative and creative methods, as we will see in practical examples from cities.

Keeping this in mind, we can point out four different and complementary methods that have proved to be very useful from the experience of cities in the C4i project and the "Antirumours strategy to prevent Racism" project in Spain. For each method, we need to clearly identify who is the target we want to reach.

Analysing existing research

Looking for existing data, research, studies, and surveys (at national or local level) related to the topic of prejudice and discrimination can complement and contextualise the data collection within the ARS. Although it may not deal directly with rumours, it can provide further knowledge about citizens' perceptions on diversity issues, which can enrich and inform our own research.

Questionnaires, surveys, and interviews

Many cities have used a common questionnaire or survey design provided by experts to identify diversity challenges and rumours. They included closed questions, rating scales, and more qualitative and open questions. Many can be done online to reach a wider audience, but it is also important to do some face-to-face interviews with key actors, to have more time to debate and analyse the content.

We need to take care how we phrase the questions in order to avoid creating bias or even contributing to disseminating rumours. Therefore, it is better to start with more general and open questions to leave more freedom to people to express their perceptions, such as:

> ► "What do you think are the current principal challenges regarding diversity issues and living together in your cities?"

> ► "Are some of these challenges related to specific groups?" "Can you provide some concrete examples"?

This way, we will capture the different perceptions about challenges regarding more complex and diverse realities.

At a later stage we should try to get into more detail, so we can ask more concrete questions about the impact of diversity in some specific fields. However, and depending on the target group, we should avoid making questions which already include specific rumours and groups such as "Have you heard rumours about immigrants abusing social benefits?" It is much better to make more neutral questions such as:

> ► "What rumours have you heard about the link between migrants/refugees/ethnic minorities or other groups and the labour market (and then again about education / social services / health system/the use of public space, etc")."

Moreover, we do not only want to identify the rumours, we also want to know a bit more about what people think and do about them. So, if an answer is: "I've heard many rumours about immigrants abusing social benefits."We can keep asking

> ► What do you think about this statement? (false, true, exageration...)

> ► Which arguments/examples are used to justify this opinion?

> ► Is this statement related to any specific group (nationality, sex, age, etc.)?

> ► Is this statement mainly sustained by specific groups (politicians, natives, foreigners, social care users, media etc.)?

> ► Have you ever tried to argue against this statement? If yes, which argument(s) have you used?""Which of them have proved to have more impact?"

The content of the questionnaires and interviews keep evolving and although there is a common methodological framework, cities may adapt them, as this is part of the essence of the ARS. Identifying rumours is important, but it is also important to be flexible to enrich our methods form the lessons learnt, the different priorities, and approaches cities may have.

▬▬ Collaboration with universities: Many cities, such as Bilbao, Nuremberg or Santa Coloma de Gramenet, have built collaborations with universities to get support on the identification process. Many have extended this collaboration to the process of collecting anti-rumours arguments and for the training of antirumours agents.

"Rumours-gathering" workshops

A very important method to identify rumours, and at the same time, promote debate and raise awareness on these issues is to organise "rumours-gathering" workshops lasting two to three hours. Again, the target group is important, and we should start by organising these workshops with the people who will be most involved in the ARS, both from the side of the municipality and the social actors (as part of the capacity-building process).

But we also need to organise the types of workshops targeting a much more diverse audience, including citizens with diverse profiles. The method consists of splitting into small groups of four to six people and asking the groups the following questions:

- ▶ Have you personally been the target of rumours or stereotypes (regarding gender, age, profession, physical appearance etc.) and if so, how have you felt?
- ▶ What are the main rumours you have heard regarding your city?

These first questions are very important because one of the goals is to make people aware that we all have been sometimes the "victims" of rumours and stereotypes. Moreover, talking about different types of rumours (such as rumours about our city or neighbourhood) helps people to better understand and reflect the nature of rumours and stereotypes. Promoting awareness, empathy, and critical thinking are key goals of the strategy, and we must start doing so from the very beginning.

We can carry on with rumours regarding diversity issues and different social groups

- ▶ What are the main rumours you have heard about diversity issues and groups in your city?
- ▶ Are these rumours about specific groups? Immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, majority groups, Roma, Muslim etc.?
- ▶ Do you consider that these rumours are true, false, exaggerations, or distortions of the reality, and why do you think so?

After the presentation of the results by the groups, workshops facilitators promote a debate and highlight the main findings (and also start thinking what kind of antirumours arguments may arise from the discussions)

Creative and participative actions to raise awareness

Identifying rumours may also become an excellent way to attract the attention of citizens and to raise awareness about them as part of the antirumours actions (we have said that the identification process must be seen as a work-in-progress, and not just an action we conduct at the beginning).

Creativity is a crucial principle of the ARS and it is important to apply it in all our activities. Many cities have found creative and original methods to identify rumours that have had an important impact, also on the media. However, we always need to be aware of the risk of contributing to the dissemination of rumours, so we need to be very careful on how this is done. The role of antirumours agents is very important on this process and many of them will contribute actively to all kind of activities to identify rumours.

▬ **Nuremberg's** *"wheelie bin against prejudices"* allowed citizens to discard of their prejudices. Hand-outs where provided on which citizens could write on one side a prejudice or rumour that someone used against them, and on the other side a prejudice or rumour that they had themselves, to then be thrown into the bin.

▬ **Tenerife's** *"great collection of rumours"* was conducted by the antirumors team of the Island's administration in the municipality of Laguna to collect the main rumours related to immigration and cultural diversity spread among the population. The participants could «dispose of" the rumors and prejudices in a large bin, could write down their impressions on a panel and have their «antirumours» photograph taken to be diffused through social networks. About twenty anti-rumour agents participated.

▬ **Lublin's** *"rumour exchange shop"* is a clever and effective way to get members of the public thinking about rumours in a public space and which, if well handled, can also attract positive media attention. It consists of no more than a set of blank posters on which passers-by write rumours they have heard or are aware of. A member of the antirumours team facilitates the process. This format has the advantage of gathering additional material for the local identification of rumours. With this initiative, Lublin attracted extensive media coverage by all three local radio stations, one nationwide and two local YV stations, three local newspapers and the most popular national online news provider.

d) Analysing rumours

Once we have all main rumours identified, we must analyse and classify them according to the their nature, target groups, the fields they refer to and their main messengers or creators. Such a classification could include, for instance, the following categories:

- ▶ Labour market
- ▶ Living together
- ▶ Public services
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Public space
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Gender relations
- ▶ Attitudes
- ▶ Identity issues and values
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Etc.

Moreover, in order to support us when setting priorities of antirumours actions, we need to identify those rumours that are having the most impact, and those targeting the most stigmatised groups (e.g. refugees, Muslims, Roma, irregular migrants etc.). These priorities will evolve over time, as some events will definitely influence which topic is getting attention in a given context or moment in time (growing populist political discourses stigmatising concrete groups, the increase of the number of refugees as a consequence of wars and conflicts, the impact of terrorist attacks that will put more pressure and increase prejudices against some groups such as Muslims etc.)

Having said all this, it is good to remind us again that the ARS has been evolving in a direction in which rumours have become more a pretext than a specific objective of our actions. The main focus of antirumours activities is not to try to dismantle these rumours, but to promote critical thinking about and awareness of the role played by stereotypes, prejudices, and issues such as equality, rights, power relations, and socio-economic inequalities. Our advise is to conduct a proper diagnosis without dedicating too many resources to the identification of rumours, which is not too difficult, and instead put more emphasis on

how to influence the negative narratives regarding diversity and specific groups we know are the most stigmatised and the most likely to suffer discrimination.

Opportunities and risks

An indirect result of the process of the identification of rumours is that it allows us to start engaging with some local actors. Connecting with the people we invite to debate on workshops is a good way to spread the word about the project and make people more interested and engaged. Moreover, we can ask university experts for research support and also engage them in the project from the beginning. However, while collecting rumours is a relevant task, it is important not to spread them, as there is a risk of reinforcing, rather than dismantling, them. In this view, we should pay attention during the process of identification (our choice of questions should therefore be very carefully made) but especially so during the dissemination strategies developed during the antirumours actions and campaigns.

e) Identifying and gathering antirumours arguments

In the previous section we have seen that an ARS is more than communication campaign aimed at spreading arguments and objective data to dismantle false rumours. While objective data is a necessary ingredient to counter some types of prejudice, we also need to be aware of the limitations of objective data to influence people's perceptions and avoid backfire effects

when using this approach. If we really want to reduce prejudices, we need also to develop actions and arguments that promote critical thinking, positive interaction, and that take into account the emotional dimension. In the following, we will present both approaches.

Objective and quantitative data, facts, and arguments

Identifying robust antirumours arguments and data can be useful in some cases, depending on the objective, the target group or the channel we use, as it helps us to

▶ better understand some realities that otherwise would not be perceived and that bring rigour and a greater certainty.

▶ empower people who want to contribute to confronting prejudices and false rumours, as it is the case of antirumours agents.

In collecting such data from statistical publications, laws, regulations, guidelines (depending on the nature and complexity of each rumour) we need to

▶ gather information that proves the rumour wrong from reliable sources such as governments, international organizations, universities, think tanks etc.

▶ find data that is disaggregated for the local level whenever possible, and combine it with data on the regional, state or even the global level.

▶ collect information from a variety of sources, combining statistical and primary data with more elaborate and specific studies.

Qualitative, logical, and emotional arguments

Research from various disciplines together with the experiences of the antirumours cities have shown the limitations of spreading objective data to influence people's perceptions. We know that our attitudes are formed by a mix of cognitive and emotional components. We also know that we tend to perceive and adapt reality according to our prejudices, and that we do not pay attention to, avoid, or easily forget objective information that contradicts our prejudices.

This is why we will get a better impact if we focus more on strategies that go beyond the use of facts and "cold" data to confront rumours and prejudices. These arguments go hand in hand with the use of face-to-face interactions, and dialogues and debates that foster critical thinking. We need to emphasise that the ARS is not about "teaching the truth to some ignorant and racist people". We must avoid this kind of approach, which is both ineffective and wrong. We should focus on active listening and promoting debates where different arguments and perspectives are exposed. As we will see in more detail later, this does not mean not directly confronting prejudices or minimising the importance and impact of racist comments and opinions. But as a general approach of targeting the ambiguous majority of population (that we also form part of), we suggest working on antirumours arguments that:

▶ Raise doubts and challenge generalisations

▶ Stress contradictions and hypocrisy

▶ Foster empathy, find commonalities and similarities (needs, interests..)

▶ Appeal to personal experiences and universal values

▶ Allow to strengthen personal links and interactions

▶ Recognise and valorise diversity

▶ Etc.

On many occasions we will also use data and more objective and logical arguments to support our position and provide rigour. But we have to adapt our arguments and messages to the target group and the context, which is not the same in a workshop with a journalist than with secondary school students, or in a conversation with our neighbours or relatives.

Antirumour arguments have much more effect when they are expressed directly in face-to-face interactions and conversations, dialogues, and debates. In this sense, the role of the antirumours agents is very important, as they will contribute to identifying the most effective strategies and arguments that will be used in many antirumours actions. But the best antirumours arguments are those that come up from citizens themselves. This is why it is so important to promote spaces and situations for conversations and dialogues with citizens where they feel free to express their opinions and intervene actively in the discussions.

Examples of quantitative and qualitative antirumour arguments

Imagine we have identified the rumour that "immigrants collapse the public health system".

We can do some research and we find much statistical evidence that challenges this idea. For example in the case of Barcelona, some antirumours data that was used included that

- ► There is solid empirical evidence showing that immigrants make less use of health services than the average population (for all ages and nationalities)
- ► Only 2% of the immigrant population are over 65 years, while the comparative share among natives in this age group on which much of the health budget is spent is 24%.
- ► Nationality is not a variable that explains differential use of health services. The latter is determined, instead, by a combination of socioeconomic and demographic variables
- ► "Health tourism" is a very minor phenomenon and mainly exists for EU and USA citizens
- ► Health care is a right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This is important information, but it is unlikely that we can change people's perceptions just by disseminating it. Let's see a different argument:

- ► In the UK many people thought that immigrants from eastern European countries would collapse the health system. Instead of spreading lot of complex and statistical data to debunk this, we could point out how many British citizens living in southern Europe are beneficiaries of their host countries' public health systems, too.

This argument is short and simple and it makes people think a bit more. It illustrates the complexities of international interdependence and reciprocity, and brings in an emotional component by evoking the image of British elderly citizens. We are not saying that sharing some objective data of how many east-European citizens contribute to the British social and health services by paying taxes, and work on jobs many British citizens may not want to, is useless. This information is important, but probably we will only use it on very specific occasions.

The importance of an exchange based on qualitative and emotional arguments is also stressed by the following situation that took place in Barcelona at the very beginning of the ARS.

A workshop was conducted in a cultural centre for the elderly, in which we started asking a group of 20 people about their feelings regarding diversity issues and the impact of immigration in the city. At the beginning, many negative rumours came up: "they are a threat to our values and identity" "they don't want to integrate" etc. The facilitator (very important role) was not

trying to contradict these opinions with objective data, but was asking more specific questions and introducing other realities with respect and active listening. At some point, one participant said: "Well, one thing I want to point out is that I recognise that most of the people that stand up on the bus to let me sit down are immigrants". Suddenly, many other participants started sharing similar experiences and criticising how society was losing some values and more respect for the elderly. After a very interesting debate in which many references were made to how other cultures keep a strong respect for the elderly, the facilitator asked them "could we say that immigrants also introduce or reinforce some positive values to our society?" The majority of them agreed and afterwards the debate continued with much more balanced opinions about the impact of diversity. Some participants started remembering that their parents had been immigrants too and that they had to face quite a tough reality when arriving in Barcelona.

This is a good example to understand that we should not over focus on rumours and data, but rather on providing spaces for more relaxed debates and conversations in which antirumours arguments may appear, having a much greater impact than simply presenting data.

3. Engaging relevant and motivated actors: the basis of the future antirumours network

The creation of an antirumours network is one of the key elements of an ARS. As previously mentioned, this is not yet another municipal policy, but a long-term city strategy that needs the engagement and involvement of a variety of social actors.

As the experience in many cities has shown, there are many different ways to create, operate or manage this network. The network's functions, performance, and size as well as the profile of its members, may differ a lot from place to place. Some are open to anyone who wants to participate and others are more focused and limited to a more specific actor profile. Some networks are more formal, have various working groups and a well-defined action plan, while others are more informal and flexible but maintain a good level of participation.

▬▬ The city of **Loures** created a multi-stakeholder antirumours network to design and implement its "Loures free of rumours campaign". The network included different municipal departments, (municipal front office, departments for public space, social housing, integration, youth, sports, education, culture, social cohesion, water and waste) and other public and private actors (local hospital, electric company EDP, IKEA, pharmaceutical company Hovione).

▬▬ **Barcelona's** Antirumours Network was created in 2010 and currently consists of about 400 entities, more than 500 individuals and the Barcelona city council. The members are mainly social entities, but also actors such as public libraries, cultural and educational centres and associations of commerce.
The network is structured along three different types of workspaces, which are a strategic committee, a commission for the dynamisation of the strategy and working groups on neighbourhoods, communication and training. There are different degrees of commitment and involvement in the network and each year there are plenary sessions, for instance to adopt the network's action plan.
Members share antirumours materials and resources, develop joint activities, and conduct activities adapting the antirumours approach to their specific fields of action. The current action plan (2016-2020) defines objectives, lines of action, actions, levels of participation and the operational structure of the network.

