

Loures: Good Practice Case Study 2

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Awareness Raising Workshops

Summary Description:

In the context of negative media images regarding immigrants and their communities, a series of stakeholder Workshops were held to explore and expose fears, prejudices regarding immigrants and related issues; and to encourage participation in the development of *Loures Free of Rumours* strategy.

Global strategy Loures

An important issue in designing a communication strategy on immigrant issues in Loures is its social representation in local, regional and national press.

One of several factors that hampers the integration of immigrants into society is the negative image linked to them and the key defining media stereotypes and opinions, that act as reproducers, generators and agents of transformation or maintenance of social representations among the public.

These often make associations, sometimes indirect, between crime/insecurity and immigrant populations, often linked to public housing and municipal districts of relocation. This is visible in the local, and even national, press, through frequent stories on crime and violent assaults, associated with the descendants of immigrants, especially Africans, contributing to negative representations.

Thus, the press contributes significantly to reproducing stigma and negative labels assigned to immigrant populations, where they reside and live their everyday lives.

Local networks/ Awareness-raising workshops

Creating a local network can act as a catalyst for the design and implementation of a communication strategy to counter these tendencies, and awareness-raising workshops were the first step in that strategy.

We ran five awareness raising workshops during 2014, exploring the topic of immigration with leading NGO's, religious congregations, local authority units in various areas, parish councils and schools. It became an important tool for building the "Loures Free of Rumours" strategy. The dates were: May 14 and 15, June 18, July 1 and 4 of July, and October 25. Over 80 people attended.

City Council participants included: Divisions of Equality and Citizenship, Foreign Affairs Information and Communication, Culture, Sports and Youth, Education, Urban Planning, Social Innovation and Promotion of Health, Housing, Security Local Contract, Municipal Police, Services, Water and Sanitation. And external participants included religious associations, residents and immigrants associations, cultural association; child support groups; youth groups; the association of local authorities, educational and music groups; sports associations, and others

Development strategy

The workshops aimed to generate open discussion on the issue of the perception(s) of immigration and immigrants in the municipality of Loures. Discussion also covered wider perceptions about the county, including non-immigrant communities, that suffer from problems of perception and integration, and other issues such as Islamic extremism and paedophilia in catholic religious orders.

Workshops looked at the perceived causes and types of prejudice and rumours, such as: cultural (and regional) differences; economic discrimination; living social housing estates, stigmatized by others, and refusing relocation; rivalries between neighbourhoods; and persistent negative information

Numerous myths and fears, prejudices and preconceived ideas emerged: e.g. that immigrants are drug dealers and corrupt; they destroy public houses and fill them with rubbish; they steal our jobs and live on subsidies. Many target specific immigrant groups, such as Africans, Brazilians of Gypsies.

The C4I project was presented, and the overall strategy and interventions proposed for Loures

Participants were asked afterwards to design initiatives that deconstruct rumours, and many ideas / and proposals were incorporated into the intervention strategy.