

Policy recommendations

guidelines and practical
advice for establishing local
anti-rumour networks



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ABOUT THE PROJECT 'WE AGAINST RUMOURS'

Racism and intolerance are on the rise in Europe and episodes of discrimination directly affect young people on multiple levels: 53.8% experienced discrimination at school, 50.5% when looking for a job, 42.4% in the workplace, 29.2% when looking for accommodation, 26.6% in health care, 15.8% in access to justice or the judicial system.

For this reason, the “WE A.R.” project was implemented with the aim to promote the Anti-rumour Methodology from the Council of Europe in youth organisations and educational settings as a tool to address the challenges of equity, diversity and inclusion, and to engage young people in creating more inclusive, intercultural and fair societies.

Understood as a public policy, the Anti-Rumours strategy, is composed of a number of elements: identifying major rumours existing in a city; collecting objective data and also emotional arguments to dismantle false rumours; creating an anti-rumour network of local actors from civil society; empowering and training “anti-rumour agents”; and designing and implementing anti-rumour campaigns to raise awareness, including by creating and disseminating new tools and resources, both creative and rigorous.

Partners

The partnership was composed of four different non-profit organisations working in the field of youth and already collaborating with local authorities in the area of inclusion and non-discrimination, from Italy: Istituto Cooperazione Economica Internazionale Associazione, from Portugal: Dypall Network: Associacao Para o Desenvolvimento Da Participação Cidadã, from Poland: Teatrikon: Fundacja Tworczości, Edukacji i Animacji Młodzięzy and Spain: Asociacion Cazalla Intercultural.

Background of national policies

Spain

When we talk about countering rumours, everyday hatred actions, discrimination or social inclusion, we see a lot of changes in the national policies in the last years.

In 2010, in Barcelona, the Anti-rumour Strategy launched and the initiative of the Network of Intercultural Cities took off in 2011.

The main objective of this initiative is to create local networks of organisations, stakeholders, public institutions and citizens with the objective of promoting intercultural cities, i.e. equality, recognition of diversity and positive interaction.

Poland

In 2022 government created a 'National Action Program for Equal Treatment 2022-2030' which involves counteracting violations of the principle of equal treatment in cooperation with social partners and NGOs.

At the local level, in 2015, Lublin was involved in 'C4i-Communication for Integration', co-funded by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The aim of the project was to target prejudices, rumours and stereotypes by using information techniques. The network of 11 cities worked together to implement an innovative public policy to promote diversity and social cohesion.

Lublin took part in 'European Pact of Integration' project with partners from 7 European cities. The main focus was to better prepare cities to cope with the challenges of weak integration policies and the dynamic increase in the number of migrants.

Portugal

The Portuguese government doesn't have a specific Anti-Rumour Strategy already launched, but this subject is a concern in the country. A National Plan to combat Racism and Discrimination 2021 - 2025 was created, with activities to develop in different fields, such as Education and Culture, Labour and Employment, Health and Social Welfare or Participation and Representation.

The Portuguese Penal Code also includes several laws on fighting racism and discrimination, since both of them are considered a crime in Portugal.

Italy

UNAR (National Anti-Racial Discrimination Office) was established in 2003: UNAR is now responsible for monitoring causes and phenomena to all types of discrimination, studying possible solutions, promoting a culture of respect for human rights and equal opportunities, and providing concrete assistance to victims.

However, the scant consideration given in Italy to the problem of discrimination as a systemic and systematic issue has mainly led to marginal actions. This also happens due to insufficient resources and the lack of strategic intervention plans coordinated by the Public Administration. Without its active involvement, anti-discrimination action is still generally thought of as an intervention led by associations and potential victims, sometimes in partnership with public authorities.

Objectives of the recommendations

The document aims to give local authorities, communities and organisations a set of tools to mitigate the harmful effects of rumours and promote a more informed and resilient society. Moreover, its focus is to support everyone affected by rumours and foster a culture of critical thinking and responsible communication.

We discovered that those aspects could be improved by several actions which includes:

- Train teachers to use anti-rumor strategies in high schools
- Teach people to do fact-checking and understand the importance of research and data
- Improve communication and create synergies between local authorities, anti-discrimination NGOs, and young people
- Make sure that the voices of young people are heard in the development and implementation of anti-rumor policies

target groups

As key stakeholders we identified NGOs, schools, psychologists, student groups, teachers and youth councils, and municipalities, with the aim of engaging them in the implementation of anti-rumor strategies. By reaching out to these groups and involving them in the efforts, we can maximise the impact and effectiveness of these policies.

