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2nd Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network Workshop

"Anti-rumours Strategy"

Lisbon, Temporary Reception Centre for Refugees, Alameda das Linhas de Torres 171,

May 10, 2016

(SUMMARY)

Opening session

João Afonso (Lisbon) welcomed all participants and underlined the importance that the anti-rumours strategy can have for the future of the RPCI. Next, after greeting Lisbon for making available a venue, Dani Torres (RECI coordinator) for having accepted the invitation and facilitating the workshop, as well as all participants for their presence, André Carmo (RPCI) made his initial intervention, addressing the development of the Action Plan for 2016.

Opening Session, André Carmo, João Afonso Dani Torres

Regarding **consolidation**, he recalled that: i) all indexes should have been delivered by the end of the 1st semester of 2016 (task significantly delayed); ii) non-fulfilling this goal pushes expert visits forward – currently visits are scheduled to Lisbon (October 17), Loures (October 18), and Cascais (March

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2017); iii) both can compromise a closer dialogue with the ACM, as this depends on the level of consolidation of the RPCI; iv) the enlargement of the RPCI has been evolving at a steady pace, moving from 8 to 11 municipalities, after Portimão, Braga and Viseu joined; v) the RPCI has been organizing meetings and workshops on a regular basis; vi) turning the RPCI into an association has been postponed until necessary conditions are met.

As for **new activities**, the following aspects were highlighted: vii) regarding the "inspiring" projects of the RPCI – C4i and DELI – this workshop signals a stronger linkage to the first, although informations about funding opportunities that, somehow, continue along DELI's path have been shared; viii) the issue of refugees remains important, and the strategy should reflect it.

Finally, in what concerns **communication**, it was mentioned that: ix) the site is updated when new members join, but there are some technical problems with map updating; x) as for the newsletter, given that only Lisbon, Loures and Amadora have been sending news, it is necessary to make this more dynamic; xi) finally, the request to share RPCI activities with local/regional media was reiterated.

At the moment, priority should be ascribed to delivering indexes, immediately followed by scheduling expert visits. The anti-rumours strategy is equally important. RPCI municipalities can access a 5.000 Euros line of funding, after filling a form that will be sent immediately after this workshop. Being mostly symbolic, it is first and foremost an incentive and a reference value when municipalities draw their strategies.

Introduction to anti-rumours strategy

Dani Torres briefly presented the anti-rumours strategy, as a social intervention strategy aimed at de-constructing stereotypes, prejudices and false rumours targeting specific social and cultural groups. While promoting new conviviality and alterity relationships, it also seeks to fight discrimination and racism, at the same time it promotes and fosters the positive advantages of diversity. He also sought to raise awareness to the fact that in Portugal and Spain there are no explicitly xenophobic and racist political parties. An anti-rumours strategy in the Portuguese context, should take this into account, without neglecting the existing specificities at the municipal scale.

General aspect of the audience in the 2nd RPCI Workshop

The anti-rumours strategy has been disseminated all over the world. This process is based on a large impulse given by the ICC and dense local based institutional networks fostering and implementing the strategy *in loco*. This cumulative, "quasi-epidemic" logic of the anti-rumour strategy, has been one of its trademark features.

The success of this strategy relies on various dimensions, such as: I) existence of political commitment and leadership capable of implementing the strategy; ii) capacity to articulate on a virtuous way local based public policy with the spirit and dynamic traditionally associated to social movements; iii) orientation to the non racist/xenophobic majority and not to the "racist minority" which will most probably not change its convictions; iv) adoption of a creative approach, very different from various projects and/or local based public policies that are monotonous, boring, with no glimpse, dream or illusion.

Besides these dimensions, it is also important to focus on rumours and not on racism, in the sense that, contrary to the latter concept, the former catches the attention of people. The message of the anti-rumours strategy should not be moralizing or persecutory. On the contrary, it should seduce people, promoting critical thinking, reflexivity and questioning absolute certainties. Hence, it does not adopt a stance of moral superiority, which would most probably be ineffective, but a position of scientific/intellectual objectivity.

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Methodology and practical examples of anti-rumours cities

From a methodological point of view, Dani Torres drawn attention to the necessity to distinguish between three fundamental concepts: i) stereotype – socially necessary generalizing belief, characterized by its simplicity; ii) prejudice – variation of stereotypes, very hard to eliminate, an hostile attitude towards specific social groups; iii) rumour – based on stereotypes and prejudices, characterized by ambiguity and no empirical evidence backing it up.

