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Principles of the Anti-rumours Approach

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Towards a systemic approach to addressing misinformation, disinformation, prejudice and toxic narratives through critical thinking and social and institutional change.

1. Assessing complexity and setting priorities

Promote diagnosis that consider social, cognitive, emotional and structural dimensions through an intersectional lens. Understanding the complexity before acting is key to identifying root causes and defining the real priorities.

2. Engaging the social majority and fostering institutional shared responsibility

Direct efforts towards the broader public, while continuing to promote institutional commitment and shared responsibility. Sustainable change requires both social transformation and the strengthening of leadership and institutional shared responsibility to influence public policy from a cross-cutting and intersectional perspective.

3. Addressing the root causes

Understand rumours as a visible manifestation of, and an opportunity to understand, the prejudices, misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and structural causes that fuel them. Addressing these causes helps prevent stigmatisation, discrimination, segregation and polarisation.

4. Connecting through empathy and shared values

Recognise the central role of emotions in shaping perceptions and attitudes. In response to narratives based on fear or perceived threats, promote mutual recognition, equal rights, respect for diversity and shared values that strengthen a sense of belonging.

5. Developing strategies for change

Move beyond impulsive or confrontational responses that reinforce polarisation, opting instead for planned, sustained interventions aimed at bringing about real changes in attitudes, perceptions and interpretative frameworks. The Anti-rumours Approach seeks to create the conditions for people to question their own prejudices and construct new ways of understanding reality. The Anti-rumours Approach is preventive, proactive and constructive.

6. Building strategic alliances and collaborative ecosystems

Foster collaborative ecosystems between institutions, civil society, the public and unconventional alliances. Collaboration increases impact, particularly when it is channelled into sustainable, flexible and long-term strategies capable of bringing together a wide range of actors who share common values and objectives.

7. Strengthening critical thinking in the face of disinformation, misinformation and bias

Promote critical thinking by analysing mechanisms of misinformation, disinformation, manipulation, algorithms and cognitive biases. Critical thinking is both a key preventive approach and an essential component of the right to education, supporting informed participation, personal autonomy and democratic resilience.

8. Creating alternative narratives to transform perceptions

Avoid amplifying toxic narratives by normalising them or confronting them reactively and ineffectively. It is important to develop the skills to counteract them, but above all, we must proactively create alternative and constructive narratives based on inclusive values, proposing different interpretative frameworks that contribute to more perceptions and reinforce prevention and social cohesion.

9. Fostering community interaction and participation

Connect and highlight existing initiatives that complement and reinforce one another, and further promote safe spaces for people to meet, build connections and participate, particularly for marginalised voices. Community action is key to fostering and cohesion, but also to strengthening rights, recognition and more resilient and democratic communities.

10. Innovating on the basis of evidence and continuous learning

Promote high-quality initiatives through training, rigorous processes and evaluation systems. Innovation involves testing new approaches, measuring impact, learning from results and continuously adapting strategies to develop responses that are increasingly effective, sustainable and evidence-based.

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