



Claiming the power of dialogue

Toolkit for antirumours dialogue

Policy Brief
2021



Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	DIALOGUE AS A TOOL FOR CREATING ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES.....	3
3	PREMISES FOR A PRODUCTIVE ANTIRUMOURS DIALOGUE.....	4
4	BARRIERS TO PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE.....	5
5	TOOLBOX FOR A PRODUCTIVE ANTI-RUMOURS DIALOGUE	7
5.1	Attitudinal tools	7
5.2	The practical tools	8
A.	Generate a connection.....	9
B.	Keep their attention	10
C.	Breaking stereotypes and correcting misinformation.....	11
D.	Strengthening the case for change.....	12
E.	Review the outcome and identify lessons learned	13

*The opinions expressed in this work
are the responsibility of the author
and do not necessarily reflect the
official policy of the Council of Europe.*

Written by Dani de Torres

Cover images:
Getty Images Pro

Intercultural Cities Unit,
Council of Europe©

Council of Europe, April 2021



1 INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where we are concerned about the rise of populist discourses that stigmatise certain individuals and groups by spreading prejudices, rumours, and sometimes even *fake news*. We also see the consolidation of bubbles or echo-chambers¹ where we tend to take refuge among those who think similarly to us.

The internet and social media have allowed access to a lot of information and new ways of communicating, bringing people together and breaking down borders. They are however also reinforcing the "social bubbles" through algorithms that filter the information that reaches us, bringing to our attention only what is more in line with our beliefs and interests. The Internet and social media have also become meeting rooms where the most exalted spread simple messages loaded with prejudice, falsehoods, and hostility. At the same time, there is an increase in social polarisation and the 'us-them' dynamic in several countries. Further, in some instances, political leaders, some of whom have held high responsibility positions, have contributed to this social polarisation.

While the majority of the population often does not share the most radical ideas, this frantic consumption of biased information tends to reinforce polarisation and hostility. Even if we are not aware of it, the toxic atmosphere and noise ends up affecting our perceptions.

These are bad times for quiet reflection, exchange of ideas and constructive dialogue. The opportunities to quietly contrast our ideas with those who think differently are shrinking.

This paper is part of the work of the Council of Europe's [Intercultural Cities](#) programme to provide theoretical and practical resources for building alternative narratives to proactively respond to negative dialogue.² Here the paper aims to put the focus on people's individual responsibility, focusing on the importance and power of face-to-face dialogue to help both counter negative narratives and alternatives ones.

¹ In discussions of news media, an echo chamber refers to situations in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system and insulated from rebuttal. By participating in an echo chamber, people are able to seek out information that reinforces their existing views without encountering opposing views, potentially resulting in an unintended exercise in confirmation bias. Echo chambers may increase social and political polarization and extremism.

² For more information see: [10 criteria for the creation of effective alternative narratives on diversity](#) (2019)

2 DIALOGUE AS A TOOL FOR CREATING ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

Despite the power of the media or the great impact of social media, face-to-face dialogue remains a fundamental tool for generating deep and lasting changes in people's opinions and beliefs. However, in a context of growing populist and stigmatising discourses, which include hate-speech, it is important to generate alternative narratives that are **more rigorous, constructive and based on respect for human rights and the equal dignity of all people, the value and recognition of diversity and the values that allow for social cohesion, positive intercultural interaction and living together in diversity.**

The processes of creating, communicating, and disseminating these narratives require a multidimensional and multilevel approach: they must involve various fields, channels, messengers, and the participation of a large number of actors, both institutional and from civil society as a whole.