▬▬ **Cartagena's** antirumours network is divided into three different areas or working groups: The core group driving the strategy, made up of representatives of different municipal departments and entities of the city; the information group formed by 40 people with technical profiles, belonging to city departments and social organisations; and the volunteers group, which is currently formed by young people of different nationalities.

This variety of existing types of networks allows cities setting up an ARS to find examples and inspiration from other cities that correspond to their own situation, and to adapt the model once the ARS has developed further. Again, flexibility and adaptability to different contexts is crucial.

There are also numerous examples of cities that have taken advantage of already existing networks and their working structures.

▬▬ The city of **Amadora's** antirumour network was initiated through the Local Council of Social Action (CLAS), established in 2003, with its 74 actors. The starting point consisted in an antirumours training provided to interested members of CLAS.

▬▬ The "Network for the Transmission of Positive Values and Messages" of **Santa Coloma de Gramenet** is a pioneer network in Spain, with 12 years of experience of working on social cohesion and living together, civility and good neighbourly relations. Its more than 400 members from 70 organisations include neighborhood associations, women's groups, cultural associations from different backgrounds, religious (Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Orthodox, etc.) and sports associations. The network decided to adopt the antirumours approach and to train citizens to become antirumours agents to challenge prejudices and false rumours.

▬▬ The island of **Tenerife** initiated a working group on antirumors within a long-term project called «Together in the same direction» in which a variety of different actors have been involved over years. The working group is a particularly productive, dynamic and creative network, and has developed highly innovative awareness campaigns. One of its innovations was the creation of an antirumours working group formed by children that gets involved in debates and other antirumours activities.

Whatever their setup, antirumours networks should

- ► have the capacity to make decisions and contribute effectively to the development of the ARS through proposals, debates, activities, and shared communication materials;
- ► provide a space of participation that allows diverse profiles of people and institutions to participate.
- ► provide a city-wide identity to the strategy that goes beyond a public policy designed exclusively in the offices of the city council.
- ► contribute to deepening the intercultural approach and the discourse of diversity management.

Why is it important?

- ► Because the network expands the effect of the ARS to areas or contexts, which are out of the municipality's reach. It is a way of mobilising more resources and creating positive synergies between actors.
- ► Building a robust network is also a way to approach the rumour "machinery". It allows us to better understand the reality and not only to determine the scope of rumours, but also to identify the best approaches to dismantle them.
- ► The network also contributes to building the sense of responsibility and solidarity among its participants by engaging them in achieving a shared common goal relevant to their city's cohesiveness and development.

Networks fulfil different objectives, which include:

▶ to act as an outreach group within the wider target community, enhancing understanding and contacts.

▶ to generate feedback on ideas and their implementation;

▶ to provide advice, guidance, and direction to the antirumours campaigns;

▶ to propose, design, and implement interventions;

▶ to extend the ARS in the future and build sustainability.

Our experience has shown that one of the main goals of the network is to provide its members with inspiration, methodologies, useful tools, support, and training, so that they can include the antirumours approach in their daily life and area of work.

Elements to bear in mind when creating the network

When the city's administration promotes a participatory space, it is very important to clarify its nature. The following issues should be considered carefully before starting: which structure the network should have, which priorities, targets, and antirumour actions the network will engage in, how decisions will be taken, what it offers to the members and how the network will be organised and coordinated.

Regarding the **level of autonomy** of networks in the decision-making process, some have more of an advisory nature whereas others have great decision-making power. Our choice will depend on the political will, the participation culture and "tradition" in each city, the profile of the coordinators, the richness and structure of the local civil society, and other factors. Experience from cities demonstrates that the choice of the autonomy of the network will be subject to changes. We will probably start with one concept (either a formal or informal network, large or small, more homogeneous or diverse, etc.)

which will progressively evolve. And we will have to adjust it depending on factors such as the level of engagement of participants, results or the new participants that will appear during the process.

But one question remains: whether the antirumour network, once created, should be expanded and open to new members or, conversely, be more subdued in the beginning and involve new stakeholders step by step. Both options are possible. In any case, from experience we would argue that involving new actors is necessary and that it is the nature and size of the network that matters, so it can be managed properly. All networks are built on the idea that a successful strategy must enable the participation of stakeholders beyond the municipality, including NGOs, community organisations, third-level organisations, private sectors and of course the target groups.

How to attract members to the network and what is their degree of involvement in the network?

Capture their interest. We start from the idea that people who form part of the network have a certain interest in improving the social relations and forms of living together in their cities. In fact, they are likely to have already worked or been involved in social and intercultural projects.

To attract their interest in the strategy, we can use the rumour-identification process, invitations to workshops and, of course, informative e-mails, social media outreach, and direct telephone calls to reach potential members. The offer to provide antirumours training will probably be a very important way to attract people interested in the strategy. The public presentations of the project and its eventual media echo can be also a good way to reach and get the attention of some key players.

Highlight the benefits of being part of the network, such as: the opportunity to be part of a rigorous and innovative framework intended to raise awareness through a global strategy focused on rumours and how to reduce prejudices; training; access to practical and shared resources (web, brochures, methodological guidelines, best practice, etc.); the feeling of belonging to an exciting and innovative organisation; greater visibility and networking; and links with other actors both locally and globally. They are contributing to an exciting process that is bringing useful and innovative responses and results for improving the social cohesion and global development of their city.

Consolidate the relationship. To ensure the sustainability of the network, it is important to establish a good framework for a long-term relationship. Their members should feel that their opinions are taken into account while possible misunderstandings or distorted expectations need to be addressed. When conducting meetings, we must set a pace fast enough to avoid discouraging participants, for instance by taking excessive time to take decisions without follow-up or concrete actions to implement them. During the peak of activities and in order not to saturate the participants, meetings should always have clear objectives and content to prevent the agents from feeling that they are wasting their time.

Regarding the level of involvement, it is important to highlight that the participative spaces must be flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of profiles. If the network we create is demanding in time and dedication and the majority of members are professionals of organisations already working on these issues, it would be challenging to attract different types of profiles. It is important to avoid the 'homogenisation' of the network. It has to be diverse, both from an intercultural perspective and regarding the professional profiles, ages, etc.

One of the specific objectives of the strategy is, indeed, to involve a lot of different people, and this involvement can take different forms: collaborating on a specific action, including the antirumours approach in their fields of work, going to training sessions, creating antirumours resources, conducting academic research, participating in the dissemination of antirumours messages, and others.

4. Training antirumours agents

Training antirumours agents is one of the key elements of the ARS, as one of the strategy's main objectives it to empower people with the theoretical knowhow, skills and practical tools to be more effective in challenging prejudices and rumours. As previously emphasised, we deal with very complex and sensitive issues and we need more than goodwill to produce a real impact on citizens' perceptions. We have to be very rigorous but at the same time we need to motivate and engage people in different ways.

Who?

First of all, we need to ask ourselves who we want to train? Why? And to do what? How will they be involved in the future design and implementation of the campaign? Do we only want to train the members of the anti-rumour network? Is training an awareness-raising action in itself and should we therefore train as many people as possible? If we start providing antirumour training without answering these questions, the risk is that after the training, we will not know what to do next. This is a crucial point. **We want to train people to become antirumour agents,** but we need to provide them with a concrete framework and practical tools so they can understand what are they supposed to do with the acquired knowledge.

At the beginning, cities will have to train the core team of the ARS and those actors who will be most engaged with the strategy. Once specific priorities and target groups have been identified, cities will have to be proactive to identify and attract more specific profiles of key people we want to engage as antirumour agents. If we decide to focus on youth, we will need to train people who may have experience and influence among the youth. Similarly, if our target is a specific

Local actors that want to become active in the network and participate in designing and implementing antirumours actions.

Local actors and citizens that we want to empower so that they apply the acquired knowledge in their fields of work and personal lives

Specific target groups that we decide to focus on in our campaigns (politicians, youth, teachers, local police etc.)

Professional trainers to become trainers of antirumour agents so that each city can have its own antirumour trainers, without depending on external trainers

neighbourhood, we will need to find people from that neighbourhood whose profile makes them really interesting and effective potential anti-rumour agents. Once we have trained the core target group, we can identify some different target groups as described below. The content of the training, while it may have a common basis, should also be adapted to the goals and the target group(s) of each session.

Which content?

Although the antirumours training will have to be adapted to particular goals and target groups, its core content should include some common topics.

- ▶ Introduction to the ARS: principles, goals, methodology.
- ▶ The wide concept of culture and how it may influence and constrain our perception of the world.
- ▶ Introduction to the theoretical framework of managing diversity approaches, emphasising interculturalism.
- ▶ Conceptual elements that allow an understanding of the key concepts of the anti-rumour strategy: stereotypes, prejudices and rumours. What are they? How are they created and how do they work? What are their effects on our society?
- ▶ How to reduce prejudices and stereotypes: what are the risks? What are the most effective methods? How can we apply them?
- ▶ Communication skills in awareness raising and dismantling rumours through face-to-face interactions.

- ▶ Examples of antirumour campaigns, tools and actions that proved to be more efficient on challenging prejudices.
- ▶ Different training dynamics (for the training of trainers).

The content and duration of the antirumours agents training has been evolving and there are different models and options. However, we can identify two different types of training.

- ▶ The basic and fundamental content: The basic antirumours agents training must cover the different topics pointed our before, and the duration may differ from a more intensive and basic program (8 hours) to more extensive and formal training (14-20 hours)
- ▶ More specific and complementary content: depending on the goal and target group(s) of the training, we must develop complement sessions and modules by putting more emphasis on specific topics (i.e. how to use social media as an antirumour tool, specific methodologies for teachers to be used in the classroom, training adapted to politicians or local police etc.). These types of sessions may last 2-4 hours and they are a great tool to both complement the basic and fundamental content and to attract people to the more complete training.

Comprehensive training will allow participants to become "antirumours agents" and should be distinguished from the more specific formats, which are not sufficient to train participants to become antirumours agents. A minimum of 8 hours training is necessary to get the basic knowledge that is necessary for an antirumours agent.

Some examples for existing training offers:

▬▬▬ **Bilbao** offers a different package of training, focused on different groups. The basic training (up to 170 people have been trained until now) is open to stakeholders in different neighbourhoods, such as members of associations, cultural and sports centres, citizens etc. There are also specific training formats for municipal staff, for politicians and the media, and formats that have been identified by participants of the network according to their needs, which include "rumours at school", "creativity in antirumours actions", "cyberactivism against hate and intolerance" or "gender and islamophobia".

▬▬▬ **Nuremberg** advertised the trainings trough open calls as well as by targeting specific groups. For employees of the cities of Nuremberg, Fürth, Erlangen and Schwabach, the 2017 training courses are offered in the training program of the city academy. The trainings are set up in 4 modules of 3 hours each (12 hours in total).

In **Barcelona**, more than 1500 members of municipal services and others institutuions as well as individual citizens have been trained by antirumours agents. The content of the training has been evolving and the current duration of the basic course is 20 hours (5 sessions of 4 hours). The more recently added contents include a section aimed at new tools in fighting against rumors in the media. The comprehensive *Practical Guide for antirumour agents* that was published by the city council provides information to complement the content of the training. It has inspired many other cities that have developed their own training materials, adapting them to different themes.

Getxo also draws on a variety of formats to train antirumour agents. They include a basic antirumors course (13 hours), the course "Antirumours in motion" (an innovative form of intensive training during a weekend), a course for administrative staff (12 hours) and in-depth seminars on different themes (4 3-hours).

The importance of "training of trainers"

Although in the first place a city needs external support to provide the antirumours training, it should identify its own future trainers from the beginning to ensure the autonomy of the city ARS. One of the main tasks will be to build training content and materials adapted to the local context and features of local anti-rumours campaigns. We should distribute some support material to the trainees after the training, to enable them to continue the work. It may be useful to brainstorm together how those trained could be supported afterwards as a group, to maintain impetus, help them build a network among themselves and encourage them to develop anti-rumours activities to reach a larger audience, with the aim of instigating a snowball effect.

In all European cities involved on the C4i project, intensive "training of trainers" sessions were conducted, from which many built their own antirumours agents' trainings. For instance **Erlangen, Botkyrka, Patras** and esspecially **Limerick** developed their own modules to target different profiles and fields. The antirumours training proved to be a very effective way to engage and empower many people that later became involved in the design and implementation of antirumours actions and participated actively on specific antirumours campaigns.

Evolution and adaptability of the content by promoting a multidisciplinary approach

The antirumours agents training will keep evolving and incorporating new methods that have proved to be effective. This may come from the involvement of new experts and trainers bringing their experience on topics such as interculturalism, anti-discrimination, and anti-racism, gender equality etc.

We need to include the knowhow and expertise of a great variety of disciplines such as anthropology, social psychology, communication, pedagogy, but we also must keep an eye on the interesting contributions from fields such as neuroscience, arts, or technology as applied to social issues. The essence of the ARS is promoting collaboration and dialogue among different actors, but also to keep an open mind (and avoiding prejudices) for current research and knowhow.

B. Designing and implementing antirumours actions

The steps we have discussed so far are a core part of the ARS but we still have not dealt with a key part of the strategy: the development of specific antirumours actions with which we intend to reach our specific goals.

Before delving into the different type of actions that can be developed, we will mention some common key elements for designing individual actions in relation to the global strategy, that will help us to better understand, contextualise, and facilitate a more effective intervention. Having said that, it is important to keep the flexibility, intrinsic to the ARS during the whole process, including the implementation of actions.

Relation with the objectives and principles of the strategy

First of all, we need to bear in mind that the actions developed need to be geared towards the strategy's objectives and be inspired by its principles:

Objectives
Engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders
Promote critical thinking and raise awareness
Influence the political and social agenda

Principles
Strengthen political commitment
Target and attract the ambivalent majority
Guarantee the "city collective dimension"
Promote creativity
Guarantee rigour and results

The global strategy vs. its specific actions

The ARS is a city strategy for triggering a process of social change in the long term and that evolves over time. It is not a project or a campaign with a limited duration of 6 months or a year. The ARS has global objectives and requires a set of actions that have a more stable and permanent character: to maintain political commitment and a stable work team, to consolidate and expand the anti-rumour network, to provide anti-rumour training and to pursue a global communication strategy within the ARS.

On the other hand, we have already mentioned that the ARS is not a communication-based awareness raising campaign, although this can help to achieve parts of its objectives. One of the key priorities of the ARS is to work in a more intensive way in those spaces that allow for a greater level of interaction, dialogue, and critical thinking: in neighbourhoods, schools, cultural centres, sports centres, libraries, universities, associations of all kinds, in public institutions, in companies, public spaces, social networks, hospitals, etc. This allows us to "dive down" into the mode of face-to-face interaction to achieve a deeper impact.

For this reason we can differentiate a more generic dimension of ARS from a more specific and intensive one. We cannot pretend to influence from the outset the perceptions of all citizens and to tackle all the rumours and prejudices identified. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize and design strategies and specific action campaigns within the framework of the global ARS, which should focus on specific objectives and target groups.