Ideally, the process of development and implementation of an anti-rumours strategy should unfold in eight steps: i) establishment of a compromise/commitment by a cohesive set of actors (in this case the RPCI members); ii) elaboration of a rigorous diagnose and identification of the rumours that, in each geographic context, are more expressive; iii) anti-rumour argument definition, based on empirical evidence and going beyond a merely factual/statistical dimension, fitting arguments to target-audience; iv) establishment of an anti-rumour network, that can either come out of an endogenous reconfiguration of municipal departments providing them a pretext and/or opportunity to collaborate, share and densify relations around a common goal or through the identification of the local institutional fabric that can sustain and promote the implementation of the strategy (e.g. schools, sports centres, associations, NGOs, local libraries); v) training of anti-rumour agents (i.e. people that, framed by different institutional arrangements are responsible for disseminating anti-rumour arguments through/within their organizations and communities; vi) devise anti-rumour campaigns, establishing social, geographical, institutional priorities, using funny and humorous approaches, public figures and relevant personalities and a graphic image ascribing some sort of homogeneity to all participants; vii) evaluate the impacts (direct and indirect) and monitor the strategy implementation; viii) find ways to make the strategy sustainable and viable in the near future.

Brainstorming

In this session participants were asked to organize in small working groups (5-6 elements) and elaborate proposals with the goal of setting up an anti-rumours strategy for the RPCI.

Working group 1:

General description: short video-clip about refugees. Using the song "Para os braços da minha mãe" (Pedro Abrunhosa and Camané, 2013) to create an "environment", a series of images of refugees in transit are shown, establishing a connection to the hundreds of thousands of young Portuguese that

abandoned the country during the last couple of years searching for better conditions of life. Appealing to emotion, the audience is directly addressed and questioned: "Refugees lost their families, jobs, and homes. Are you still able to say no?".

Rumour: "there are no houses for us, but there are houses for refugees".

Anti-rumours arguments: refugees are picked up civil society institutions, not by municipalities. There are European resources to receive refugees. The average quota to refugees reception for each Portuguese municipality is merely symbolic (5000 refugees / 308 municipalities = 16,6 refugees p/municipality).

Working group 2:

General description: creation of theatrical performances in institutions such as job centres, social centres or care centres, that can help people (old age, unemployed, etc.) question their own certainties and prejudices.

Rumour: "immigrants steal our resources" (e.g. health, work).

Anti-rumours arguments: the social contribution of immigrants is above their costs. More often than not, they pay more taxes then they get in return from the State in social support and services. In fact, the majority of immigrants gives an important contribution for economic and labour market development.

Working group 3:

General description: having unemployed people as target audience, this proposal relies on the organization of conferences or similar events specifically addressing unemployment, as well as sharing the life histories/testimonials of resident immigrants that are well integrated into communities.

Rumour: "immigrants steal our jobs"

Anti-rumours arguments: Immigrants create jobs

Working group 4:

General description: working together with children of young age (primary education), presenting them life histories and testimonials of gipsies.

Rumour: "gipsies don't want to work"

Anti-rumours arguments: There are several gipsies in the Portuguese labour market, with mediators playing a fundamental role in local development. Some of the possible mottoes are: "drown the rumour", "burn the rumour", or "give the other cheek to rumour".

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Working group 5:

General description: having public servants as target audience, develop a campaign that starts out with a teaser (t-shirt with a slogan - "who do you share your shirt with?"). On the other hand, it could also be targeting the general population, using sugar packs to disseminate messages about rumours.

Rumour: African population and gipsies have more support from the State than the rest of the Portuguese population (with the housing sector being paradigmatic in this regard).

Anti-rumours arguments: explain the requirements necessary for the State to provide support to people (i.e. related to their socio-economic situation and not to ethnic background, culture or religion).

Closing session

Dani Torres underlined the dynamic and commitment of all participants in the workshop, as well as the necessity to continue the development of the anti-rumours strategy in a near future. Afterwards, André Carmo highlighted the need to continue strengthening the Iberian connection, while also pointing out the fact that several groups focused on gipsy population. Arguably, this specific group could play a more central role in the RPCI anti-rumours strategy than refugees (until now, RPCI municipalities only received around thirty refugees). Additionally, he also expressed satisfaction with the group dynamic during the brainstorm exercise, a methodology that should be replicated in the future in the sense that, besides promoting a more intense and integrated collective reflection, it also contributes to foster cohesion, interpersonal trust and the development of "lateral" relationships between different RPCI municipalities. Finally, participants were informed that the 7th RPCI Meeting will take place next June 21 in Portimão, the 8th Meeting is planned for the last trimester of 2016, in Braga, and that all will receive an online survey to evaluate the RPCI coordination quality.