The objective of the dialogue we propose is very specific and cannot be generalised, nor does it have to do with intercultural dialogue, which pursues other objectives. It is a question of **identifying tools ensuring this strategic dialogue can be productive, achieve results and contribute to generating change among individuals whose beliefs are based on prejudices and misinformation.**

The method and tools proposed are the combined result of ten years of experience in the development of antirumours strategies and training in various countries, together with the *know-how and resources* generated in the member cities, as well as the inspiration from other experiences. An important inspiration has been Justin Lee³, who analyses the barriers and best techniques for tackling strategic dialogues and Hans Rosling's commitment to "fighting lack of knowledge and misinformation, identifying the instincts that prevent us from getting closer to the truth and how we can present data in an innovative and effective⁴ way". Another relevant inspiration has been the Brazilian philosopher and activist Marcia Tiburi⁵ who claims the power of dialogue as a "guerrilla of resistance" against those who have embraced the most authoritarian and populist discourses. Maria now resides in France because due to threats on her life in her country of origin because of her critical activism.

3 Lee, J. (2018) Talking across the divide how to communicate with people you disagree with and maybe even change the world. J.P.Tarcher,U.S./Perigee Bks.,U.S

4 Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About The World - And Why Things Are Better than you think. (Hodder And Stoughton)

5 Tiburi, M. (2015) How to Talk to a Fascist: The Authoritarianism of Everyday Life.

3 PREMISES FOR A PRODUCTIVE ANTIRUMOURS DIALOGUE

- The dialogue must be a complement to other actions that aim to generate alternative narratives and to promote critical thinking and empathy.
- This type of dialogue is an instrument for achieving concrete results. It must be done on the basis of a commitment to rigour, facts and truth, as well as to the values of respect for human rights and the dignity of all people.
- In no case is it a question of manipulation or winning a battle. Approaching a debate as if it was a battle in which to win by imposing arguments is problematic when it comes to building bridges across differences.
- The dialogue proposed should be understood as a process that has deeper results in the medium and long term. But this does not mean that humble or relevant results cannot be achieved in spontaneous conversations.
- Dialogue in no way means relativising, minimising, simplifying, or accepting ideas with which one does not agree at all and which may be consider negative or even dangerous. It is a matter of claiming individual responsibility for everyone to have a proactive attitude and achieve results.
- Anti-rumours dialogue has its red lines. Faced with clearly extreme, intransigent or supremacist racist positions, this type of dialogue may not be effective as it requires active listening from all sides.
- Priority is given to dialogue with persons who are part of the ambivalent majority and who have opinions based on prejudice and misinformation.
- This dialogue is approached from the private sphere and not to be shared among other audiences. Priority is given to face-to-face dialogue with a single person, as this has a greater impact as a forum, although this does not mean that it is not advisable to consider dialogue with more people, in certain contexts.
- Anti-rumours dialogue can be the result of proactive planned action or a spontaneous situation. In the first case, there is more time to prepare; in the second case, there is a need to improvise more, but we will also be able to apply the techniques and recommendations detailed in this paper.
- Context matters. To have a productive dialogue it is important to have a calm environment and enough time. If this is not the case, it is better not to engage.
- Anti-rumours dialogue requires preparation, practice, and continuous evaluation of the results.

4 BARRIERS TO PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Before we start the strategic dialogue, we must be aware of the main barriers.

The protection of our ego. Our ego plays an important role in our lives because it tries to give us confidence, security, and peace of mind in the face of the complexities of the world. When activated, it often prevents us from questioning our beliefs from an objective and rational viewpoint. As Justin Lee explains so well in his book, no one likes to be treated as an ignorant or bad person. This will only cause defensiveness (or offensiveness) and prevent openness to listen to other arguments or views.

In general, people tend to think we are right and when faced with evidence of the opposite, we tend to justify our position rather than show readiness to change it. We also tend to pay more attention to information and arguments that confirm our beliefs than to those that question them and seek any excuse to discredit or ignore them. Our ego tries to make our lives easier but mismanaged it can make them much more complicated.

The trend towards comfort and simplification. Our brain is lazy: once we are satisfied with our beliefs, we find it very difficult to make the effort to change them. Living in our bubble is comfortable and having to change our opinions makes us uncomfortable and uncertain. We must have an important reason that justifies going out from our comfort zone or that provokes the change, and it is not easy to find it. In addition, we tend to focus much more on simple and direct messages that we can understand immediately and without much effort. The problem is that lies, and rumours are usually simpler to grasp than a complex truth. When faced with a complex reality our brain tends to look for a single cause, and often finds it in scapegoats. Some public communicators, including politicians, journalists, or influencers, are aware of this and do not hesitate to use this as a strategy.