Setting specific objectives and targets

- ► Set clear objectives
- ► Identify target groups
- ► Identify actions, tools, messages and channels to use
- ► Identify key actors and partners to involve
- ► Link and integrate to existing initiatives
- ► Design and implement antirumours actions
- ► Monitor and evaluate

The decision making process

One of the most important parts of the design of the anti-rumours actions and campaigns deals with the decision-making process. Who decides on the priorities, targets and actions, and how?

Thanks to the antirumours diagnosis we will have a much clearer idea of what are the most relevant challenges we are facing in our city regarding diversity issues, rumours, and prejudices. However prioritising certain sections of the population is still important. We need to be realistic and proactive to choose specific target groups and also find specific allies and local actors that may enhance the impact of our actions.

The manner in which the decision-making process is administered has to be clear from the beginning, otherwise there will be inefficiencies in the management process. This does not

mean that there is no space for evolution and flexibility during the process because the consolidation of some dynamics takes time and requires capacity to adapt.

Organic development of the strategy vs. the need to start "making some noise"

Following a working plan with its methodology and planned activities is very important. However, we should not forget to leave some room for flexibility, creativity, and spontaneous reactions.

Often cities need some time before designing some specific antirumours projects and campaigns to be able to attract people and motivated actors, to disseminate the main messages and see the reactions and their impact. Making some noise with some communication actions and public events has proven to be a good strategy to find the best allies and more opportunities to link the ARS to existing initiatives. However, this obliges us to follow up and not lose momentum. We should not create expectations to people that afterwards we are not prepared to respond to. Better not to make too much noise if we won't be able to follow up properly. We need to guarantee a proper empowerment and focus on solid content before starting to disseminate messages and implementing actions.

The "contagious" effect: the benefits of "losing control"

It is worth emphasising that the people implementing ARS will "lose control" over some of the actions. Throughout the process, new actors will appear inspired by the antirumours approach and decide, independently, to launch actions within their field of action (schools, NGOs, sport centres, etc.). This reality must be seen as an indicator of success, as one of the main objectives of the strategy is to "spread" the approach and to add new actors, even if they act independently to the decision-making space of the ARS. To adapt a flexible approach is key, in order to not limit or stifle this "dispersion" with strict methodological criteria. Indeed, it is desirable to identify these actions and, when possible, link them to the strategy.

In many cities, these actions have contributed to enriching the strategy being used and to opening new doors that we can to take advantage of. However, it is important to transmit rigour

and share the lessons learnt (mostly mistakes!) to avoid that these actions use erroneous premises and methodological approaches, or ones that have proved inefficient – or even counter-productive.

Draw on existing expertise to be more efficient

When designing the activities aimed at reducing prejudices and stereotypes, it is important to keep in mind the know-how and expertise accumulated from previous experience. Knowledge from successful projects, academic research, and the experience from the cities already working on this issue will shed some light on possible lines of action that have proved to be more effective. We recommend that individual actions should:

- ▶ Call for collective and individual responsibility and action
- ▶ Provide knowledge and critical thinking
- ▶ Identify contradictions in evidence, cultural framework, ethnocentrism, or hypocrisy
- ▶ Work on the emotional dimension, such as empathy and personal experience
- ▶ Facilitate individualisation and acknowledge diversity of the members of stereotyped groups.
- ▶ Emphasize the identification and recognise similarities and common shared categories
- ▶ Promote positive-interaction dynamics and spaces
- ▶ Generate new, more global and inclusive identities, based on cooperation processes in order to achieve common objectives

Classification of the actions

We can classify the antirumours actions according to different criteria regarding our priorities, diagnosis, context and goals, according to:

DESIGNED, LAUNCHED & IMPLEMENTED BY:	TARGET	FIELD	TIME	
• City Council • Antirumours Network • Antirumours agents • "External" actors linked to the AS (third sector organisations, companies, media, sport centres…) • External" actors not linked with the AS but influenced by it • Citizens	• Youth • Politicians • Civil Servants • Activists • Professionals • The elderly • Families • Ethnic minorities • Idols • Community leaders • General public /citizens	• Public Policies • Third Sector • Education • Media & Social Media • Public Space / Urbanism • Companies & entrepreneurship • Sport • Culture	• Permanent /ongoing actions • One-off actions • Intensive actions during a concrete period of time	Flexibility: Message Channel Context

Principles: political commitment, collective "city-dimension", individual responsibility, target and seduce the ambivalent majority, creativity, rigour, results-oriented

⚠ Backfire effects

⚠ Benefits of "losing control"

Some actions will be on-going (having at their disposal channels such as webs and social networks) and others could be one-off actions (organizing an event, workshop or seminars), while yet others will be organised under the framework of specific campaigns with their defined objectives, target groups and calendar.

The evaluation baseline: from where to where?

We should not forget that we are implementing an ARS because we want to change something. We expect to reach some goals and achieve concrete results. And we need to be sure from the very beginning what these changes and results are and how we are going to know and to measure to what extent we reach them.

This is why the approach to evaluation we use must be defined at the very beginning, with clear indicators, methodology, and tools. Monitoring of our actions and campaign is a prerequisite to its successful development and sustainability.

1. Communication and dissemination

Although an ARS is much more than a communication campaign, we need to take into account the communications dimension and its different potential objectives.

Objectives

► To visualise and demonstrate the real commitment of the local government and the city to put this topic in the agenda and prioritise it.

► To appeal to local actors, institutions, professionals and citizens who may be interested in participating in the strategy (as antirumour agents, becoming members of the network etc.).

► To encourage other entities or professionals to include this approach in their daily activity;

► To raise the public interest and make people think about the negative impact of prejudices and rumours circulating in their city about diversity issues and people from diverse backgrounds;

► To check the reactions and interest in the project (in the Media, among local actors, citizens, etc.);

► To complement more intensive and qualitative actions of awareness-raising in different contexts;

► To engage local artists, youth, or citizens by asking them to design a communication tool.

The necessary adaptability of the actions

In all our actions, but especially on those focusing more on communication, we need to take into account three key factors that will be crucial to achieve greater impact:

▶ The content/message: What message do we want to communicate? The efficacy of our intervention will depend, to a great extent, on the capacity to adapt the content to the specific objective, target group and channel. In addition, the message must "stick" in people's minds. This could be enhanced by our antirumour arguments taking into account two main ingredients of the antirumour approach: emotions and creativity.

▶ The channel / messenger: it is key to identify and involve those people and social actors with a larger capacity to influence the target group.

▶ The context: before designing any communication message and action, we need to take into account the specific circumstances of the context in which we will intervene. Citizens perceptions may be influenced by many factors, such as the current political situation (increase of populist and xenophobic discourses) the impact of an economic crisis or by a period of more intense arrival of refugees among others. Moreover, if we want to focus on topics regarding the labour market, education or health issues, we need to take into account what are the current challenges of those fields before sending any message that may be misunderstood.

Avoid counter-productive effects

A common misconception is that simply providing more information can dismantle rumours. However, experience proves that no matter how vigorously and repeatedly such misinformation is corrected, the influence of rumours remains detectable. There is yet another complexity: Debunking a rumour can actually reinforce it in people's minds. Several "backfire effects" have been observed, arising from popularising myths and rumours and by triggering an averse reaction by threatening established worldviews in providing too many arguments and evidence.

These are some creative examples of antirumours communication tools that have managed to get important impacts to disseminate the ARS, attract key actors and reach wider audiences.

a) Logos and slogans

Building a global and inspiring identity of the city ARS is very important, and creative logos and slogans play an important role. It is recommendable that the ARS has a distinctive image and is accompanied by a logo and one or more slogans to raise the interest and attract attention in a positive and original form. These can be designed with the help of the some key actors and citizens as a way to establish their link with the campaign, bring about creativity, and build engagement.

Linking antirumour agents, organisations, schools, municipality officers, youth, etc. with the co-creation of the logo and slogans will reinforce the "city-dimension" of the strategy, including the ties between the citizens and the strategy. Moreover, if they are creative and linked to the identity of the city, the message will "stick" in people's minds and have a greater impact.

▬▬ "Don't get drenched in rumours!" The city of Bilbao uses an umbrella as a logo which inspired later the city of Patras to use real umbrellas as antirumours symbol.

"Be careful with rumours. Don't follow the crowd". Getxo's parrot logo deserves special mentioning as it has inpired many other cities such as Amadora, Botkyrka, Erlangen and Patras.

Don't parrot, inquire! Says Erlangen's parrot.

"Think twice before you act" suggest Botkyrka's parrot.

"Don't feed the rumour" alerts Amadora's parrot.

■ With "Rumours are not an art form" Jerez de la Frontera has chosen a very creative slogan, linking its ARS identity to a well known flamenco expression.

■ "Vaccinate yourself against the rumours. Do not let them make you sick" from one of the most creative campaigns in Tenerife.

■ "Do not feed the monster of rumours. Eat it!" in Santa Coloma de Gramenet.

■ "Loures free of rumours" and "Cartagena free of rumours" is a direct and clear slogan.

b) Public presentations

At some point it will be necessary to make a public presentation of the ARS to potential stakeholders in order to explain the decision to launch this strategy, to show the political commitment and to let the local actors and citizens know about this decision. It can be useful to ask for active participation and start engaging future actors in the network, while registering the reaction of the public and the media.

▬▬ In **Amadora**, the anti-rumour strategy was presented to the mayor, representatives of 17 local authorities, municipal employees, members of the Local Social Network (CLAS) and representatives of 43 local partner organisations. The presentation was spread over two days and was followed by rumour-identification workshops. Participants identified rumours about the city of Amadora, both in general and about the immigrant population.

▬▬ In **Bilbao**, a public presentation of the anti-rumour strategy was organised in a public square of the Deusto neighbourhood (target of Bilbao's first antirumours campaign), featuring a theatre performance raising questions about diversity and immigration in the neighbourhood. The stage was decorated with umbrellas, symbolising Bilbao's antirumour campaign and protection from rumours.

▬▬ **Nuremburg and Erlangen** co-organised an event, early in their ARS, for key stakeholder organisations to debate the relationship between rumours and wider interculturalism. They invited experts to present their thoughts on the ideas of rumours and their wider context. The event helped to raise awareness about the ARS within the two city authorities, offered support for setting up a network, and insights into how to evaluate the project. It also allowed participants to raise issues of concern before the campaigns had been designed in detail.

c) Materials and resources for communication

Cities have developed lots of different and very creative material to disseminate their ARS and antirumours content to wider audiences and to support and complement the more intensive actions on the ground. They include explanatory brochures, viral videos, comics, songs, tales, multimedia products, glasses, t-shirts, bags, and many more objects.

Comics
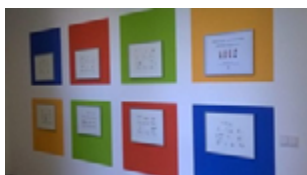
▬▬ **Barcelona** has created five editions of "Blanca Rosita Barcelona" comics with simple everyday stories of living together and addressing the most common rumours and stereotypes about diversity. Miguel Gallardo, a well known artist is the author of the comic.

▬▬ **Erlangen** launched a Comic-Exhibition "Come as you are and leave different" in the city hall.

Many other cities such as Amadora, Nuremberg and Getxo have used comics as an antirumours tool.

Leaflets, brochures, infographics



Barcelona

Limerick

Sabadell

Videos

▬▬ Many cities and organisations have produced videos with antirumours content, such as the one produced by CEAR in the Basque Country "Don't let yourself be entangled" by rumours.

▬▬ "It all happened unintentionally" is a great antirumours tale about the origin of a rumour in the class and its consequences that resulted of the involvement of professional writers and artists in Fuenlabrada.
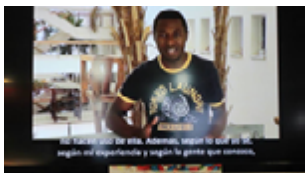
▬▬ Storytelling videos in **Tenerife.**

Loures created a great videdo about the process to build its antirumours "art street" action.

Amadora "Do not feed the rumour" video.

Bilbao has developed a game, in the form of a scratch-card and an online app, that allows the user to assess whether s/he is "protected from" or "drenched in" rumours.

Photo call in **Sabadell.**

Antirumours roll-up in **Santa Coloma de Gramenet**: "In front of rumours: refresh your ideas. Get informed, reflect, act."

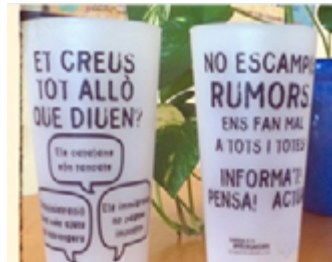Antirumours exhibitions in **Tenerife, Nuremberg, Erlangen.**

Marketing material

Antirumours marketing products produced by cities such as leaflets, bags, plastic glasses, street banners, poster, t-shirts and even antirumours pills in Tenerife!

d) Communication channels

General media

Undoubtedly, the media can be a great ally of the global strategy, even if it is not easily manipulated, specifically for media seen as much more our "opponent", as they spread messages that reinforce prejudices and rumours.

The messages, slogans, images, and information generated – everything related to the campaign must have an attractive communication component. Sometimes we will try to catch media attention through press conferences, whereas on other occasions it is the media themselves who will knock on our door seeking to know more about the strategy. The result is a mirror effect that can cause great media coverage in press, radio, or television, and will allow us to reach a wide audience.

Finally, the media can also be the target audience of anti-rumour activities. We can identify those media that reinforce negative stereotypes and false rumours in the treatment of their news. Anti-rumour agents can then conduct actions to identify and challenge such stereotypes and rumours spread by media outlets and provide evidence of their weaknesses of evidence and arguments, pointing out inconsistencies or misinterpretation of the reality. This can be done, for instance, through social media. On the other hand, it is also very interesting to attract journalists to participate and collaborate in the strategy by contributing their knowledge and expertise, and to seek opportunities for collaboration to sensitize other professionals and media. Some cities have organised workshops with journalist with very positive results.

Also many cities have used municipal publications and newsletters to disseminate the ARS in many ways.

▬▬ In Borkyrka, the collaboration with local media has been very important and even some journalists decided to launch a new local paper to focus on the positive news about the city, in order to counteract the negative perceptions that often appear on mainstream media about the city.

Websites

It is highly advisable to have a website where anyone can go to get more detailed information about the objectives, actions or resources of the ARS. It is important to provide information and draw attention to the antirumour network and the role of the antirumour agents, and to disseminate such information and products that are generated within the different actions, as they may be very useful and inspiring (videos, comic books, brochures, manuals, songs, etc.)

▬▬ Almost all the cities have their own antirumours website and use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) to communicate, spread, and share antirumours content.

Social media

Social media are an important support element to publicise the project, disseminate messages, generate debate, encourage the involvement of new players and keep the pulse on everyday actions etc. They become not only a broadcast channel but also an awareness-raising tool where spontaneous interaction occurs. That said, we must not forget that social media increasingly becomes a major channel to spread false rumours and therefore should also become an important awareness-raising channel. If you wish to use social media as an antirumour channel, is crucial that your team are familiar with them and trained to use them. Otherwise you will not achieve the desired impact and may face important backfire effects. Remember that good will is not enough and proper training and rigour are necessary.

