C4i
Communication for Integration

C 4 i
antirumours

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR ANTI-RUMOUR

AGENTS

HOW TO FIGHT RUMOURS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN YOUR CITY

DOC. 6

November 2014

DOC. 6 A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ANTI-RUMOUR AGENTS:

HOW TO FIGHT RUMOURS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN YOUR CITY

Author: **Direcció de Serveis d'Immigració i Interculturalitat – Barcelona City Council**

Date: 24 November 2014 - Version 1.0

NOTE TO THIS VERSION

This version of **Guia pràctica per a l'agent antirumor. Com combatre els rumors i estereotips sobre la diversitat cultural a Barcelona**, published by Barcelona City Council in 2012, has been adapted in English to meet the aims of the Council of Europe's Communication for Integration Project (C4i), and the needs of participating cities. With regards to the original version, in Catalan, all methodological content has been preserved while many of the local examples and references have been adapted to a more global public, as these must be provided by each particular context. Therefore, all credit must be due to the authors and collaborators of the original version, listed below, while responsibility for adaptation is due only to the local C4i team in Barcelona.

DOC. 6 A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ANTI-RUMOUR AGENTS:

HOW TO FIGHT RUMOURS AND STEREOTYPES
ABOUT CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN YOUR CITY

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Many organisations and agencies have prepared awareness-raising materials to take on existing stereotypes, prejudice and rumours regarding people of different nationalities and cultures. On the one hand, we can find the scientific or informative documents or articles that present various theories or perspectives to help us to understand the reasons for the phenomenon of prejudice and rumours. On the other, there are more practical materials that offer us tools for raising awareness.

The main aim of these materials is to generate group reflection and awareness-raising. Taking these resources as a starting point, the added or differential value of this Guide is that it is aimed at training individuals to raise awareness. In short, the aim of the guide is to provide a support tool for teaching the skills and attitudes needed to raise awareness through dialogue, and to provide a solid knowledge base for people who wish to carry out the task of actively raising awareness, in order to put a stop to the existing false conceptions people have regarding Barcelona's foreign-born population.

The guide's cornerstones are then capacities and skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

This leads to the second fundamental aspect: who is this guide aimed at? The document presented here is aimed at people who are unhappy about seeing others around them expressing prejudice and stereotypes that make integration and living together in cultural diversity harder in an increasingly diverse and global city. Individuals who, tired of hearing rumours about culturally diverse people, decide to take action and contribute their "grain of sand" to help to foster attitudes and perceptions in their local environment that are more positive and which take socio-cultural diversity into account.

As you may know, the idea of the Anti-Rumour Agent came up when Barcelona City Council was working together with organisations, social agencies, services and universities on the development of the BCN Anti-Rumour Network to foster initiatives within the framework of the BCN Anti-Rumour Strategy, **to help fight current rumours, prejudice and stereotypes about Barcelona's culturally diverse population.**

The Anti-Rumour Agent is a person who is committed to carrying out the role of raising awareness and breaking imaginary and false conceptions about culturally diverse citizens.

Some of you might be familiar with anti-rumour strategies and for others, this might be the first time you've heard about this kind of action, and you may well be asking yourselves: "Have I got something to gain from reading this guide?"

The answer to your question is yes. The guide has been especially designed not just to provide anti-rumour agents with practical tools but also to be of possible use for anyone who shares these values. Regardless of the label we give ourselves and whether or not we fully identify with what this entails, we would like to invite you to try out and apply the techniques presented in this guide.

Anti-rumour agents are a recent creation, which is why we need to talk about their roles as something that is constantly undergoing redefinition. At the time the original version of this guide was written, the BCN Anti-Rumour Network defined anti-rumour agents as having four distinctive dimensions or areas of action, depending on the interlocutors and target audience for their actions: interpersonal dialogue, networking, one's own organisation or service, and the media.

Each dimension establishes specific objectives and actions that can be carried out by anti-rumour agents. In chapter 6 of this guide we will discuss each of these dimensions in more detail. However, before you continue reading, we should point out that the guide only covers one of these aspects.

It talks specifically about raising awareness through interpersonal dialogue. That is, raising awareness through face-to-face contact in informal and often improvised settings.

This makes the awareness-raising task even harder, given that we will not have the support materials that help us with our task: dialogue skills will be our principal or only tool. Note that this does not mean there is no prior preparation. Quite the contrary. As contradictory as it may seem, good improvisation is something that can be learned, prepared for and planned.