Closing session, André Carmo and Dani Torres

ANNEX I

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PROGRAMME

2nd Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network Meeting

"Anti-rumors Strategy"

Lisbon, Temporary Reception Centre for Refugees, Alameda das Linhas de Torres 171, May 10, 2016[1]

(PROGRAMME)

10:00-10:10 – Opening session, João Afonso and André Carmo

10:10-11:00 – Introduction to anti-rumour strategy, Dani Torres and Gemma Pinyol
                   Why an anti-rumour strategy?
                   Origin and evolution
                   Fundamental principles
                   Basic concepts

11:00-12:00 – Methodology, Dani Torres and Gemma Pinyol
                   Diagnostic
                   Rumours and anti-rumours argumentation
                   Anti-rumours Network
                   Anti-rumours training
                   Devising anti-rumours campaigns
                   Evaluation and sustainability

12:00-13:00 – Practical examples of anti-rumour cities, Dani Torres and Gemma Pinyol

13:00-14:30 – Lunch

14:30-16:30 – *Brainstorming*, Dani Torres and Gemma Pinyol
                   RPCI ideas
                   Collaboration between cities

16:30-17:00 – Next steps, Dani Torres and Gemma Pinyol

17:00-17:10 – Closing session, André Carmo

Note: the official languages of the workshop will be English and Spanish

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[1]   For security reasons, the address of this workshop should be handled with care.

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ANNEX II – PARTICIPANTS

2º Workshop da Rede Portuguesa de Cidades Interculturais "Estratégia anti-rumores" Lisboa,

10 de maio de 2016

LISTA DE PRESENÇAS

Entidade	Representante (nome legível)	Contacto	Email
RPCi	ANDRÉ CARMO	93 853 26 84	CARMO@CAMPUS.UL.PT
CM COIMBRA	Rita Fernandes	96 4439 925	rita.fernandes@cm-coimbra.pt
CM Coimbra	Teresa Rebuinho	96 29 124 958	teresa.pedrinho.lcm@cm-coimbra.pt
CM Coimbra	Carla Sá	919 36 1411	carla.sa@cm-coimbra.pt
CM BRAGA	Cristina PALHARES	96 744 6102	cristina.palhares@cm-braga.pt
C.M. Braga	MARIA TAVARES	919 092 617	MARIA.TAVARES@cm-braga.pt
CM LOURES	Sandra Almeida	96 329 6406	sandra-almeida@cm-loures.pt
CM Loures	Vitor Amaral Silva	916 299 776	vitor.amaral.silva@cm-loures.pt
CM Amadora	Custódia Favela	96 4706033	custodia.favela@cm-amadora.pt
CAT LOURES	Rui Monteiro	965 22 ?201	rui.monteiro@ct-loures.pt

Centro de Acolhimento Temporário para Refugiados, Alameda das Linhas de Torres 177, 1750-142 Lisboa

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10 de maio de 2016

LISTA DE PRESENÇAS

Entidade	Representante (nome legível)	Contacto	Email
CM Amadora	Ana Paula Lois	214369000	ana.lomas@cm-amadora.p
CM Lisboa/GLEH	Maria José Roxo	21322 73 43	maria.jose.roxo@cm-lisboa.pt
C.M. Évora	Yara Bonela	239 854890	yara.bonela@cm-evora.pt
CM Lisboa/GUJA	Miguel Graça	91291 6841	miguel.graca@cm-lisboa.pt
CM Viseu	Fernando Santos	232427427	fernando.santos@cm-viseu.pt
CM Viseu	Clara Pombeiro	232427407	clara.pombeiro@cmmviseu.pt
CM Oscar	Helena Bispo HHO	51581 8430	
CM cascais	Afonseca Bilouia	91226 24 tc	filomena.oliveira@cm-cascais.pt
CMC/Cant Unha	Yolanda Herculano	9686 97 804	Joana.Herculano@cm-barcos.pt
CMC loiis	Sandra Alba Henrique	91307 4525	sandra.henrique@cm-loures.pt

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LISTA DE PRESENÇAS

Entidade	Representante (nome legível)	Contacto	Email
C.M. Beja	Sara Muncausi	966275006	Sara.Serrano@cm-beja.pt
C.M. Beja	Maria Manuel Coelho	926373073	maria.manuel@cm-beja.pt
C.M. Pontinecos	Paulo Christovão	96552506	paulo.proposto@cm-pontinecos.pt
C.M. Portimão	Ligia Cid	282490262	ligia.cid@cm-portimao.pt
	Ana Tavares Lima	96593043	ana.tavares@cm-portimao.pt
C.M. S. V. Teres	Cristina Mateus	914785000	cristina.mateus@cm-... .pt
C.M. S. J. Reis	Rosario Nunes	919423472	rosario.nunes@cm-feira.pt
C.M. J. M. Feira	Rosario Oliveira	965706357	roberto.reis@cm-feira.pt

Centro de Acolhimento Temporário para Refugiados, Alameda das Linhas de Torres 177, 1750-142 Lisboa