Loyalty to our group and the tendency to see the world in terms of groups in conflict We are not aware of the extent to which we are influenced by the opinions of the members of those we consider to be 'our group'. Furthermore, in contexts of greater polarisation and fragmentation, people tend to see reality in terms of opposing groups. In other words, if we add up the tendency to generalise and look for opposing groups, we get into the very dangerous dynamic of 'us-them'. To this we can add the influence of context, the tendency to ethnocentrism and the homogenisation of "other groups" through which we can end up dehumanising with our prejudices, lack of knowledge and lack of positive interaction.

The power of the negative, the dramatic and the fear. The media and many politicians know that our brains are activated and pay much more attention to morbid and sensationalistic stories that fuel our instinct to react to fear and threat. Ordinary or more positive news or stories simply have a much harder time to capture our attention. When we feel threatened by something or someone, even if there is no objective reason, we react defensively and instinctively, and critical thinking disappears. The tendency to focus more on the negative aspects or stories, the influence of uncertainties and cultural and socio-economic changes, together with discourses that encourage fear, simple solutions, prejudice and hostility to what looks different (i.e., unknown), can cause us to create a very distorted view of reality. Identifying the fears of the persons we are talking to is very important.

The threat to our world view. Some of our beliefs are part of the basis that shapes our way of seeing and interpreting the world. They are linked to our strongest values, as well as to aspects such as ideology, religion, or beliefs about the concepts of justice, freedom, and equality. If in a dialogue on a particular subject someone questions our deepest beliefs, we tend to reject their arguments and react defensively.

Truth, what truth? Another barrier is the distortion created by the spread of rumours, fake news and misinformation that pursue interests far from the rigour and objective facts and data. Nowadays we can find arguments and data that pretends to confirm the most absurd beliefs. That is why it is important to maintain a commitment to information that is contrasted and to objective arguments and facts that bring us closer to reality and the truth.

5 TOOLBOX FOR A PRODUCTIVE ANTI-RUMOURS DIALOGUE

We are already aware about the main barriers that can make our dialogues more difficult and now it is time for action.

The **process of preparing the anti-rumours dialogues** will differ depending on the context and the situation, but some key aspects can be identified:

- Acquire and practice the skills for strategic antirumours dialogue.
- Have a good knowledge of the issues and consult different sources of information and accept to review our possible biases.
- Find out about the other person's profile.
- Think about possible questions, stories, arguments, data, etc. that could be useful in the dialogue.
- Set concrete objectives ("with this person I think it would be very good if we could talk and listen to each other calmly and be able to talk again later without getting angry...").
- Choose the timing, context and space for the anti-rumours dialogue.

The main tools for holding productive anti-rumours dialogues are listed below.

Attitudinal tools	A critical mirror
	Empathy to recognise and humanise the other
	Humility and patience
	Self-control of emotions
	Know the limits
Practical tools	Listen actively and ask the right questions
	Use the power of stories
	Put forward arguments and points of view strategically
	Review the outcome and identify lessons learned

5.1 Attitudinal tools

A critical mirror. The biggest mistake we can make is to think that we are free of prejudices, fully equipped against misinformation, and that the instincts we have described above do not influence us. If we want to be agents of change, before we start to take action, we must reflect on how our instincts and personal contexts affect us and how we can maintain a critical attitude towards ourselves.

Empathy to recognise and humanise the other. It is very important that the other person feels that our interest is sincere, that we care about what they tell us and that we are making a real effort to try to understand their vision. We must ensure that – even if we think they are wrong – our interlocutors feel respected and understand that we do recognise they may have good intentions. If we use aggressive language, if we place ourselves in a position of moral superiority or treat people with condescension, the anti-rumours dialogue will not be constructive.