▬▬ **Castellón** launched "an antirumours selfie" action within its "Stop Rumores" campaign. The goal is that people identify rumours with a traffic light with three colours and have to make a comment on Facebook to raise awareness on the negative role of rumours, myths and prejudices that exists in the city.

▬▬ **Barcelona** launched the communication campaign #nocomparteixorumors (#Idontsharerumours) after the last terrorists attacks to prevent islamophobia.

Public events and meeting places (festivals, conferences, seminars, entertainment events...)

There are many meetings and events, both professional (conferences, seminars, etc.) and informal and popular (local festivals, cultural events, etc.) where we can explain the campaign and generate a debate on it.

Engaging Influencers

Engaging local icons, community leaders, and opinion influencers from fields such as culture and sport can also be a good strategy for achieving a greater impact on citizens and the media. However their engagement should be honest and not just as superficial publicity action.

▬ Many cities have managed to engage local artist, cartoonist, writers, singers, or people from different sports etc. to help disseminate the ARS and raise-awareness.

2. Attracting new allies

One of the key of success of an ARS is its capacity to pass on the antirumours virus to as many people as possible. This can mean empowering them to fight prejudices and reinforce critical thinking in their daily lives, in their professional environments or even taking part in the antirumours network. To do that, we have different spaces: the antirumours network, capacity-building workshops, training antirumours agents and other activities aimed at attracting new actors.

In order to capture the interest of people, the communication strategy may be important, but what has been proved to work best, is a proactive attitude looking for people and inviting them. It is important to allocate time to identify who could contribute best to the ARS and convince them, while being flexible enough to take advantage of each member's skills, experience and influence. The profiles of the allies could be very diverse and from different fields, the more the merrier! Instead of having a reactive attitude of "wait and see" who will come to us, one needs to be very proactive to find new and "unsuspected" allies to engage them on the ARS. We need to be proactive and creative and move our from our "comfort zone".

There are many examples of how a more open and proactive attitude can engage very diverse actors. Patras managed to involve prisons, Erlangen a big company like Siemens, Tenerife collaborated with hospitals, Santa Coloma de Gramenet and Barcelona with restaurants, Getxo with big musical festivals and an international skate competition and many cities have engaged sports team, such as Lublin, Jerez or Cartagena. There are many more "unsuspected" allies whose involvement is fundamental for any ARS to reach wider audiences.

We always have to take into account the risk of generating misunderstandings or distorted expectations and not being able to properly respond to the generated interest. If people show their interest in collaborating, but we do not know how, what to ask or offer, it will be detrimental to the ARS and we will be wasting energy.

▬ FC **Cartagena** supporting the antirumours strategy.

3. Promoting knowledge and critical thinking

Disseminate counter-information

Trying to dismantle beliefs by providing information that questions them is often a very ineffective method. People tend to ignore and forget the conflicting knowledge, and this can even reinforce negative beliefs. Usually, messages that are transmitted more directly and interactively are significantly more effective. However, sometimes, and depending on the target, they can be useful, especially if they do not try to spread rumours or superficial arguments and take into account the recommendations detailed in the previous chapters.

Limerick's ARS chose info graphics that "translate" complex information and arguments into one graphic, to be shared on social media to reach a big impact.

In **Santa Coloma de Gramenet** tablecloths with antirumours arguments were produced in collaboration with local restaurants, so people can think about them at lunch!

Specific capacity-building actions

Apart from the training of antirumours agents, there are other spaces of capacity-building and empowerment we should focus on by organising workshops, seminars, debates etc. These activities must be flexible in order to reach very different profiles and not only those who are already sensitised. In this sense, we should avoid to limit our invitations to our databases of people already involved in these actions, and promoting these actions in very different contexts.

This kind of training can be provided to civil servants, social organisations, companies, cultural and sports centres or citizens in general etc.

As all antirumours cities promote specific capacity-building actions only a few examples can be pointed out here.

Erlangen conducted an antirumours campaign in cooperation with Siemens Company, a major employer in the region. The campaign focused mainly on rumours regarding asylum seekers and included antirumours capacity-building workshops with employees and also the provision of traineeships to qualified asylum seekers, to promote diversity in the company's workforce. The project aimed to bring about a win-win-win situation, first for asylum seekers who would receive work-place orientation, then for firm employees who would reflect on their bias against refugees and migrants, and finally for the company itself, which could make use of the potential of qualified asylum seekers.

Fuenlabrada developed a specific antirumours campaign focusing on families. Among the different actions, they promoted literary creative workshops for families with kids (6-12 years), conducted by professional writers. The goal was to provide capacity-building and awareness to recognise the negative role of rumours and prejduices and build skills to confront them.

Montreal: In Montreal, the Carrefour de ressources en interculturel (CRIC) is facilitating workshops to encourage intercultural analysis and discussion around rumours. The rumours of the persons participating in the workshops are collected to prepare the content beforehand. During the workshops, certain tools are proposed to participants as a means to encourage dialogue and critical thinking (tools to recognize when generalizations are made, to recognize that we use our own cultural baggage to read situations, and participants are encouraged to ask themselves questions). The workshops are facilitated at elementary schools, high schools, centers for older people, community organizations, etc. Since the workshops have an intercultural approach, they touch rumours that impact diversity but also rumours of the local population. This serves two purposes: to create empathy and to facilitate intercultural exchange and openness through critical thinking.

Patras provided capacity building in collaboration with prisons. A prison is a small, closed society that must deal with the same problems as the rest of society. In prison people are obliged to live together 24 hours a day, very closely, without opportunities for avoiding each other or enjoying privacy. It is therefore difficult for them to hide their beliefs or to avoid rumours and prejudice. The Antirumours workshops in Patras prison were developed with the full support of the management and staff. The workshops were attended both by inmates and prison staff, and antirumours material was prepared in collaboration with the prison educational service.
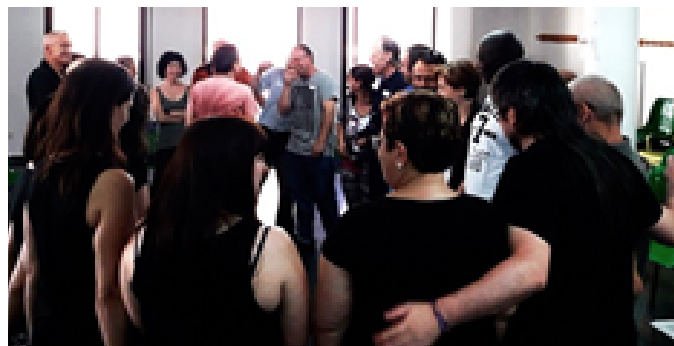
Logroño, among many other antirumours workshops, organised a very special one to promote positive interaction and raise awareness about prejudices and discrimination. Participants were mainly unemployed and also people with some disabilities. The workshop was a demand from the municipal employment department.

Santa Coloma de Gramenet offers a great variety of specific antirumours workshops to diverse target groups. For example, they have provided antirumours training sessions to municipal employees focusing on topics such as religious diversity and interculturality from a gender perspective.

Activities integrated into formal curricula

This content it has a greater impact if is included in the regular programmes (of the security forces, teachers, officials etc.), rather than being presented through specific modules or voluntary sessions (in which participants are usually those already sensitised).

In the case of schools, although there are many great examples of actions implemented by several antirumours cities, it is desirable not to dedicate just a single session or unit to this topic, but rather try incorporating this approach as part of the pedagogical project, within the framework of a cross-cutting commitment to intercultural education. Providing knowledge about the history and roots of racism and discrimination has proved to have an important effect.

Limerick: The organisation Doras Luimní developed a strong and ambitious antirumours training, focusing on the formal education system. Building on the initial antirumours workshops there was an interest in developing a more sustainable model that could be embedded into third-level teaching and learning, second-level schools and also informal youth programmes. Each third-level institution has incorporated the antirumours approach into an aspect of their courses and used the antirumours approach as an assignment for part of a course.

▬▬ **Amadora**: teachers that assisted to an antirumours "training of trainers", started developing antirumours actions in schools. Then there was a snowball effect and other schools decided to include the antirumours approach within their education programmes in a very creative way by using arts (theatre, photo and music activities) as a main catalyst of their work.

▬▬ Antirumours creative workshop in **Jerez.**

Materials, resources and practical tools

Elaborating materials and resources that complement and support the training is a fundamental objective of ARS. Many cities have developed manuals, guides, videos and other materials that are used by many people and professionals to deepen knowledge and adapt it to their specific areas of work. It is very important to develop materials that provide practical tools so that not only the anti-rumour agents, but many other interested people, can apply them in their day to day to contribute effectively to challenging and reducing prejudice.

There are many examples of material, guides and practical handbooks produced by all the antirumours cities (e.g. Nuremberg, Sabadell, Botkyrka, Fuenlabrada or Limerick) to support the work of antirumours agents and professionals who want to conduct antirumours actions of their fields of work. We just point out few of them but you can find many more on the cities webpages.

▬▬ **Barcelona**: A practical guide for antirumours agents has been the referent publication from the beginning for many cities. With a theoretical but mainly practical approach, it offers solid information and useful tools on how to counter rumours and prejudices.

▬▬ **Bilbao**: "Games to dismantle rumours" a Handbook with antirumours activities for youth. It is a very recent and complete publication and offers many strategies and methods to promote critical thinking and raise awareness among youth.

4. Participative awareness and empowerment actions

There are other less formal actions to promote empowerment, awareness and critical thinking that are very useful to engage and reach wide audiences. Actions encouraging participation dealing indirectly with prejudices through culture and arts have proven very efficient.

▬▬ **Bilbao**: "youth video workshops". Many youth centres of the city have been running workshops to produce micro-videos, using a participatory methodology, to highlight and facilitate the understanding of rumours in their neighbourhoods.

▬▬ **Botkyrka**: Anti-rumour cafés have been set up in libraries as a public platform to discuss and explore rumours and prejudices. Libraries were chosen as they are well attended by young people aged 18-25 years old. Antirumours Cafes had a central topic to be discussed, but the main goal of each café was to encourage people to talk about rumours that they usually feel uncomfortable discussing.

▬▬ **Getxo**: Acciones antirumores en las Bibliotecas Municipales: Desmontar estereotipos y fomentar la interacción en torno a talleres, cuentacuentos, acciones de comic, conferencias etc. Getxo also managed to involved the local theatre school to include the antirumours approach and the students produced antirumours plays during the whole year that were seen by hundreds of relatives.

▬▬ **Loures**: Public art gallery: The goals were to change the stigmatised image of a specifc neighbourhood, Quinta do Mocho, to address prejudice and stigma, increase the pride and sense of belonging towards public space, and develop a public art gallery, while taking into account the specifc characteristics of its diverse community. The idea came from planning the "Festival: The Neighbourhood and the World." The antirumours team decided that one major part of the festival could be the painting of murals inside the community area, as an artistic intervention and community development, by promoting community meetings and debates and the engagement of many stakeholders and artists. This main goal was to change external (feeling of insecurity, fear of migrants) and internal (lack of self-esteem, lack of ownership) prejudice around this neighbourhood. A total of 33 murals were painted with 45 artists involved in the intervention.

▬▬ **Lublin** "rumour-eaters" media workshops: , during which the participants did not only get to know the secrets of filmmaking, but also created short video promoting integration themselves. Participants not only got to know the situation of foreigners in Lublin, defined the biggest challenges when it comes to intercultural community, but also were able to creativly tackle them in short videos they made themselves. The effect of workshops was presented during the official Lublin Rumoureaters Gala at the Centre of Culture in Lublin.

We should follow the logic of using existing spaces and not creating new ones. It is very important to count on professionals and both varied and innovative methodologies that could be offered in cultural events and centres, libraries, associations, companies and even hospitals or prisons, as some cities have done.
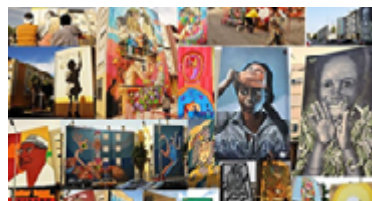
Nuremberg: Photo-Action: Nuremberg photo action asked people to write a sentence about a group to which they belong and then to include one characteristic that is usually associated with that group but that they themselves do not have. For instance: "I am Asian, but I am not good at maths." The goal was to make the viewer of the photographs aware of stereotypes and so become less susceptible to rumours.

Patras: Kids Carnival. During the anti-rumour training of trainers workshop, the idea of including the anti-rumour approach within the Patras Kids Carnival came up. The plan was worked on and the result was great; many kids became involved and the event reached many of Patras's citizens. The experience was a good example of how to be inspired by other cities' campaigns: the event showcased a giant parrot float inspired by Getxo in Spain and Bilbao's anti- rumour umbrella.

Sabadell: coexistence rap. The city invited a renowned rap singer, popular among teenagers and young people, to help schoolchildren compose and record an anti-rumour rap song. TV actors, journalists, showmen, neighbourhood leaders and school headmasters participated in the city's campaign.

Barcelona. "Antirumours activities Catalogue" offers more than 30 antirumours activities conducted by different organisations and professionals, that are offered for free by the municipality to schools, organisations, municipal services etc More than 20.000 people have participated over the last 5 years on these activities. The catalogue offers more than 30 antirumours activities, including many creative workshops (hip-hop, radio, video..) theatre-forums, debates, events to promote positive interaction etc. "I'm not racist but..." is one example of the many activities of he Catalogue is a theatre-forum conducted by La Xixa Teatre, a very experienced and creative antirumours organisation.

5. Promoting positive interaction

It is desirable that activities count on a good level of diversity in the profile of their participants. However, this is not always the case, and it will depend on the diversity of the spaces in which we develop our actions (schools, neighbourhoods, cultural centres, public space etc.) and on our capacity to attract people from different socio-cultural profiles to the different activities. This is why it is fundamental that some actions focus specifically on promoting and guaranteeing positive interaction among people with different origins, nationalities, beliefs, gender identities and age groups, etc.

We have seen that positive interaction contributes to reduce prejudices, but the "contact theory" warns that this will not happen only because of interaction. It is necessary that certain circumstances converge, such as equality of status, a cooperative and non-competitive dynamic, and above all that the activity is based on common objectives that transcend the differences and put the emphasis on shared interests. In some cases, it will simply consist of incorporating the criterion of guaranteeing diversity in many of the actions we carry out, starting with the members of the antirumours network, to avoid becoming a really diverse network with an active participation of people from different backgrounds and from the stigmatised minority groups. But in other cases it will be necessary to promote specific actions and spaces in which this positive interaction is promoted and facilitated.

Erlangen: Picnic banquet and "living books". The city of Erlangen built a banquet table over 180 metres in length and hosted a giant picnic along the main street of the city. About 1000 Erlanger residents and many asylum seekers, directly communicated and exchanged with each other, and took away with them information about rumours and how to counter them. Along Erlangen's picnic table, ten "living books" offered open conversations with refugees. People were invited to ask 10 asylum seekers about their life, talents, skills, experiences and dreams. The aim was to pose questions one would not normally dare to, thus overcoming rumours and getting to know one another. Banquet participants met people with exceptional stories to tell and learned about the unexpected talents of people living next door – refugees in Erlangen. It was a great opportunity to generate positive and active exchanges on one-to-one equality, making introductions and friendships, many of which are on-going.

