CLUB DE MADRID

The Shared Societies Project:
Leadership for Dialogue, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Building a world safe for difference

Replicable example of practice

Commitment IX*

Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity and support local communities in exploring their identity, sharing their experiences with other identity groups and working together with those groups on common concerns.

Suggested Approach

Create or ensure the creation of networks of local community organizations to engage with each other and encourage wider involvement in inter-community activities.

Develop and promote the implementation of awareness programmes on the nature of racism and sectarianism and how they can be combated at an individual and group level throughout all levels of society.

Establish and support training programmes to train skilled community facilitators to work with local communities in establishing local groups and organisations and in exploring issues of cultural identity and diversity.

* *The Ten Commitments for Shared Societies at the Local Level*

Anti-rumours

Country: Barcelona, Spain.

Background

- In many European countries, populist and extremist political parties with racist discourses are rising.
- The economic crisis has added fuel to these attitudes.
- The traditional integration models like multiculturalism and assimilation seem unable to explain diversity in positive and collaborative ways.
- Not only are these parties fostering clear racist attitudes, but also other parties are adopting some of these discourses "against" migrants for electoral reasons.
- Flirting with racist's messages doesn't really stop extremist parties

growing but encourages and seems to legitimize them, and the consequences are that negative perceptions and hostile attitudes are increasing.

- They have a special impact in the local level, as it is in the city where 'living together' really happens.

- Cities are the closest "areas" to the citizen.

- Perceptions are an important element in forming attitudes and many cities have detected how negative stereotypes have been spread through false rumours relating to migrants, and how these stereotypes and prejudices, based on a lack of knowledge, a misinterpretation of reality or a manipulation of information, degenerate into discrimination and racism.

- In 2010, the city of Barcelona starts to research the false rumours many citizens were spreading as if they were true.

- As a result the municipality decided to develop an antirumour strategy

Goals

- The objective of "Anti-rumours" has been to identify the main existing rumours regarding the migrant population and diversity, and check their veracity with data and factual information.

- To build effective community support for integration policies based on the mutual respect of rights, obligations and cultural diversity.

Method

- An Anti-rumours network was created to include different social actors.

- People are trained to act as anti-rumours agents.

- These volunteers undertake close and respectful dialogues with people that repeat and spread rumours in order to raise awareness about their lack of factual basis.

- A wide range of materials and activities has been design to help volunteers in their efforts.

- The antirumour strategy has grown rapidly building a network of more than 300 associations and people working together to counter those false rumours and to send positive messages about cultural diversity.

- The strategy has set up alliances with several civil society organisations, public institutions, municipal leaders, famous people, civil servants, etc. to include them in the campaigns as anti-rumours agents.

Impacts

- Anti-rumours strategy is an innovative way to tackle discrimination and racist attitudes insofar that it targets the whole body of citizens in the effort of producing a public reasoned reflection on migration and diversity.

- By promoting integration policies and instruments, usually with lack of resources, but in a more creative and collaborative way, due to partnerships with local associations and NGOs, false rumours can be challenged and attitudes can change

Comments

- The Anti-rumours program, because of its format, is replicable. Today, other cities around the world are starting to build their own projects from Barcelona's example.

- In 2013, a pilot project to 'export' the anti-rumours strategy was developed in four other Spanish cities, confirming the anti-rumours strategy as a good practice (www.antirumores.com).

- In 2014, the anti-rumours project spread in Europe. The C4i-Communication for Integration project, co-funded by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, targets prejudices, rumours and stereotypes by using viral information techniques to provide evidence-based answers to common misconceptions. Active participation from citizens as "anti-rumour agents" is a key feature of C4i. The project is based on a partnership network of 11 cities, working together to implement an innovative public policy to promote life – peace, diversity and social cohesion.

References

http://www.bcnantirumors.cat/

http://www.antirumores.com/

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