Humility and patience. It is important that we are humble and do not have high expectations, to avoid frustration. Experience shows that if we set ourselves small goals and achieve them, our motivation increases, and we will be more consistent. Sometimes, the result we can expect

is that the other person is willing to talk to us about that topic again. This is not easy and might be seen as a real challenge. Other times the goal may be to raise thoughts around new ideas, or that the other person has agreed to some aspects of our arguments. In the best case, we may find that the other person actually questions his or her belief, even if only indirectly. This is a great achievement. But humility also means that we must also be open to change.

Self-control of emotions. The "zen" attitude is the key to avoiding that all our efforts are in vain or even have a counterproductive impact. It is therefore important to control ourselves and adopt a strategic attitude and not to forget that we are looking for results and that it is not about winning a debate or being satisfied by showing our strong rejection of the other person's ideas. If we raise our voice, if our body language shows aggression, if we constantly interrupt the other person and show indignation, it will be very difficult for us to achieve any results.

Knowing our limits. We can find ourselves in situations where we consider that dialogue is meaningless and that red lines are being crossed. We must know the limits and in the face of denigrating or strong racist comments from a person who seems not closed to dialogue and who is only seeking for confrontation and attention, it is probably not beneficial to try and engage in an anti-rumours dialogue.

5.2 The practical tools

We can identify four major tools from which small instruments emerge, which we will describe below.

Listen actively and ask the right questions. When we want to have a productive dialogue, the first rule is to listen actively and with clear objectives. Firstly, the other person has to feel that we are really interested in their opinion and that we leave them time to explain their point of view. Listening is a sign of respect, sincere interest and empathy. When we do so, we are recognising the other person and humanising him/her. To do this, it is essential that we accompany our listening with appropriate questions and thinking about expected outcomes. What kind of information are we looking forward to share?

- The interests, concerns, and motivations behind the other person's opinions.
- The level of knowledge the other person has about the subject, whether it is deep or superficial.
- Identify possible misinformation, prejudices, and rumours on which the other person bases their opinions, as well as the sources of information they use.
- The meaning the other person gives to important concepts about the subject matter we are talking about. If we do not share the same meaning, it will be very difficult to dialogue or to agree on something.
- To learn about personal experiences that have influenced you on the subject being discussed.
- Identify if the other person has any perception of insecurity, fear or threat and know the root causes that motivate this perception.
- Identify common interests, concerns or needs.

The information we obtain from this process of active listening will be fundamental in choosing the arguments and stories well, so that they have higher chances to create impact.

Use the power of stories. Personal experiences and storytelling that have an emotional component are much more effective than "neutral" data and information in having some impact on the other person. Anti-rumours dialogues require preparation and practice, and so it is

important that we take time to remember or to seek out those stories we feel can convey our messages most effectively. If we want to share knowledge about a reality that affects a group, about the impact of an action or policy, or if we want to bring out objective facts or data, we must develop the ability to convey that information in the context of a personal experience or a story.

If the other person has had a bad experience in relation to the subject we are talking about, they will not care if statistics show that this reality is not common and only refers to a small number of cases. That is why it's important to share stories with an emotional component that bring another point of view. It is about giving the other person the opportunity to experience another story, another narrative. Stories that include overcoming some difficulty, that are close, that humanise and emphasise common and shared elements and experiences, have a greater impact.⁶

We cannot always resort to stories that are personal or in which the other person directly identifies, but we can also resort to stories that we have read about (after checking the source) or seen/lived and consider appropriate to the context.

Put forward our arguments and points of view strategically. After having listened carefully to the other person and collected/processed relevant information, it is time to put forward our arguments and stories.



A. Generate a connection

The first objective is to generate a connection with the other person in order to foster empathy and avoid being placed in "opposing groups".

Explaining their own "story". A very effective strategy to show that we are listening carefully is to summarise the other person's arguments: *"If I have understood you correctly, what you mean is..."* When the other person listens to their own story told by us, they recognise that we have a real interest in understanding it and a certain complicity is created.