"A meal for the meeting" (Bizilagunak) Getxo, Bilbao, San Sebastián and other cities have been implementing this project led by the organizations SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa: This initiative is inspired but the "Next door family" that was launched in 2004 in the Czech Republic and then spread throughout Europe. It consists of organizing a meal between a family or group of friends of native origin and another of foreign origin, with the accompaniment of a person dynamizing and thus, sharing table and experiences. Many Basque cities have promoted this project within the framework of their antirumours strategies. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) awarded SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa in December 2016 for this project, as one of the five organisations and individuals from across Europe who have demonstrated outstanding examples of solidarity towards refugees and migrants.

Sabadell: "Gastronomic antirumours experience": an intercultural four-week long gastronomic event, organised jointly between a group of immigrant women from different Women's Spaces in Sabadell and 25 students and professionals from the Gastronomic School restaurant, owned and run by the Economic Development Department of the municipality. The event attracted large numbers of members of the public and offered opportunities to provide information and interaction about rumours and anti-rumour activities.

Cartagena. "Girls in action" The city is implementing its ARS focusing specially on secondary schools to challenge prejudices about different cultures. An interesting antirumours activity is lead by a group of "good students girls" with diverse backgrounds that promote debates with the other students about their different cultures to foster better knowledge of cultural diversity and positive interaction.

Nuremberg: "The mobile kitchen" is an initiative to promote social interaction that was inspired by the C4i project in Nuremberg. The aim of the mobile kitchen is to create encounters between residents in different neighbourhoods, as the wooden kitchen bar is easy to transport and even easier to be extended accompanied by chairs. The idea is to invite passers-by to talk and chat to each other.

6. Direct confrontation of prejudice and rumours

Another of the key points of the ARS is the need to promote a proactive attitude, both personally and collectively, of direct confrontation of prejudices wherever we identify them. Confronting prejudice is fundamental to reduce impunity, to stop the downward spiral of rumours and to avoid the "normalisation" of certain comments, attitudes and behaviours. This confrontation can and must be carried out in various ways and through different channels:

▶ Face-to-face with people of our environment

▶ At political and institutional level, through public declarations, seeking consensus

▶ From the antirumours network and the organisations and social actors through manifestos, specific actions, etc.

▶ By launching specific communication campaigns

Annex 1 offers a set of strategies for confronting prejudice and rumours face-to-face. This is one of the important points in any training of antirumour agents since sometimes our reactions can be counterproductive and it is key to perform effectively.

Tenerife: "Get a vaccine against the rumours. Do not let them make you sick". Tenerife's antirumours agents set up an antirumours test in a hospital and invited citizens to check their opinions about some rumours. Depending on the responses, they started a conversation and at the end gave them antirumours pills with a receipt full of antirumours arguments.

Tenerife's "wheel of rumours" is a useful tool to promote conversations and check citizen's rumours in the public space, such as local markets. The "turn rumours the other way round" was a very original activity that ask citizens to turn the wheel and discuses about their opinion on the selected rumour. It is very good exercise to test the communication skills of the antirumours agents.

Confronting rumours on social media

Many cities have included in their antirumours trainings strategies to counteract rumours and negative narratives about diversity in social media.

Barcelona. Within the campaign #NoComparteixoRumors (#Idontsharerumours) launched after the terrorist attacks in the city on August 2017, the Antiurmours network developed a protocol to ask and empower people to combat rumours and hate speech on social media. The action aims to show users how to act in front of these discriminatory messages and rumours, which spread and become viral very quickly, and appeal to the responsibility of each one. In the case of rumors based on stereotypes and false data, the protocol recommends requesting respect, notifying the transmitter not to send this type of messages again and inviting them to be informed beforehand and act responsibly in social network. The campaign invites citizens to be critical of the messages received, especially if the content is insulting and manipulative. It also instructs them: "Do not react impulsively, reflect on the veracity of the information and search for other sources, do not share it to minimize its dissemination." Finally, the network calls on denouncing the hate messages, classified in the criminal law, to the relevant institutions.

7. Spaces free of rumours

Promoting spaces free of rumours is an interesting initiative that does not consist in carrying out just some antirumour action in a school, public library, company or city council, but in developing a much more intense intervention. It is about implementing a "mini" ARS in that space, which is committed to become a space free of rumours.

This involves a formal commitment and develop a work plan that contemplates diverse actions of training and awareness raising and that becomes part of the identity and core values of the centre. These actions can be part of an overall city strategy in which it is decided to create various spaces free of rumours. They will have an external impact, influencing not only its workers but the people who use, attend, or visit these spaces. These centres, like the antirumours cities, must comply with a set of requirements.

"Cities free of rumours" is the title of the guide of C4i European project and the slogan chosen by various cities for their strategies such as Loures and Cartagena. Although the rumors will never disappear because they are practically part of the human condition and play their part, this claim can serve as a ambituous benchmark and guidance to be applied to different spaces of the city.

The claim of a "neighborhood free of rumours" has been used by the Barcelonan association "La Casa Amarilla" to guide a specific type of workshop within the Antirumors Activities Catalogue of the city. The initiative aims to raise awareness of children and families about the importance of fighting rumours and stereotypes about cultural diversity, and reinforce the knowledge and value of different cultural expressions. Through different games, it introduces the concepts of rumour and stereotype and the negative consequences to spread them.

▬▬▬ The Andalusian Federation **"Andalucía Acoge"** through the **"Stop Rumores"** Agency, is promoting an interesting initiative in Andalusian cities as well as in Ceuta and Melilla. The provinces of Huelva, Granada and Malaga have been pioneers with the establishment of "spaces free of rumours" which have become key sites for the detection and dismantleing of rumors about diversity and specially immigrants. In these spaces, the people who carry out their daily work receive training and information to ban spreading rumours from their work space. The Provincial Public Library of Huelva has been the first to become a Space free of Rumours. In Granada it has been the communitarian social services center of the Northern District, and Malaga worked through the community plan "Proyecto Hogar". The actions targeted neighborhoods with a diverse population and many transformation needs that were particularly affected by rumours.

8. Antirumours creative labs

The ARS is a long-term process and it is fundamental that it is nourished permanently by new ideas, experiences, contributions from new actors and disciplines. For this reasons, creativity and innovation are key identity elements of the strategy. The worst thing that could happen to an ARS is that it comes to a standstill, that it shows signs of inertia in the form of a consolidated set of actions that is no longer enriched with new methodologies, activities and actors.

But in order to guarantee this spirit of permanent innovation, it is necessary to promote spaces dedicated to this objective guarantee the continuity of this creative energy. Therefore, a line of action of all ARS should be specifically about generating new ideas. Tenerife has stood out as one of the most creative networks, as well as Getxo, Barcelona, Lublin or Patras.

It is also important to attract very diverse profiles and continue involving new actors in brainstorming and creative workshops, as have done many cities like Fuenlabrada, Loures and many others.

▬▬▬ "Antirumours Creative Lab" Currently, a very interesting initiative is being promoted that links the global antirumors project with a center of creativity and co-working based in Barcelona but with many international connections. MOB: Makers of Barcelona, won one of the prizes of the "Diversity Advantage Challenge" promoted by the Spanish Intercultural Cities Network RECI. MOB is a space that breathes dynamism, creativity and diversity. Precisely the diversity of the team and the community of "mobbers" have allowed to innovate in different ways. The founder Cecilia Tham, who has an intercultural background, argues that there is a need for diversity of ideas, contexts, profiles, perspectives, gender, nationalities, etc. to find innovative solutions to the current societies main challenges. Diversity at the service of innovation, entrepreneurship and commitment to the social and economic development of the environment. The goal is to create a collaborative platform that promotes creativity at the service of the ARS and that allows to integrate very diverse fields and disciplines based on the "maker" approach.

9. Reaching new levels of influence

The objectives of the ARS are ambitious and complex and it is not realistic to expect that they can be fully achieved only through the development of a set of awareness-raising actions at local level. We have already seen that prejudices and attitudes towards socio-cultural diversity have multiple causes and are influenced by different actors.

In order to bring about really profound and not merely superficial changes, it is necessary to reach other areas of influence that allow addressing these causes. For this reason, it is important that the ARS is able to build bridges and alliances with actors with different levels of influence and competencies, such as associations of municipalities, regional and state governments, political parties, the Media, large social and cultural organisations, universities, companies and other decision-making environments.

The ARS has shown that despite being based mainly at local and community though policies and participative networks of diverses social actors, it has succeeded in influencing many other areas that are decisive in reinforcing the commitment to confront and reduce prejudices, discrimination processes and counteract negative narratives about diversity.

In 2012, a **collaboration agreement was launched between three levels of the Catalan administration**, Barcelona municipality, the provincial administration and the Catalan government, with the objective to collaborate to promote the ARS more globally and in many Catalan cities, through the transfer of materials, training and joint campaigns. This case illustrates how creating synergies and adding new collaboration can raise effectiveness and impact. The fact that the governments of these institutions are formed by different political parties, who commit themselves to the objectives of the ARS, is a great indicator of the capacity to add shared and transversal efforts in favour of building more inclusive, intercultural and fair societies.

The **Basque Antirumours Network ZAS!** started off as a humble project of training 20 antirumours agents in Getxo and now has expanded into an alliance of many of the most relevant social entities, municipalities, the Basque government, the University of the Basque Country and other key institutions such as the autonomic Ombudsman. This involvement has allowed not only to put this issue on the political and social agenda but to achieve important advances and impacts, beyond the city.

▬▬▬ **Erlangen: Siemens impact:** The fact that Erlangen involved the Siemens company, with more than 25,000 employees in the area, helped greatly to tackle negative perceptions regarding cultural diversity and especially the important contribution that refugees can bring to the host societies. The good results spread to other company headquarters in other cities and to strengthen their collaboration with the intercularal integration policies of their respective cities. Outcomes include

- A reduction in the number of rumours against refugees among Siemens' employees.
- Strengthened intercultural exchange, awareness and competences on both sides
- Greater awareness and use of the "diversity advantage."
- An exchange of expertise and knowledge.
- An improvement of the workplace capacity for asylum seekers.
- A strong contribution to long-term intercultural integration.

Media

The impact of the ARS on the media has been spectacular in all the cities in which it has been implemented, including many state-wide media. Televisions, newspapers, radios, online media, etc. they have collected news, interviews and documentaries about the ARS. An outstanding example is the Catalan television program "Tot un Món" (a whole world) which over years broadcast antirumours initiatives and pesonal testimonies of people of foreign origin to counter stereotypes and false rumors about cultural diversity.

There are many other examples, as we have seen previously, of how the antirumours have produced a great influence on key fields such as education, culture and sports etc.

International scope

One of the most prominent illustrations of the great capacity of ARS to generate interest beyond its original context has undoubtedly been its international expansion and the interest shown not only by many countries in Europe, but also in Japan, Mexico, Canada, Morocco, Jordan or New Zealand. In the last years the ARS has been presented in more than 25 countries and in several in high-level international forums.

▬▬▬ Intercultural cities team in Mexico where an antirumours workshop was conducted at the Historical Museum of the City.

▬▬ Asahi, the second largest paper in Japan, which is affiliated with New York Times and Guardian, published a long interview to Dani de Torres about the ARS with comments of Keizo Yamawaki, the most relevant Japanese expert on interculturalism, and expert linked to the Intercultural cities programme of the Council of Europe.

▬▬ Another example of the impact of the ARS has been the collaboration between the Antirumours Global project with FACEBOOK to design an awareness campaign about stereotypes and prejudices regarding diversity. Facebook organised a two-days "Hack for good" brainstorming with different teams of very creative young people to compete to win the best antirumour communication campaign award.

10. Cooperation and exchange with other cities and the global project

Finally, one of the strengths of the ARS is its global character. The fact that several cities in different countries are promoting the same strategy but adapted to their contexts and circumstances is a great opportunity to enrich the antirumours approach and increase its impact. In this sense, it is necessary to establish spaces of contact and cooperation between them.

Many cities that have begun to promote their strategies have contacted others to consult and share experiences. It is necessary to adopt a proactive attitude to communicate with each other and to draw inspiration from good practice and adapt them to their circumstances.

In some cases, several cities have shared common projects and have benefited from the exchange and the way in which each city has found innovative solutions to the shared challenges. This is why it is so important that cities are linked to the overall project supported and promoted by the Council of Europe. In this way, it is possible to define certain common frameworks of action that benefit all, and brings rigour and legitimacy from the lessons learned. This is the case of the content of antirumour training, the method of creating antirumour networks or evaluation methods.

▬▬ The **"Youth Antirumours encounters"** is an annual meeting between youth from different Spanish antirumours cities to partcipate together in an intense antirumours training to form a network of young antirumours agents. The first encounter took place in Sabadell in 2016 and the second one in Getxo in 2017, with the participation of 60 young people from seven cities (Getxo, San Sebastian, Barcelona, Sabadell, Getxo, San Sebastián, Bilbao, Cartagena and Tenerife).

ICC Antirumours workshops and trainings were held with all cities of the network running and ARS or interested in launching one during an ICC coordinators meeting in Reykjavik in 2016. The objective was to exchange experiences and identify the main challenges and needs of cities to design or consolidate their strategies and share the weaknesses and strengths of their strategies. At the meeting to celebrate the 10 years of ICC in Lisbon in November 2017, anti-rumors training is offered for interested cities and organizations.

On June 22 2017 Barcelona hosted the first meeting of 15 Spanish antirumours cities. This meeting was part of the elaboration process of this Antirumors Handbook. Together with all their European peers, the cities answered a questionnaire on the current status of their strategies and identifying their progress, main challenges, best practices and evaluation systems and indicators.

Chapter 6
Impact, and ARS evaluations

A. A process of less to more

Assessing and measuring the impact of a strategy like the ARS, which addresses such complex issues as people's perceptions, rumours, prejudices, and attitudes, is not an easy task.

The start of the ARS in Barcelona was a process of less to more. It began with a few very concrete yet vaguely planned actions, but the immediate impact they had and the interest aroused by the strategy made it possible to reinforce the initiative, to better define its approach and to significantly increase its activities.

It was clear from the beginning that the ARS had something that made it different from other initiatives. When the Barcelona City Council publicly announced its intention to promote the ARS, the strategy demonstrated its ability to generate interest and attract the attention of very different actors (social entities, citizens, media, politicians, international organizations, cities from different countries).

But beyond this initial unexpected impact, and after a very intense and stimulating time of development of the ARS in which several cities had begun to define their own strategies, it was absolutely necessary to focus on the evaluation of this impact.

B. Evolution of the evaluation

In 2013, the Barcelona City Council (through the organisation "Sòcol") carried out the first evaluation of the ARS in order to take stock of the process to date and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy. This evaluation was very useful to rethink some questions and to refine some of the process's methodological elements. However, the results focused more on process-related aspects. But an analysis of its most direct impact on changes in people's perceptions and attitudes had yet to be conducted.

A similar evaluation that focused on the process of involving actors in the strategy was also conducted in 4 territories within the Spanish network of Intercultural Cities, RECI, which were the first to apply the Barcelona experience outside the city.

Other cities, such as Getxo, have carried out evaluations of their strategies, using different approaches and focusing on more concrete aspects of their process and impact.