Proposed actions

Where do we want to take action?

- We have identified that a lot of rumours that lead to discrimination and prejudices among young people take place in online environment, on social media platforms
- Secondly, we aim to take action in schools, aiming to involve students and teachers in the process
- Last, but not least, in order to raise awareness on the topics of the recommendation and to involve the community as well, cultural centres and public spaces are also included

What is our course of action?

- We want to propose activities for young people to get to know each other in order to make sure that mutual acquaintance is not based on rumours and prejudices
- Through the implementation of workshops and laboratories we want to train personnel in public institutions and workplaces to develop specific skills on countering rumours
- Youth workers should be trained in recognizing biases, prejudices and rumours and they need to be given tools to counter them and make them active anti-rumours agents
- There should be a solid communication between municipalities, NGOs, CSOs and schools in order to make each local community more active in anti-discrimination
- Local networks of youth workers, teachers and cultural and social spaces should be encouraged, supported and implemented through the participation in city/local events and workshops
- Every sector of the civil society as well as public institutions should implement their capability to fact-check through training courses held by experts

Policy recommendations

Access to public fundings and decision-making processes

- The process to access public fundings should be simplified and clarified, to make the process transparent. It will help if the access to public fundings is visible on official websites and newspapers
- To help simplify the process of getting authorization/renting costs and materials, a tutorial document or video can be created
- Funds by Europe and local municipalities should be gathered in a single easy access document, so organisations know where, when and how to apply for a specific public funding
- Promote and implement participatory budget for projects designed by young people so that they can implement the initiatives in their local communities
- To create a page for connecting citizens with specialized NGOs in order that is easier to denounce discrimination
- A safe space should be created to involve victims of discrimination and minorities in the policy-making process, to provide a view closer to reality

Synergy between youth organisations and Municipalities

- Youth organisations can provide expertise about anti-rumours strategy and offer trainings to teachers and Municipality employees
- Municipalities need to financially support the youth organisations in offering training opportunities on the Anti-rumour methodology
- Municipalities and City Halls should be committed in the selection of specific personnel to provide trainings and to actively participate in the process
- Municipalities should offer legal and financial support in the creation of youth spaces, where young people from all communities come together, have a space for socialising
- Municipalities facilitate access/procedures to use empty/abandoned buildings around the city for youth initiatives and cultural and social centres
- Decision-makers should create a public space for specific task forces at local level, to fight against hate-speech and to help with anti-rumours strategy, providing training courses and materials
- Local organisations should create monitoring bodies in order to periodically assess and evaluate the work of local media about their ability to do a correct fact-checking
- Municipalities should define multi-level and pragmatic plans against discrimination in partnership with CSOs, youth organizations and groups at risk of discrimination (constant monitoring of the phenomena and redefinition of systems and policies that generate inequalities on the territory)

Education system and local community

- Educational institutions should commit to support youth initiatives about independent journalism and to introduce a proper time during schooling to make young people analyse the news and to critically think about what is happening around them
- Schools should organise workshops or field trips with the students that can be useful to create debate clubs, radio podcasts or a school newspaper
- Students from every grade should be provided by the teachers with all the tools to fight against rumours in their schools
- Students should have an easy access to conversations with the school psychologist
- There should be more integration meetings which allow getting to know other cultures better as well as familiarizing students from different cultures and thus preventing the creation of rumors
- Educational institutions in partnership with the local community should organize systematic awareness-raising campaigns for public recognition of the problem. These campaigns shouldn't be episodic and make a synergy with youth organizations and involve creative social communication techniques

Follow-up on the implementation process and contact

Even though this document was elaborated and created inside the project “We against rumours”, through the dissemination and local and national networks, we invite more youth organisations, educational institutions and local stakeholders to join in taking action against countering rumours and thus, reducing the level of discrimination and exclusion in our communities.

The process of the implementation of these recommendations is a long-term action, but the partner organisations, together with local partners, commit to following up on it and strengthen the local networks by capacitating them in using the Anti Rumour Strategy and become active agents.



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