Speaking from their values and interests. Our tendency is to argue from our interests and values. If, on the other hand, we present our arguments from the other person's values and interests, we make it easier for them to be more open to listening to us and perhaps to questioning their opinion. For example, if we talk to a person for whom we know family is really important, we can incorporate this value into our arguments: *"This policy aims to facilitate the reunification of families so that they can live together...there are people who have been living and working here for years, like Claudia, the nurse who looks after your mother, who has not been able to see her children for a long time... I think it is very important that families can be together"*. If we add a personal reference to someone who is close and with whom you have an emotional bond, the argument will be more persuasive.

⁶ In his paper "How to tell the intercultural story" Rune Kier explains the main criteria that we must take into account for stories to have an impact. Although his analysis focuses on the specific construction of the intercultural narrative, many of his recommendations can be very useful and are fully in line with the approach and dialectical tools that we propose in the next section.

Recognising points of agreement. As we listen to their explanation we may be able to find some idea or argument with which we agree. If, for example, we observe that the person is concerned about increased insecurity and blames an entire group based on their origin or ethnicity, before we go into question that statement, we can begin by highlighting a point of agreement: *"I also care about security, on that we are in complete agreement. However..."*. By doing this, we make it easier for the other person to be more willing to recognize common ground with our arguments.

Referring to common interests or concerns, whether cultural, social, sporting, professional, etc. We may already know these common interests because we know the other person, or because we have sensed them in their explanation. *"In the end what I want to say is related for example to the origin of jazz, which we both like so much... jazz was born from the encounter and fusion between traditional African music and rhythms with elements of European music which was heard in North America at that time. Without this mixture of influences (in this case sadly forced by the reality of slavery) we would not be able to enjoy jazz now. Can you imagine? Well, what I wanted to tell you is that ..."*

Another example could be: *"I know that like me, you value local commerce very much as a factor of cohesion and dynamism in the neighbourhood. That is why I think it is positive that many businesses are maintained, and new ones opened thanks to neighbours who have come from outside, because otherwise many would have disappeared.* Furthermore, if instead of talking about "immigrants" we refer to concepts such as "neighbours", we are not only humanising a stereotyped group of people, but also questioning the "us-them" division.

B. Keep their attention

Making a connection is important, but the challenge is to get the other person's attention and to listen with interest to our arguments and stories.

Positive messages, not defensive ones. For example, if we insist on saying *"this isn't so...you're wrong...this isn't true...this doesn't make any sense"* we will activate self-protection and won't get results. This does not mean that we should avoid the complex or conflicting elements, but that we should propose ideas and arguments in a positive way that stimulate the other person to reflect and to question themselves.

Clear, understandable and... catchy⁷ If it is already difficult to question someone's beliefs, it is even more so if we base our strategy on exposing them to a lot of complex data and arguments that require high mental effort. Even if we succeed, it is likely that after a while they will forget the details and return to their original belief. In addition to being understandable, our information must have something that captures the other person's attention. To do this, it is essential to compare the data with other realities, to divide it up, to use percentages, to look at its evolution in order to offer simple but powerful messages and that always are closely linked to reality and not to abstractions.

Encourage curiosity. We all like to learn new things, especially if they have to do with our interests and concerns. For example, if we want to share information about the increase and evolution of immigration in the city, we can do so in a way that encourages curiosity: *"The other day I learned about the number of residents that experts estimate our city would have if no one had immigrated to our city during the past 50 years...do you know how many?"*

⁷ At the [Gapminder](#) Foundation they present the data in an innovative way, translating it into simple and rigorous messages.

Lower the tension. Often, we will not be able to prevent the dialogue from becoming more heated and it may be difficult to control our emotions. When we identify a particular topic that generates tension and is difficult to get out of, it is important to know how to temporarily redirect the conversation towards more neutral topics. Humour can be useful, but it must be used well as it otherwise can be counterproductive.

C. Breaking stereotypes and correcting misinformation

In the other person's explanations, we may have detected the use of stereotypes and information that we know is wrong or not very rigorous. In that case, it is important that we provide information to "correct" that misinformation, but it must be done strategically to ensure the other person does not feel lectured.