Finally, in 2014 the Council of Europe decided to lead the European project C4i to test its capacity to adapt to cities in different European countries and above all to measure, in greater depth, their real impact.

There were two different evaluations of the C4i, and both were very useful.

1. The C4i process evaluation (conducted by **Seán Ó Siochrú**)

It provided a very well done overview of the C4i Programmes Management and city processes as well as complete case studies from each city, which lead other cities to follow these examples.

2. Impact and change evaluation (conducted by **Kseniya Khovanova-Rubicondo**)

It provides a complete and in depth analysis of the C4i impact based on the theory of change.

The evaluation of the C4i project and the antirumours strategies of 10 cities, provided very thorough and, in general, very positive results.

Here we will provide a very brief summary of the main findings of the impact and change evaluations results of both full reports can be find at the webpage of the C4i project, together with many other documents and reports.

http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/c4i/methodology

C. The C4i impact and change evaluation

We believe it is important to provide a summary of the main results of the evaluation of the impact of the C4i project, since it is the most rigorous impact evaluation of the ARS so far and that allow for identifying important aspects of its impact.

For the first time, the impact on people's perceptions and attitudes were analysed, following the implementation of a specific antirumours campaign. The main weakness was that the duration of the antirumors campaigns were limited to a few months. However, the results showed that we were on the right track, and reinforce the idea that the ARS was having relevant impacts.

Social change

Social change refers to an alteration in the social order of a society. Social change may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behaviour, or social relations. For evaluating the ARS within the C4i project, a theory of change was developed, serving as a road map connecting the elements of the ARS, in particular the participation of local stakeholders with the desired social change, the objectives of the initiative. The theory of change provides an opportunity for the stakeholders to assess what they can and cannot influence, what impact they and their actions can have, and whether it is realistic to expect to reach their goals within the time period and with resources available. (Anderson, A. The community builder's approach to theory of change, New York, 2005).

This resulted in a six-step theory of change to assess the impact of the C4i project in the partner cities, including:

1. Identifying long-term goals;
2. "Mapping" local conditions to identify the preconditions necessary for achieving these goals;
3. Identifying basic assumptions about the context;
4. Identifying the actions needed in order to create the necessary preconditions;
5. Developing indicators to assess the performance (accounting for the preconditions);
6. Articulating the C4i theory of change, i.e. summarising various components, principles and "moving parts" of the theory).

Initial statements about the context of the C4i project implementation were collected from C4i cities in the form of individual "vision of success" inputs. In order to make these visions a reality, the cities' basic assumptions were subsequently re-discussed and verified with the cities, to account for their communication strategy design, ultimate target audiences, key actors, tools, and intervention types.

In a participative process with local stakeholders, a replicable result-based monitoring and evaluation methodology for the implementation of anti-rumour activities was designed and successfully tested throughout the C4i project. It combines

a) Testing the applicability of social communication and networking approach of the antirumor strategies;
b) Assessing the impact of this approach in terms of a change of attitudes among the population

In terms of monitoring the ARS approach, the evaluation found that:

▶ In all project participating cities, community natives and migrants became active participants of the antirumour campaign and worked together on discrediting erroneous ideas and rumours and contributing to an informed public debate about integration and diversity;

▶ Local governments have launched their integration-conscious official communication strategies focusing on the diversity advantage contributing by this to the creation of migrant-friendly social and political climate in their communities;

▶ More accurate and fair media (mostly local) reporting as well as increased use of evidence based information has been observed as a result of the C4i project communication campaign and activities implementation in the majority of the cities;

▶ Consultation and cooperation between local governments and civil society representatives on the issues of diversity and intercultural integration have become common practice in every participating city;

▶ As a result, local communities and groups have improved their understanding about the content, scale, scope, and socioeconomic impact of migration;

▶ The results of the Evaluation also demonstrate the relevance, effectiveness, applicability, and replicability of the C4i-tested antirumor methodology in the context of European urban communities for creating innovative social mobilization strategies at a local level, dismantling erroneous ideas and rumours, and improving people's attitudes towards migration.

In terms of changing the community attitudes in the cities, the impact of three rumours was tested before and after the project implementation. The evaluation found that, as a result of the antirumour activities and campaigns, more people disapprove of the following statements:

▶ "The crime level grows in their communities as the number of immigrants increases" (almost 30% in the 2nd survey as opposed to above 20% in the 1st survey);

▶ "Immigrants take jobs from natives"(40% in the 2nd survey as opposed to about 30% in the 1st);

▶ "Immigrants benefit from the social care system more than natives"(31% in the 2nd survey as opposed to 24% in the 1st survey).

Besides this, in terms of changing attitudes the evaluation found that:

▶ An increase in people's willingness to share public space with people of different nationality was also observed (52% in the 2nd survey as opposed to 42% in the 1st survey). Slightly improved community relations were generally reported.

▶ The scale of the behavioural changes produced by the project proves to be rather significant, especially given the comparatively short period of the project implementation (18 months) and duration of cities' communication campaigns. This factor may explain why the impact evaluation demonstrated no significant change in the level of interaction with people from foreign backgrounds.

▶ There was a high degree of satisfaction from the respondents with the anti-rumour communication campaigns and its efficiency. In addition, over 60% of local network representatives agreed that the campaigns were participatory.

In summary, the C4i impact study validated the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and applicability of the antirumours approach. In terms of guidance for future evaluations, the project developed and successfully tested the following ARS evaluation instruments for participatory monitoring and evaluation:

▶ Set of C4i Core indicators for impact and change evaluation

▶ Two templates for the 1st and 2nd survey analysis;

▶ C4i Theory of Change Articulation;

▶ C4i Theory of Change Map

D. The definition of a global and shared monitoring and evaluation system

Taking into account this disparity of existing evaluation systems and approaches and the lessons learned in their implementation, the Council of Europe, together with the Antirumours Global team, is currently developing an evaluation system that can be used and shared by the set of cities from 2018.

This handbook has been carried out while taking into account the results of all these evaluations and the strengths and weaknesses identified in them. In the coming months, this common evaluation system will be defined, allowing further analysis of the impact of the ARS and comparative analysis between cities.

The ARS assessment method will be based on the theory of social change, on which the evaluation of the C4i project was already based.

The ARS has evolved in recent years and some of the premises and approaches have been redefined. Therefore, it is important to have an evaluation framework to update these changes. At first, the focus was more clearly on the rumours and the antirumours arguments. But as the strategy evolved, the focus has been broadened by using the rumours as a very useful pretext to address other issues related to a wider vision of diversity and interculturality.

Thus, many of actions of the ARS deal less with the logic of identifying rumours and using antirumours arguments, as we have discussed in the previous chapters, than on furthering dialogue and encouraging interculturality. The ARS has become a more open and flexible process that can cover many issues and the reduction of prejudices through the reinforcement of critical thinking and empowerment has increasingly shifted from more explicit actions focused specifically on rumours and antirumours arguments.

That is why we are in the process of updating the evaluation system, to include these changes in the approach, which have already been taken into account in the contents of this manual.

The new ARS impact assessment model that is being worked on today is part of the great work carried out under the C4i project and should be considered as an action of the same, based on the evolution of the ARS in the last few years, and thanks in large part to the lessons learned and the increase in the number of cities that are implementing it.

Chapter 7
Evolution and sustainability of the ARS

I n the guide of the C4i European project led by the Council of Europe C4i we dedicated a specific chapter to highlight the most relevant aspects to take into account in order to guarantee the continuity and sustainability of a city ARS. The experience accumulated in recent years since the publication of that guide has only confirmed the aspects and recommendations that we pointed out in it. That is why this chapter is practically identical to that of that guide.

We have pointed out that an ARS must be seen as a long-term strategy, as there are no short cuts when trying to change perceptions and dismantle prejudices and rumours based on them. Moreover, new challenges may arise because of social, economic and demographic changes, and obviously new rumours can appear.

However, there is a need for specific timing and stages. Once we have reached one of these stages, for example at the end of a specific antirumour campaign or at the end of a one or two-year work plan, there is a need to assess what has been done and what happens next.

How do we ensure the sustainability of the ARS? How do we defend the need to put resources into it? And how do we keep the commitment and motivation of so many people?

There is no magic answer to such questions, but from the experience of different cities we can identify some key points or steps that we should take into account when working on the strategy's sustainability. Yet again, the case of Barcelona is worth mentioning in this context, because seven years since the launch of its ARS, and after two changes of government, it still keeps growing and developing further.

A. An in-depth analysis of the evaluation and impact

The first thing to demonstrate in order to be able to defend the continuation of the strategy is results. We have emphasised that it is not easy to influence people's perceptions, but we can identify concrete results at some stages from our evaluations, that indicate it is worth carrying on with. If we are unable to demonstrate such results, we will face difficulties in getting support to carry on with our strategy and would mean that we could not carry on.

Once an in-depth analysis of the different results and impact of the strategy has convinced us that it is worth pursuing, it becomes much easier to convince others. This is why it is so important that we start working on the evaluation strategy from the very beginning of the ARS and every specific campaign. It is also important that we have input at different stages of the strategy/campaign(s) about the diverse dimensions of their impact.

Last but not least, we need to take care of how we present the results and the impact. We will probably need long and more in-depth studies including all details, data and arguments about the impact, but we need to be sure that we can show key points in a simple, direct and exciting way Targeted communication of the results tailored to diferent audiences, such as politicians the media or citizens, may make a big difference.

B. Internal support

Since this project requires a mainstreaming approach, we should have already built an informal network of municipal staff from different departments (education, culture, social policies, participation, urban planning, communication, human resources etc.). Depending on the level of engagement of and the number of different officials, we will manage to attain wider cross-departmental support and more opportunities to spread and implement the ARS in different fields.

Obviously we need to have strong political support. Maybe this was achieved at the beginning of the strategy when, for example, one deputy mayor convinced the mayor and other politicians of the importance of this policy. But we will get even more political support if we manage to build an internal network of allies and, of course, if some time after the strategy implementation we can show positive results.

Being successful in identifying and engaging the internal antirumour allies is not only a necessary condition for being more effective and achieving greater impact but also for facilitating the sustainability of our ARS.

Finally we should not forget that working from the outset on reaching the strongest political consensus across parties should be a priority and one that may have the most decisive influence on the ARS's sustainability.

C. External engagement and commitment

Apart from the importance of building internal support, one of the main factors that will help us ensure the sustainability and further development of the ARS has to do with the scale and strength of the local antirumours network. Experience from many cities has shown that when the strategy is considered a global "city strategy" and many different local actors feel they are an important part of it, the capacity of the strategy to grow, develop and continue is very high.

The mere fact that organisations like schools, NGOs, public libraries, cultural and sports centres, neighbourhood and immigrant associations, health-care institutions or even prisons and a wide variety of professional organisations and citizens participate in the strategy in some way and implement antirumour action brings a great level of autonomy and identity to the strategy. This formal or informal network of social engagement and commitment puts pressure on the local government to not stop the strategy and ensure its continuity.

When a change of a political government takes place, the new administration may be uncertain whether to continue with the strategy or not. If the new team sees that many people in the city are engaged and are prepared to defend the ARS, it will be more difficult for the new government to stop it. Moreover if there is an internal network of municipal staff from diverse departments that also defend the importance of the strategy, it will be easier for the new government to take the decision to carry on with the initiative.

Finally, if the political party or parties of the new government were consulted by the previous government during the process of designing and launching the ARS and managed to reach an agreement, then the options for guaranteeing its sustainability are high.

D. Being part of a global and innovative strategy

There is another important lesson learnt so far that, from our point of view, contributes in a very positive way to the sustainability of the ARS. As we know, the antirumours approach deals with a complex, sensitive and also global challenge. When a city from a specific country decides to pursue a public policy like this, it may face some challenges and difficulties, such as a lack of consensus within its own government or political party, a reaction from the media that may provide an inaccurate vision of the strategy's goals to the citizens or strong criticism from the opposition and also from some local people or organisations.

An important strategy for countering these possible negative energies is to explain that the ARS is not just a "weird" idea of one specific government but also a global trend with many European and also non-European cities on board. The strategy involves cities with different political colours, it is promoted by the Council of Europe and has been recognised as an innovative and important good practice by many international organisations and institutions.

Our recommendation is that any city willing to launch an ARS has to emphasise the global character of this framework and the value of belonging to a network of innovators and followers of recommendations from international institutions like the Council of Europe. We are not alone; we are on a boat with many other cities and we are leading the implementation of new practices that will keep spreading internationally.

This message of belonging to an innovative and global network supported by international institutions may be of great help in receiving more internal and external support and attracting legitimacy to the strategy. Activities intended to display the international connections of the strategy, such as inviting other antirumours cities to explain their work and exchange experience, might be helpful towards this goal. In addition, experience shows that such exchanges bring about very positive results in terms of know-how, capacity building and motivation. And being internationally connected increases our chances of accessing further resources and funds from European and international projects. The C4i project was a joint effort of cities large and small, active and engaged in the international arena and connected somehow to the Intercultural Cities network of the Council of Europe.

E. What's next?

Once a city has reached the end of a particular stage of its ARS development (e.g. the term of a European project like the C4i that has provided funding but also a methodological framework, working plan, advice and networking), many questions and doubts may arise. What do we do now? How do we continue?

The experience helped us identify some important factors for obtaining the necessary internal and external support to carry on with the strategy; for example, we may have managed to secure internal budgets to continue or our local network is sufficiently strong and willing to continue developing the strategy.

At the same time, the termination of a specific phase, like a European project, may have a negative effect due to the lack of dynamism and motivation that comes from membership of a formal international network with concrete schedule, support and responsibilities.

However, we can argue that the ARS has shown a great capacity for keeping a high level of support and engagement in the cities and for finding new ways to further development. We have pointed out the example of Barcelona, but many other cities have managed to internalise the ARS as an important local policy and it's been included within different strategic Municipal Plans.

As highlighted many times, ARS is a long journey and some of the expected results might not be very visible during the first year implementation. But this strategy has already shown some interesting results, in both the short and mid-term, and we believe that from the cities' perspective, it is beneficial for

other cities to join the antirumours approach and keep enriching this methodology. Each new city provides a new perspective, new ideas, actions and tools that are worth sharing with others.

The pointers below are just a selection of responses we could offer to the question "What next?"

1. Clearly identify the lessons learnt from the first stage of the ARS, both weaknesses and strengths.

2. Check the internal and external support for the strategy.

3. Adapt your next steps to focus on specific targets and results and to strengthen the local network and political support.

4. Keep in touch with other cities at the international level: identify those who have focused on similar targets to yours and propose visits and exchange of know-how, practices, etc. Remember you are not alone and you can learn a lot from others; at the same time you also have the responsibility to let others learn from you.

5. Be sure to include all groups and diversities in your ARS (do you also deal with rumours that minority groups may have regarding the majority and other minority groups? Are minority groups well represented in your strategy and network?).

6. Keep a proactive attitude towards the European and international networks and look for new ways to get more support and recognition.

7. Be sure that you properly communicate your experience and results and adapt your communication strategy to different target groups: politicians, civil society, media, citizens, international actors (it might be helpful to translate at least into English a summary of your campaign, best practices and results, that will allow you to gave more visibility.