Of course, the guide has no magic or fool-proof recipe for doing away with rumours, prejudice and stereotypes. But we do believe it offers useful techniques for carrying out the difficult task of awareness-raising and encouraging frank and open dialogue on issues such as immigration and socio-cultural diversity that are often the focus of the kinds of demagogy that incite stigmatisation and social discrimination.

1.1.Structure and contents of the guide

Another of the guide's added values is its **interdisciplinary perspective.** When we talk about interdisciplinarity, we do not mean introducing ways of applying or considering sociology, anthropology and psychology, but rather the introduction of tools that have proved to be effective in other areas and which have rarely been applied to social responses. The two key contributions we have added are:

- Strategic planning of the response. Counteracting rumours or raising awareness of prejudice and stereotypes requires a lot more than knowledge of the possible counter arguments that have to be presented. It requires a fuller complete tactic that provides for other strategic aspects, such as the ones that are taken into account when business or development plans are being drawn up. These can also be applied to this role.
- A key element of this strategy is training in communication skills, making the most of the valuable techniques used in negotiations, sales, mediation and conflict management.

In short, we believe that the added value of this approach lies in the strategic, communication and personal skills it provides. Of course, the guide envisages the possible discursive arguments and responses that also need to be used. But these are just one of the elements to its more holistic approach to awareness-raising.

That said, the guide offers a strategic approach to how to act when confronted with rumours or false conceptions. Each chapter covers a key aspect of the strategic thinking. These are:

- **Knowing the terrain.** This is the most theory-based chapter in the entire guide. Even so, we try to explain the main concepts in the simplest, funniest way possible. In short, knowing what we are talking about, stereotypes, rumours etc., how they come about, how they work, why they exist, and so on.

- **Knowing yourself**. Treating people with empathy and respect as we come into contact with them in our awareness-raising work requires some self-reflection. Are we really so different in who we are and how we think?

- **Preparing a strategy**. This chapter presents the main communication tools that can be put into practice when carrying out face-to-face awareness-raising.

- **Being aware of our strengths and weaknesses.** As with all strategies, evaluation is a fundamental element. We need to develop an awareness of aspects we are good at and those we need to work at improving.

As we pointed out in previous chapters, we are fully aware that stereotypes, prejudice and rumours are multi-directional and not specific to any one group or period. However, the guide focuses its attention on those mostly found among the native population and which are directed at the population with different cultural origins. Starting from this perspective, we wish to make it clear that the communication and personal skills developed here are dealt with from a contemporary Western perspective.

Finally, we should emphasise the fact that the guide explicitly shies away from paternalistic responses, where "awareness-raising" ends up becoming a discussion in which immigrants are the victims, with negative stereotypes falling back on the native population and bringing about new simplifications and false conceptions. Nor is it our intention to demonise people who hold prejudiced views or repeat rumours and who "need to be rescued" by the anti-rumour agents. In the approach we are advocating, awareness-raising makes sense insofar as it promotes more reflective and responsible dialogue habits and attitudes, with arguments based on reflection on one's own experience and on verifiable knowledge and information. It is this that makes the work of anti-rumour agents fully compatible with the promotion of genuine freedom of expression.

2. Knowing the terrain. What are we talking about?

The first step to this strategic approach comes with the following questions: what are we talking about when we refer to stereotypes, prejudice and rumours? What are they? How do they work? And even, what role do they play in our society?

In short, we are talking about having an in-depth knowledge of the subject to come up with the best strategy for fighting rumours and stereotypes. This is an approach where several perspectives have made significant contributions, ways of seeing the phenomenon which, far from being antagonistic, actually complement each other. This is how we will try and construct a multidisciplinary explanation that helps us to understand the problem.

Rumours, like stereotypes or prejudice, have been around as long as humankind. And the results have always been the same: making relations more difficult between people from different social groups.

2.1. Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination

Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination are all terms that are difficult to understand on their own given the interdependence between them, which is very strong. We shall treat the issue as we would a ball of wool, starting by pulling on a thread and then unravelling each of the interconnections and meanings. Prejudice is the first concept we'll be tackling, the start of our argument's thread.