Evidence of their lack of knowledge in an indirect way. The best way for anyone to realise that he or she is wrong or is not aware of the real facts, is to let them realise it themselves to not activate their ego protection barrier. If we find, for example, that our interlocutors are not fully aware of the legislative provisions and/or obligations of something we are talking about, it is better to "remind" them of that information which reinforces our argument, rather than saying, *"you don't know what the law says? Don't you know that the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the core of the international protection system? Really?"*.

Questioning generalisations. If we observe that the other person has used negative stereotypes and generalisations about a certain group, we have to counter them and avoid the homogenisation and possible "dehumanisation" of those groups. To do this, we should highlight the "internal" diversity of the people in that group, emphasise similarities or common elements that they share with people in that group, and highlight the value of diversity (i.e. by providing examples of advancements we could not have made without diversity) to redraw the lines that separate groups. One option is to draw on personal experiences or stories of people who are close to them, including any data or information that may help to break those stereotypes.

Correcting false beliefs without lecturing. If we identify that the other person is basing much of their arguments on incorrect information and rumours, it is important that we try to correct them, but always avoid the risk of further reinforcing them. If in their explanation they state something like *"immigrants are given more social benefits than natives just because they are immigrants"*, we must try to correct this misinformation. It is not easy because the other person can also refer to data they got from a vague source *"they showed me the list of all those who received the benefits and they were all foreign surnames"*. First, we must find out who they are referring to by "immigrants" and what kind of benefits are talking about. Often, the best strategy is to ask the other person to be more specific and to make their arguments more concrete. In doing so, they usually incorporate nuances and "correct" their first message. Then, we should share information and arguments that show that their beliefs are based on incorrect facts and data, but without teaching: *"Do you remember Maite? That friend of mine that you liked so much? She works in social services and explained to me how the system works and what is taken into account are economic and social criteria, and the origin nationality has nothing to do with it. You can see that..."*.

The credibility of the information. If we want to correct erroneous information, we will be more successful if the other person considers that the sources of information, we use are credible and rigorous. This is one of the reasons why it is important to diversify our sources of information. Let us imagine that the other person is linking the increase in "immigration" with an increase in insecurity and crime. If we have objective and rigorous information that questions this link, we should share it strategically: *"Just the other day I saw an interview on that programme you like so much in which the chief of the local police explained the evolution of the number of crimes and highlighted that we are now at one of the lowest levels in the last decade. He also explained*

that the perception of insecurity could be increased by other indirect and more subjective factors such as...". It can be easy for the other person to question 'our' information, but more complicated for them to *question* the local police chief.

Avoid reinforcing rumours. Rumours work by repetition, and even if we want to dismantle them, we take the risk of reinforcing them by repeating the message. The best strategy is to try to get out of the frame and narrative of the rumour and try indirect strategies that question that information, using stories and arguments that propose another framework and narrative. Where we cannot avoid referring to rumours, we should do so strategically, such as through the "sandwich theory". According to this theory, if it is necessary to refer to a rumour or fake news, we need to put it in the middle of two positive messages that deny it. For example, in the face of the rumour that *"immigrants abuse the public health system and we cannot afford it"* the sandwich strategy could be: *"Did you know that most of the budget and health services go to the elderly? Look, it's logical, but I never thought about it.. some people say they are abusing the public health system but that's not true...immigrants are younger and healthier in general... besides, the director of the public hospital X, which is so prestigious, explained that immigrants go to the doctor less than the natives and consume less medicines..."*.

This won't change the other person's belief, but it may cause them to have to develop and justify their position better, and that is when weaknesses or inconsistencies may *appear*.