8. Devote some time to support other cities and organisations that have shown interest in learning from your experience. It is really a win-win relationship. First, you may think you do not have time to attend to the demands of others that want to come and visit you or invite you to explain your experience. But after a while you will probably see other cities doing great things that you would like to adapt, and if you have collaborated with them from the outset, you will benefit from enriching your strategy. The principle of sharing must be at the core of your attitude from the very beginning. This is probably the most important advice we can give you.

Finally, the purpose of this handbook is to also contribute to the further evolution and sustainability of the ARS. Sharing and communicating this experience may help more cities to take a step towards designing and implementing their ARS and to become inspired by the experiences of the current antirumours cities. Moreover, the handbook may also help the veteran cities themselves to explain and visualise their contribution and convince key people about the importance of continuing and further developing this strategy.

We know that building more inclusive, intercultural and dynamic societies is a major worldwide challenge of this century.

What we also know is that prejudices, preconceived ideas and rumours are strong and deeply rooted barriers to achieving these goals. We are seeing a serious increase of populist and xenophobic discourses in many countries that are fostering negative narratives and perceptions about diversity and specially stigmatised groups. There is a need to reach a wider political will to fight against the negative impact of prejudices and rumours and to do so together with civil society, as this is a global responsibility of the whole of society.

There are no magical or easy solutions and no shortcuts. But there are policies and strategies that may bring about some positive results and we believe that the antirumours approach is one of them. We hope this handbook becomes a useful tool to inspire and engage more cities and social actors to commit to building truly intercultural societies, working hard to prevent discrimination and racism and making the most of the "diversity advantage."

Chapter 8
Some lessons learned so far

Based on the analysis of the different evaluations carried out to date (more focused on the process, results, or impact) and the questionnaires filled out by those responsible for the ARS in the great majority of antirumor cities, we can point to a set of assessments of the strengths, weaknesses, and major challenges that arise in the immediate future of the ARS.

ARS strengths, weaknesses and challenges

We can identify three different areas of analysis related to:

▶ The antirumours approach

▶ The "internal" process of ARS

▶ The "external" impact

a) The antirumours approach

Although this manual has already highlighted this in several sections, it is important to begin by identifying those aspects that the majority of cities consider as most relevant to explain the "success" of an ARS (understood here not in the sense of its direct impact but in its capacity to generate interest and to continue adding more cities, social actors, and organizations at an international level).

Focus on rumours

Raising an initiative that focuses on the rumours and not on other abstract or overly technical concepts has shown to be a decisive factor in attracting attention, generating interest, and using it as a pretext to tackle other issues and wider and more complex debates.

The "not blaming citizens" approach

The commitment to an approach based on empathy and the absence of blaming people for having prejudices (of the ambiguous majority of the population, not of the racist minority nor of those dedicated to spreading xenophobic and hate speech) has also allowed to reach and attract the interest of many people who do not usually feel challenged by other speeches, that tend to distil a certain moral superiority and disdain.

Combination of public policy and a city "social movement"

The fact that the ARS consists of a public policy, but is also based on a strategy with a high participatory and collaborative component, that utilises a wide range of actors from civil society and citizens in general, is valued as a great asset that must be preserved and consolidated.

Much more than spreading factual data and arguments

The conviction (and the evidence shown by experiences and numerous studies) that simple dissemination of objective data has a very small impact in influencing perceptions, prejudices, and narrative changes, and that other more qualitative approaches that include the emotional component, dialogue, and the promotion of critical thinking, is a key aspect of achieving greater long-term impact.

The commitment to empowerment

Focusing a part of the strategy on the empowerment of very diverse actors through various formative actions and providing practical tools to more effectively confront prejudices and negative narratives about diversity is another key aspect for the success of the ARS.

Add to, and value, the work that is already being done

Building the ARS from identifying and involving, in a collective and cooperative process of social change, the maximum number of experiences, projects, and key players that have been working on these issues is key to maximizing resources and energies, as well as achieving greater impact and guarantee the sustainability of the ARS over time

Flexibility and adaptability

The ability to adapt the antirumours approach to very different contexts and scopes, and expanding its field of influence from a methodology that combines rigour with flexibility has also been highlighted as one of its main strengths.

b) The "internal" process

When using the term the "internal process", we refer to everything related to the development, methodology and actors involved in the implementation of ARS.

Strengths / Opportunities

The ARS approach and methodology have proved very useful in facilitating the involvement and commitment of both policy makers and municipal technical staff.

Transversality and cross-department cooperation

- ► The approach and flexibility of the ARS facilitates that different municipal departments can be involved in this process, by incorporating this approach into their policies and activities
- ► Transversality allows reaching different audiences, fostering a culture of collaboration within the city council and facilitating the sustainability of the ARS when changes of government may take place

The creation of a network of diverse social actors and motivated people who cooperate and form a fundamental part of ARS, allows to:

- ► Reach a wider audience and connect with different social actors
- ► Easily incorporate diverse experiences, projects, and knowledge
- ► Foster co-responsibility and the link between public administration and civil society, which cooperate to achieve shared objectives
- ► Facilitate the creativity and innovation of activities
- ► Increase the visibility and impact of actions by providing them with a common action umbrella
- ► Encourage higher levels of critical and constructive reflection on the functioning of the ARS,
- ► Reinforces the dimension of a global "city strategy", facilitating its sustainability in the face of possible changes of government

The training antirumor agents' training

- ► In general, the feedback from people who attend the trainings to become antirumors agents are very positive and recognize that it gives them relevant knowledge and practical and useful tools
- ► Many antirumours agents incorporate this approach and tools both in their fields of work and in their daily lives

- Allow the generation of spaces of empowerment shared between municipal workers and members of civil society that facilitates the links and the exchange of knowledge and experiences

- Generates a sense of positive identity linked to a global city project that is considered relevant to improve coexistence, cohesion, and the prevention of discrimination

Collaboration between three key areas: public policies, civil society, and academia

- In many cities, the ARS has served to foster collaboration between the academic world, public policies, and many social actors, which has allowed for more rigours efforts and an increased impact of its contents and activities

Production of antirumors materials, resources, and tools

- In general, the materials developed in the framework of the ARS of all cities are valued very positively for the quality of its content and also for its creativity, which allows to convey a rigorous but also stimulating and motivating image

Weaknesses / risks

- Difficulties in finding a clear balance between the level of formality and informality of the antirumours networks, as well as their degree of autonomy with respect to the municipality

- High expectations of many actors and members of the network, that can then be difficult to satisfy depending on the capacity of the antirumours team, resources etc.

- The loss of energies and motivated people who carry out the antirumours training and leading to an inability to effectively link the ARS framework, especially if they are not part of any entity (perhaps some organisation or group)

- The risk that the network is not permeable to the incorporation of new, diverse actors and profiles, leading to excessive homogenization and professionalization, very marked by the presence of a majority of entities that are normally involved with these issues

- Excessive dispersion of activities. While the ability of the ARS to attract the attention of many actors who decide to promote antirumours actions should be seen as a positive impact, it is important to define concrete action plans and campaigns with well-defined objectives, activities, and timetables to ensure greater impact and enable evaluation.

- There is a need to go deeper into actions aimed at social media, which are a key space in the generation and dissemination of rumours, stereotypes and prejudices, and also to generate spaces for communication and exchange between the antirumours agents and the actors involved in the ARS.

- There is a risk of loss of rigour in some activities, including the dissemination of rumours, or antirumours arguments that are superficial. There is also a risk that the great proliferation of actors who promote all types of activities and antirumours training, but do so without solid preparation or knowledge of the ARS and the lessons learned during these years. In some cases, mistakes have been made that were already overcome in the early stages of the strategy, and ineffective ARS activities that fail to take advantage of these advances can damage the ARS brand overall.

- The disparity of evaluation methods used by the various cities can make comparisons difficult and demonstrates a need to define a more up-to-date and comprehensive system for assessing their impact

c) The "external" impact

Here we focus on the aspects related to the impact on the aspects, actors ,and target groups of the ARS, which it intends to influence in some way to reach the objectives that are pursued

Strengths / Opportunities

- The "contagious" effect that the ARS has demonstrated in reaching out, involving and empowering actors and individuals who are normally not linked or attracted to such issues and strategies

► The ability of the ARS to place these issues on the political and social agenda by adding cross-cutting support from different political parties and having a significant impact on the media

► The ability of the ARS to influence education, incorporating this approach in many schools, institutes and other training programs, both at the municipal level and as academic or adult training

► The international expansion of the ARS, which has shown that it generates interest in different contexts and countries, not only in Europe but also in countries as diverse as Japan, Mexico, Canada, Morocco or Jordan, among many others.

► The ability of the ARS to influence public policies by promoting a greater number of policies aimed at managing diversity from the intercultural approach, by reinforcing and complementing anti-racist policies and discourses, and anti-discrimination strategies

► Finally, the positive impact it has shown, especially from the evaluation of the C4i project, to improve citizens' perceptions and attitudes regarding issues of socio-cultural diversity and especially related to groups such as immigrants, refugees, and other stigmatized minorities

Weaknesses / risks

► The complexity of pushing and sustaining specific campaigns that demonstrate substantial long-term changes over time

► Limitations on impact through more professional and rigorous use of social media

► The risk of not maintaining over time a proactive attitude to continue to involve individuals from very different fields that will reach a larger number of people who are not sensitized

► The tendency identified in some cities not to maintain an attitude of permanent self-criticism and to continue innovating and incorporating the knowledge of diverse disciplines that can greatly enrich the approach, the effectiveness, and the impact of ARS

► The prejudices that are sometimes perceived among those some actors, both from the municipal level and from the entities and the network, from not wanting to act in areas as relevant as the private sector and large companies, and that hinder the expansion of the ARS in key areas

Appendices

What attitude should we take when faced with rumours and discriminatory comments? The city of Barcelona's Practical Guide for Anti-rumours Agents provides very useful tips about how to confront rumours in our day-to-day life. In this Annex, we provide a summary of this content.

Unfortunately, many of us rarely challenge comments and rumours. A strategy for action aims to provide tools for more effective communication and more productive and positive dialogue with people whom we are trying to sensitise. In this sense, a set of premises should be taken into consideration:

Lower your expectations

There is no special magic to the process of communication, there are no secret sentences that enable us to persuade others. Leaving our partner in conversation with certain doubts or even with a small bit of our narrative as now part of their way of thinking, is a huge success. Bear in mind that it is more effective for people to come to thoughts and conclusions on their own, without feeling pressured: let people do their own process.

Treat people as equals

We are no better, not even different from the people we want to sensitise. Empathy must start by acknowledging our own stereotypes or prejudice. Constructive dialogue, which we engage in for raising awareness, is only possible when we acknowledge the other as a valid partner in conversation with whom we can exchange knowledge and experiences.

Keeping a positive attitude

If your starting thoughts are that a conversation is going to be unbearable, it most likely will be since your attitude will sway you in that direction. However, if you believe the opposite, that regardless of the result you will surely manage to get something positive from it, you will probably succeed in the direction of intercultural relations.

Adopt a professional stance

Family and everyday surroundings are the hardest to manage. Wherever we are, we must be aware that some of the comments we will hear can be offensive. It is important to empathise with the person we are talking to (even if we disagree). Try to remember how confuse you feel when facing situations you do not understand and how you interpret them based on your cultural perspective. Be aware that changes sometimes come with fears.

Practice

Before we begin, it will depend on the attitude and predisposition of the person we aim to sensitise, but the mastery we display also counts, and that can only be achieved through practice. Practice and perseverance will help us to refine our technique and skill.

Some key communication elements to improve the dialogue when raising awareness face-to- face are:

1. **Be aware of time, place and company**. Haste is the worst enemy of effective communication: having time to start a calm conversation with enough leeway to listen to the other person's arguments can help us to come up with convincing arguments and the best response strategies. A good strategy would be to withdraw and resume the conversation more easily at another time when you and your partner in conversation are alone, avoiding the feeling of confrontation, ("us against them"): "I was thinking about what you said the other day and...". Sometimes the people around us will ruin any attempts to hold a relaxed conversation. The outcome of this conversation is most likely going to be a defensive attitude.

2. **Show respect**. Routine communication is based, to a large extent, on imitation (raising the voice or smiling). When we show an attitude of respect towards our partner in conversation, we can influence that person by encouraging them to employ the same attitude towards us. What we are trying to do is to stir up people's critical awareness, blurring the boundaries between the categories of "us" and "the others", and coming closer to the people who we want to sensitise. Upon finishing the conversation, we should ask ourselves: do I feel like talking to this person again? And, does he or she also want to talk about these issues again? If the answer is no, we haven't succeeded on our approach.

3. **Value the other person**. Rumours that are most frequently spread are those that we experience close to home, that relate to issues that concern us and that respond to our fears and worries. Under no circumstances should we dismiss a family member's concerns. Acknowledging and valuing their concern can help to ensure they listen more openly to our reasoning, even if it contradicts their own. When you value your partner in conversation, this helps people to feel understood, appreciated, and accepted. Person-centred communication can make your partner in conversation defensive.

4. **Listen closely and understand their reasoning**. Active listening should help us to understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions of our partner in conversation, while analysing what is happening. When the subject of the conversation is a rumour we want to dispel, the problem is that while the other person is talking to us, we are thinking about a counterargument. We need to show that we are listening: do not interrupt, do not finish the other's sentences, and do not talk over someone. We should not be afraid to ask questions; the better we understand someone's reasoning, feelings, or underlying concerns, the better we will be able to adjust our answer.

5. **Catch their attention**. It is very difficult to maintain a constant level of interest. First of all, we need to avoid long-winded arguments in which we refer to abstract concepts such as globalisation or interculturality. It is much more effective to offer brief and clear arguments that get straight to the point of the conversation: use examples and arguments that the person has already given, but reducing them to shared points. It is important to highlight how powerful questions can be when it comes to getting someone to reflect and to hold the person's interest.

6. **Stay calm**. Normally, partners in conversation end up radicalising their initial discourse. In dealing with such a complex situation, keep calm and do not make accusations. Communicate your differences but also highlight the points you agree on. If you remove affirmations that are emotionally loaded and work on the basis of mutual agreement, you will find it easier to talk.

7. **Body language and tone of voice** should reflect what you are trying to convey in conversation. Try to show coherence between what you are trying to express with your words and what your body or voice is communicating. Instead of interpreting their answers according to our own cultural codes, it is best to ask questions about how we can make one another feel more comfortable together, while gradually deciphering our different cultural codes.

Response strategies. a variety of strategies could be used to stir up people's critical awareness when it comes to rumours and stereotypes, sowing the seeds of doubt, creating space for reflection.

To conclude, we should not be afraid of openly recognising the fundamental rights we all should enjoy. We should be coherent and recognise these rights in everyday life, and for all our neighbours living with us in our towns and cities.

Look what people say about women or about men when they lump them all together...what a way to generalise, sal[t]ting the world in two! Couldn't be more absurd!

We can all be victims

Encourage curiosity

I hear that all the time, but the truth is I've never seen the prerequisites for granting free school lunches. Have you? Let's check and see, shall we?

If we went to a parents' meeting at school and they were asked what they'd like their kids to be when they grow up, surely they'd all say things like doctors, engineers, teachers. Everybody wants the best for their children, you and I do too. I don't think anyone would neglect the issue or act indifferent.

