

Amadora: Do not feed the Rumour! Campaign



Case Study 1:

Training for Trainers of Anti Rumour Agents: The Snowball Effect

Summary

The launch of the *Do Not Feed the Rumour! Campaign* – a core activity of the C4I project– by the Amadora Social Network, coupled with the training of anti rumour agents, is disseminating the principles, values and mission statement into its community.

There is evidence that the ‘snowball’ (or multiplier) effect is taking hold as those involved in the Campaign proactively develop C4I activities that positively influence the target group. The growing influence of the Campaign in schools has seen the emergence of immigration and social inclusion themes in an open, innovative and creative way, enabling students to explore their feelings, thoughts and behaviour about cultural differences, stereotypes, prejudices and rumours, through art and a process called “positive dialogue”.

Background, source of the idea and partners

The *Social Network* is a forum for coordination and pooling of effort, built on a commitment of authorities and public or private entities to eradicate/reduce poverty and social exclusion and to promote social development. The goal is to foster the emergence of a common awareness of social problems and encourage a response and the optimization of actions at the sites. Established by Law, each community develops new joint actions and sets priorities and plans, in an integrated and inclusive manner, to build a partnership between public and private entities covering the territory.

The Municipality of Amadora joined the Social Network Program in 2003. The Amadora *Local Council of Social Action* (CLAS) was established in 2003 and has 74 partners. CLAS represents a broad social consensus; its participation in the Project is thus essential to the success of the *Do not feed the Rumour! Campaign*.



The *Anti Rumours Local Network* is emerging in this context based on *anti rumours training* provided to members of CLAS interested in the theme. The *training of trainers* of anti-rumours agents (alongside an existing network of intercultural mediators in public services) is the basis for a *snowball effect* within and beyond CLAS. The network of agents will extend and solidify as more members of CLAS become involved, and continue on to train further agents in the community.

Specific Goal and Target

The main target of anti-rumour training is members of CLAS. The main objectives of training anti rumour agents in CLAS are to build a network of partners capable of dealing with stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and rumours against immigrants; to mobilize and build the capacity of CLAS members on the theme of immigrant social integration and social inclusion; and to influence positively the community by acting as facilitating agents in the fight against exclusion of immigrants in Amadora.

Actions, timescales and resources

The C4I Project began with a presentation to the Plenary Session CLAS in early 2013. In all 43 local partner organisations heard the main objectives and methodology and had an opportunity to ask questions and exchange views on possible community campaigns.

In two later workshops in mid May, 20 of those most interested went into more detail. They identified common rumours about Amadora, including negative (e.g. many violent robberies, crime) and positive messages (e.g.: good accessibility, International Comics Festival), and beliefs about the immigrant population (e.g. criminality, dependence on subsidies). A further workshop, "Acting Together", was held with 25 CLAS representatives. These brought new ideas and challenges to the *Do Not Feed the Rumour! Campaign*. Specific ideas emerged for activities and for collaboration in partnerships for interculturalism, cultural diversity and social cohesion.



With the active support of CLAS, key members were invited to participate in a first *training of trainers* session for anti-rumor agents. Led by the Council of Europe C4I consultant Daniel Torres, 28 representatives participated: City Council staff, school groups (an intercultural school for sport and professions, two 2nd and 3rd cycle junior schools, and a high school), two parish councils, a theatre and film training centre, a theatre group, and several others.

From there, the 28 participants have promoted the messages in their daily work in Amadora. In January

2015 they were encouraged to run their own anti rumours agent training, targeting those they work with. A guide for Anti-Rumour Agents has been produced to facilitate this.

Communication Tools: Expression through "positive dialogue" and art

There are indications of the beginnings of a 'snowball' effect.

Teachers are working in several schools in Amadora enabling them to talk about the issues and express themselves through "positive dialogue" and art. While the Project targets children and teenagers and builds their skills, the idea is that these go on to influence their primary and secondary support networks i.e. family, friends, colleagues, teachers and fellow pupils.

For example, the *Seomara da Costa Primo* High School initiative enables students to develop the theme of rumours and anti rumours through various artistic resources, including photography, singing, visual arts, and positive dialogue in classes, building their abilities as anti rumours agents. The idea of promoting "expression through art" and "positive dialogue" arose spontaneously from teachers already trained as trainers, adapting the ideas to their daily practice. Schools thus function as both receivers of skills and further disseminators in a 'viral' communication and dissemination process.

In *Almeida Garrett* 2nd and 3rd Basic Cycle School, workshops were run with students in 5th to 9th grade classes. The school curriculum includes an *Education for Citizenship* theme, including tolerance and social inclusion, and the C4I project material has been integrated within that. The teachers who had received training developed the materials on the topic, using PowerPoint, and provide it to their colleagues. A total of 29 teachers and 622 pupils from 5th to 9th grade are involved.



On the school's *Patron's Day*, the *Did you know that...?* leaflets with information on immigrants were also distributed to parents and other members of the educative community. Thus the school is proactively using relevant school occasions to promote the *Do Not Feed the Rumour Campaign* and encourage a positive dialogue within the wider school community.



Ultimately the goal is to disseminate these sessions to other schools, creating a specific methodology to students of the 2nd and 3rd Basic Cycle and to Secondary Grade students.

The *Do Not Feed the Rumour Campaign* is also being adopted in 1st Basic Cycle Schools on the *Pedagogical Council* projects throughout the Municipal Amadora Educa Programme. Teachers responsible for anti rumours information are provided resource to:

- Use the symbol of the *Do not Feed the Rumour Campaign* in school stands;
- Stimulate anti rumour group sessions;
- Publicise the C4I Project through the educative community;
- Provide visibility to the Project, reinforcing the interest of the local authority in social inclusion.

The strong link with schools and the interest raised by the campaign have led some teachers to select the diversity as the subject of plays being prepared for the *Amadora Annual Theatre Show* taking place in May.