Divert attention to motivations and root causes to promote critical thinking and question rumours. If the other person tells us *"that immigrants are taking our jobs"*, we can choose to mention statistics and complex references to labour market developments, but it will be more effective if we can find out what kind of concerns or fears lie behind the statement (fear of losing their job, unemployed family members, worries about their children future...). Our strategy could be to leave aside the reference to immigrants and forget about directly questioning that rumour and instead share a reflection on the root causes of the economic crisis. It is a way for the other person to change their perspective and have to think about the causes that have provoked a situation and those who have a greater responsibility. In this way, it is more likely that "immigrants" disappear from the conversation and that maybe we will find points of agreement about some complexities or injustices regarding economic policies which may have a big impact on increasing inequalities for everyone. So, we reframe the anti-rumours dialogue and do not try to question directly their belief, and in doing so, we might be more successful in achieving a productive dialogue.

Identify the "hidden" motives of those who spread stigmatising rumours and hostile narratives. As Ophelia Field points out in her paper on effective migration narratives⁸, it has been shown that sometimes it can be useful to refer to the real interests pursued by those who spread such discourses and rumours, and who we may consider to be irresponsible and seeking "to divide us". But we must be careful and do so only when it is evident because otherwise, they may react defensively if they consider we are attacking referents and leaders they trust.

D. Strengthening the case for change

Finally, apart from questioning stereotypes and misinformation, we must reinforce the reasons that may lead them to question their beliefs.

Visualize the negative consequences that the position the other person is defending can have in practice and in the life of certain people. If we also do it from their own interests and values, it is more likely that we will be able to generate internal tension or discomfort. In the example of the family reunification of immigrants, we could explain the consequences of being separated

⁸ Ophelia Field (2021): Migration and Integration - Which alternative narratives work and why.

that long for that person and their children. This example could be accompanied by data showing the reality of family reunification (especially if the source is a means that is considered reliably by the other person) and how these people have gone through complex and traumatic situations. When people become aware of the complexities and consequences that their beliefs or proposals may have on specific individuals, they can nuance and try to correct some aspects of their argument.

One of the techniques that have proven to be most effective in getting people to question their proposals and "solutions" is to ask them to develop and specify them. In this way, by having to visualise all the steps, they become aware of the complexities, difficulties, and negative consequences that they had not foreseen in an exercise of simplifying reality. By asking the other person to develop their approaches, they will often become aware of their weaknesses and be more open to questioning them, even if they do not externalise or recognise this at the time.

Provide alternative explanations. When we dismantle a rumour or wrong belief but do not provide an alternative explanation, it is more likely that the other person will believe in that wrong idea quite soon. This happens because that belief had a function, for example it served to give a simple answer to a complex problem. If we remove that idea, we leave a gap and a question unanswered. That is why we must strive to provide alternative explanations narratives that allow the wrong belief to be replaced by a more inclusive narrative.

In the previous example about the idea that "immigrants take our jobs", if we simply dismantle that idea with arguments and data without providing an alternative explanation for the increase in unemployment, probably the person will keep believing the wrong belief sooner or later.

Share examples of people who have changed their minds. Stories about people who held a similar position to the person we are talking to and who changed their mind, might be quite useful. If we are the person who changed our mind, so much the better. *"I used to believe that too, but then I met this person who works in that department and she explained to me that this was not true because they don't give them any benefit just because they are foreigners, and it all depends on the economic situation. Actually, immigrants often ignore they have rights so they don't even claim the benefits they would be entitled to. Now I think it makes more sense because..."*.

In short, anti-rumours dialogue is about facilitating the process so that the other person questions their viewpoint and even considers changing their mind... to do this we must be very aware of the barriers we may encounter and know how to listen, ask the right questions, tell good stories and personal experiences, and know how to present our arguments strategically.

E. Review the outcome and identify lessons learned

It is very important that we review how it went and what lessons we learned. If we take the time to evaluate the results of our anti-rumours dialogues, we will improve more quickly (what kind of arguments and stories we think have had the greatest impact and which have not). It is also necessary to identify the concrete results, however small, that we have achieved.

Finally, it is important that we share our experiences (positive and negative) with others who are also promoting these complex but necessary dialogues. That is why there are spaces within the framework of antirumours strategies for antirumours agents to share their experiences and further develop new skills. But there is a need to do more to support them and provide spaces and tools for collaborative networking and share the valuable know-how accumulated by these people who are committed to be active agents of change.