Find common ground

Positive messages

But having kids of different levels in the classroom is a good thing. School isn't only for teaching math or language: kids are taught to be understanding and to cooperate with their classmates. Helping each other out is a good thing, isn't it?

And what was it that you saw, exactly? And are you sure that... (trying to clearly discern between description and interpretation)

Ask questions

Questionning generalisations

Not all of them, but the majority...the majority? What is the majority? 60%? 75%? 90%? How do you know?

We always say they don't want to relate to us, but the truth is I don't make the least effort either to talk to them. They might feel the same about us, don't you think?

Approach reality directly

Apply common sense

And why would public services want to benefit these people over the rest of the neighbours? And why would the revenue authority let these shopkeepers get away with not paying taxes? Most of them aren't even able to vote...

Appendix 2 – Antirumour cities

AMADORA (Portugal): The Amadora Social Network launched the campaign Do Not Feed the Rumour! – a core activity of the C4i project. The city counted on the support of the local University to evaluate the impact of the actions on citizens' attitudes. Key activities were: Let's Talk Truth! Competition; Pathways to Integration; The Value of the facts Forum; and a kite contest for all primary and secondary schools.

More information

BARCELONA (Spain): The Barcelona ARS is a line of action of the Barcelona Interculturality Programme (2010). The city started research to contrast the false rumours many citizens were spreading with the truth. On this point, the municipality decided to launch an action, and the ARS rapidly began building a network or more than 300 associations and people working together to counter those false rumours and to send positive messages about cultural diversity. The strategy was tested in four other Spanish cities (2013) and under the framework of the C4i Project (2014-15), validating the ARS's work. The Barcelona network is currently formed by 1,000 members amongst many organisations, municipal programmes and services, the City Council and citizens.

More information

BILBAO (Spain): Since 2014, Bilbao has deployed its ARS at the district and neighbourhood level (Deusto & Rekalde), with the goal of mainly addressing youth and the Media. With a strong commitment from the antirumour agents, trainings and awareness raising actions constitute an important pillar of the strategy here. An app was created under the framework of the strategy – as a game to measure the knowledge on migration issues including antirumour arguments and data. Bilbao is a member of ZAS- Red Vasca Antirumores, the Basque antirumours network.

More information

BOTKYRKA (Sweden): Besides the general goal of dismantling rumours that create hostility and/or conflict, the Botkyrka campaign aimed at identifying and developing indicators that follow social change regarding the breakdown of rumours and prejudices that lead to racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. The target group was the youth who actively want to contribute to nuance and/or dismantle rumours. The national and long-term objective of the ARS was to start cooperation with other municipalities - mainly through the Unesco LUCS platform.

More information

ERLANGEN (Germany): The city focused its strategy on the general population and on two specific target groups, named the elderly and students at the University. The city has established an anti-discrimination office in 2016. In its C4i campaign, Erlangen put a particular emphasis on asylum seekers. Some of the actions included a "Picnic Banquet of Diversity", a "Living Library", and a traineeship for qualified refugees at Siemens AG.

More information

LIMERICK (Ireland): The ARS identified youth as their target group. Limerick worked in close cooperation with Doras Luimní's - a migrant rights organisation with access to networks of key decision-makers and links with the core youth network. Schools and high-schools incorporated the antirumours approach into an aspect of their courses and used the project as an assignment. The Limerick Youth Service ran workshops that resulted in the development of an antirumours Education pack to be used in Second-level schools throughout Ireland.

More information

LOURES (Portugal): A primary objective for Loures was to demystify the prejudice on immigrants living in social housing, especially in deprived neighbourhoods. The strategy included awareness-raising workshops, and exploring the topic of immigration with leading NGO's, religious congregations, local authority units, parish councils and schools. A festival was organised under the framework of the Project "The neighbourhood and the World", as well as a public art gallery.

More information

LUBLIN (Poland): The Lublin C4i campaign's targeted groups were the general population, the media, local network representatives and local organisations working with migrants.

Additionally, specific communication campaigns targeted the youth and the elderly. Some activities were: Rumour Exchange Shop, to get the population thinking about rumours in a public space, and to attract positive media attention; and Lublin "Rumour eaters" media workshop: participants created short videos promoting integration.

More information

NUREMBERG (Germany): The C4i campaign was developed in the city district of Langwasser, being the target group multipliers from schools and civil society organisations. A group of antirumour agents made up of members of civil associations (e.g. social workers, volunteers) and people working in schools was established. Some actions included: a photo campaign depicting people with common prejudices related to their heritage and a "Portable Kitchen" to promote intercultural encounters and dialogue, through joint cooking session in public areas.

More information

PATRAS (Greece): the city focused on youth as a specific target group. It is worth highlighting the following activities: the Prison Workshop (the prison educational service introduced the antirumour approach and materials as a topic to be addressed); and the Theatre of the Oppressed, where artists and migrants' associations joined forces to reach out to young people against xenophobia through role playing and story-telling.

More information

SABADELL (Spain): A member of the Spanish Network of Intercultural Cities since 2012, the city launches the Project "*TEJIENDO LA CONVIVENCIA: red antirumores de Sabadell*" after the end of the C4i project. Under the framework of the ARS, the city organised a contest with high-schools to create an antirumours rap.

More information

CARTAGENA: partner of the Intercultural Cities project and member of the RECI since 2011. The city also participated in the European project DELI. The ARS was presented by Antirumours global in the city in early 2016, and it was decided that the campaigns will be addressed to the general public and particularly to the youth. The city has created Spaces free of rumours, an antirumours information point, and organised workshops in high-schools.

More information

FUENLABRADA: Fuenlabrada joined the project "antirumours strategy to prevent racism" with other RECI cities in the year 2013. It started with a campaign aimed at families collaborating with educational centers and carrying out many activities such as creative literary workshops and the development of a an online antirumor tale in which various artists participated.

More information

GETAFE: Partner of the Intercultural Cities project, the city presented in 2016 its Plan of Coexistance, to positively manage diversity. The ARS was launched at the beginning of 2016 as a part of this plan. With regard to specific actions, the city aimed at targeting children, young people, and the elderly. In addition, they studied the adoption of the antirumours approach in the mental health field. They are exploring the possibility to collaborate with chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs to build loyalty with the strategy.

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA: The city approved its Plan on Diversity and Intercultural coexistence for the period 2015-2018, and launched the ARS in 2016, meaning it is still at an early stage. As a target group for their campaigns, the city has chosen the youth and children. They are creating their antirumours network and have a very inspiring slogan: "rumours are not an art form"

More information

LOGROÑO: The city joined the Network in 2015 and the ARS was presented in 2016 by Antirumours Global. The city has started the creation of the Antirumours Network and has trained the antirumours agents and workers of the City Council. Regarding actions, the city aims at targeting both the general population and the youth –through social networks and with a focus on rumours related to Islamophobia.

More information

TENERIFE ISLAND: The Antirumours Group is a working group linked to the diversity management strategy "*Juntos En la misma dirección*", launched by the Cabildo and the University of La Laguna in 2013. The Group has three lines of action: 1) training antirumour agents and organising dialogue labs; 2) Awareness-raising campaigns (i.e. ciber-racism); 3) the design and dissemination of material.

More information

CASTELLÓN: Through the "Stop rumores" project, Castellón has been carrying out various antirumours activities, such as various training workshops to municipal employees and social actors, the use of theater as an antirumours tool or creative communicative campaigns as "an antirumour selfie".

More information

OTHERS: There are many other cities that are in the initial phase of launching their ARS, such as Montreal, Leganés and San Sebastián, or have been implementing it already for a significant period, specially in Spain, such as Zaragoza and many cities in Andalusia. In both cases, the spread and advancement of antirumours strategies in cities across the globe is highly encouraging to all those engaged in the fight to promote interculturality and defeat discrimination.

General information

City:

Contact person / s for anti-rumour strategy (AS):

Email:

Date at which ARS started:

Current situation of the ARS: (eg, kick-off phase, consolidation, growth, currently on hold, irregular progress, leadership is carried by other organisations and the city does not participate, etc.)

Political commitment and consensus

▶ Is there a strong political commitment with the ARS?

Yes, No

If yes,

– What factors have facilitated / hampered political commitment to strategy over time?

▶ Is there a consensus with the other political groups about the ARS?

Yes, No

▶ Is the ARS included within the framework of any strategic municipal plan?

Yes, no,

If yes,

– In which one?

▶ Has the City Council mentioned the ARS in any political statement or institutional declaration?

Yes, No

If yes,

– In which one/s?

▶ Is there a municipal budget specifically for the AS?

Yes, No,

If yes,

– What is the budget per year?

Core team and capacity building

▶ Which municipal department coordinates the strategy?

▶ How many people are part of the core team in charge of the ARS management and coordination?

▶ What are the profiles of the members of the core team? o is part of the team that drives and coordinates the strategy? (How many people, profile, external-internal actors, ...)

▶ Have capacity-building workshops about the ARS been organised?

Yes, no

If yes,

– Who has participated on those workshops? (Only the core team, politicians, municipal staff, civil society members..)

Cross-department collaboration

▶ Does the work on the ARS follow a transversal logic across the different municipal departments?

Yes, no

If yes,

– What has facilitated / hindered progress in mainstreaming?

– Which departments are more involved?

– Please describe 2-3 examples of anti-rumour actions promoted in collaboration with other municipal departments

Antirumours diagnosis

▶ Have the main challenges of the city regarding diversity been identified?

Yes, no,

If yes,

– Can you identify the 3-5 main challenges?

▶ Have the key actors and existing initiatives working on this/similar field/s been identified?

Yes, no

If yes,

– Can you provide some concrete examples of projects and key actors identified?

▶ Has been a process to identify the main rumours in your city regarding diversity issues in general and specific groups?

Yes, No,

If yes,

– What are the main rumours identified?

– What rumours worry you most from the point of view of their impact on coexistence and as a breeding ground for racism or discrimination?

– What methodology have you used to identify the rumours?

▶ Have you organised any participative or creative activity to identify rumours?

Yes, no

If yes,

– Give an example

▶ Have you collected antirumours data and arguments?

Yes, no

If yes,

– How have you compiled these arguments and data?

– How have you collected this information?

– What sort of arguments do you think are most effective and which are more counterproductive? (2-3 examples)

– Have you worked on rumours that have nothing to do with issues related to cultural diversity? (*Eg rumours related to neighbourhoods or the city itself, or with other dimensions of diversity such as gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc*.)

Yes, No

If yes,

– Provide some examples

Antirumours network

▶ Has an anti-rumour network been created?

Yes, No

If yes,

– Who is part of the network? (Number and profile) and how has it evolved since its inception?

– What rights / commitments exist for the members of the network?

▶ Is there a formal structure of the network?

Yes, No

If yes,

– How is the network structured and managed? (*Eg who coordinates it, is there a steering committee, working groups, what rights / commitments exist for the members...*)

– In your opinion, what are the key challenges need to be addressed with regard to the functioning and role of the network? (2-3 examples)

▶ What are the main tasks of the network?

Training antirumours agents

▶ Have you provided antirumours agents training?

Yes, No

If yes,

– How many anti-rumour agents have been trained and what profiles do they have?

– How is training advertised? (*Eg through open calls to whoever is interested or targeted to specific audiences?*)

– How is the basic training structured? (headlines of contents and duration)

– Are there other training formats? If yes, provide an example

Design and implementation of antirumours actions

▶ Have any specific priorities and targets been identified within your strategy? (*Eg prioritising some rumours, groups, places, areas of action...*)

Yes, No,

If yes,

– Which ones and why

▶ How and by whom were these priorities and target audiences identified?

General communication

▶ Have you produced a communication strategy of the ARS?

Yes, No

▶ How is information disseminated to the general population? Please specify through which of the following

- media channels and tools (eg web, social networks, videos, comics, etc.)

- examples of slogans and logos

- events

- institutional declarations

- presentations to the media and press releases

- etc.

– In your opinion, what sort of actions and communication resources have had the greatest impact when it comes to making the strategy known to citizens?

Antirumous actions and campaigns

▶ How do you choose / decide which anti-rumour actions to implement?

▶ Have you designed an action plan for specific antirumors actions and campaigns?

Yes, No

If yes,

– What are the specific goals, targets, activities, and timing?

▶ How would you define / classify the different anti-rumour actions that are being carried out? (*If possible use the 'headlines' below to group them*)

– Communication

– Attracting new allies to the ARS

– Promoting knowledge and critical thinking

– Participative and awareness and empowerment actions

– Promoting positive interaction

– Direct confrontation of rumours and prejudices

– Creating Spaces free of rumours

– Promoting antirumours creative labs

– Reaching new levels of influence (political, social...)

– Cooperation with other antirumours cities and the global project

▶ Who are the responsible of implementing those actions?

– Municipal staff

– Members of the antirumours network

– Antirumours agents

– Other entities, organisations, schools, public libraries etc.

► What percentage of the antirumours actions carried out fall within the ARS work plan, and what percentage can be considered "external" or "autonomous" with respect to the decisions made by the team steering the strategy?

Evaluation and sustainability

► Has there been any evaluation of the strategy or of some specific campaigns/actions?

Yes, No,

If yes,

– What method of evaluations have you used?

– Can you summarize the key main evaluation results?

– Can you identify the main positive aspects of the implementation of AS?

– What kind of indicators do you consider should be taken into account?

► Is the ARS a sustainable strategy in the city?

Yes, No

► What factors have facilitate / hamper its sustainability?

► In your opinion, what are the main challenges the ARS is facing in your city to gurantee its proper development and growth?

► What are the next steps you are planning for the future of the ARS in your city?

Best practices

► What are the best practices you can identify from your ARS that could be inspiring for other cities?

– Please provide a brief description 2-3 examples

Populist, demagogic, and often xenophobic discourses have proliferated in recent years, reinforcing prejudice and barriers between "us" and "them", groups "defined" by ethnic, national, cultural and religious identities. History has shown how uncurbed processes of social polarisation may have very negative and even catastrophic consequences.

The Anti-Rumour Strategy (ARS) is a long-term process of social change which seeks to prevent discrimination, foster inclusion and harness the potential of diversity by reshaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of citizens and specific target groups. The ARS focuses on three specific objectives:

- ► To engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders and citizens by implementing a local public policy and building a cooperative multi-level social platform within the framework of a long-term "antirumours city strategy".
- ► To promote critical thinking and raise awareness of the negative effects of stereotypes, prejudice and false rumours, by implementing innovative actions to reduce them, and challenging the negative narratives around diversity.
- ► To influence the political and social agenda so that reducing prejudice and preventing discrimination is recognised as a crucial collective goal for society as a whole.

The ARS was first launched in 2010 in Barcelona and the Council of Europe promoted its further development and expansion to more than fifty European cities. In recent years, it has also attracted interest from cities, governments and many organisations from non-European countries such as Japan, Canada, Mexico, Jordan, Morocco and Chile among others.

This handbook is a practice-oriented sequel of the "Cities Free of Rumours" Guide published in 2015 by the Council of Europe. The lessons learned in recent years coupled with the growth in the number of cities that have joined the ARS and the interest it has generated since then, call for an update and further systematization of the antirumours approach and methodology. The handbook also provides practical examples to help and inspire cities and other stakeholders interested in learning more about this initiative and how to put it into practice.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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