One of the most widely understood and accepted definitions of this concept is the one put forward more than 50 years ago by Allport (1954). According to this author, **prejudice is a hostile and mistrusting attitude towards a person who belongs to a group, simply because they belong to that group.**

Prejudice is an attitude and, as such, is presented as a combination of feelings or emotions, inclinations to act and beliefs known as stereotypes. Stereotypes exist among all social groups and, in themselves, are neither negative nor positive. **They are generalisations made about a**

whole group of people based on certain characteristics of some of the members of that group. Qualities are attributed to a person as a member of a group, and they are not judged on their individual qualities (Myers, 1995).

Negative images held about a group of people lead to negative judgements regarding those people which are not first verified and are not based on a direct or real experience. Furthermore, negative attitudes towards a particular group are extended to each of its members.

Stereotypes tend to have an empirical basis, but it is the exaggeration and indiscriminate generalisation extended to all members of a particular community that turn them into prejudice.

The error lies in its extrapolation and also its persistence over time, ignoring the particular characteristics and changes that occur among the subjects of any group.

Simply accepting the clichés popularly associated with immigrants (poor, uneducated, no training, anti-social attitudes, with beliefs and customs that can seem absurd) is to ignore the enormous heterogeneity of migratory routes, origins, family circumstances, education, background (rural or urban), social class and even the individual interests and motivations of those who have immigrated.

However, we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that prejudice is one-directional. Quite the contrary: prejudice exists among all social groups. The native population has prejudice and stereotypes about foreigners and vice versa. And clichés also exist within these two groups, for example, among immigrant communities and also within the native population towards people who have migrated from other parts of the country, and so on and so forth.

As we have mentioned, the stereotyped beliefs and prejudice learned are transmitted without any contact (or regardless of contact) with the members of the group against which the prejudice is directed.

Family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and the mass media are all transmitters of perceptions that not only go unquestioned but which we end up assuming as our own, so that we eventually end up spreading stereotypes and their associated prejudice.

However, **prejudice based on stereotypes is very difficult to undo, as it carries extremely simplified messages and is consequently very easy to transmit.** As part of the "world that we take for granted", and when faced with personal experiences that contradict our preconceived ideas, it is often easier to consider the experience as an exception to the norm than it is to question our own apprehensions and fears.

For example, if among our work colleagues, we come across a Muslim with a degree in education who champions the feminist cause, we consider them to be an exceptional case, or, ironically, an "advanced" member of their group, but not as reliable proof of the real heterogeneity of individuals that belong to the group as we interpret it.

Our aim here is not to overlook the usefulness of stereotypes. Quite the contrary: stereotypes help us to simplify reality and enable us to quickly decide what to think or how to behave in situations we have not come across before. **Stereotypes enable us to effectively economise the effort it takes to constantly interpret the social reality that surrounds us.** However, this does not mean that we should not also be open-minded and sensitive enough to question or even change our clichés when reality presents us with situations that contradict our preconceived ideas.

Another key aspect to take into account are the direct consequences that stereotypes and prejudice can have. In fact, stereotype, as a belief, can lead to prejudice as an attitude and this in turn can lead to discriminatory behaviour.

An example might be when someone from a particular cultural community gets on the bus. The stereotype lies in thinking they're going to rob you. Prejudice lies in feeling fear as a result. And discrimination results in acting: "I'm not sitting next to them".

Cultural discrimination results in intolerant attitudes and actions and the rejection of whole population groups, who are perceived homogeneously, and this then leads to processes of

marginalisation and social exclusion. For example, discriminatory treatment of people from countries outside the European Union might limit their employment opportunities and leave them doing jobs that require fewer qualifications even when they have the training and professional experience to do other jobs. If we take a closer look around us, we might be surprised at the number of university graduates we find serving us coffee each morning, cleaning our offices or looking after the old lady in the top flat.

Furthermore**, cultural discrimination limits and determines the social interactions between groups, a situation that can perpetuate segregation and social marginalisation for long periods of time, even for generations.** And this not only has negative effects on the person being discriminated against, it also affects the people who discriminate: for example, a company might disregard a candidate because they are foreign, assuming that the quality of their education or the experience they have acquired in their country of origin is of little value, or if they believe the standard of their work will not be as good, not only do they limit the employment opportunities of the person seeking work, they might also be passing up the opportunity to hire the most suitable candidate (examples taken from www.e-faro.info.)

We should also mention that, while prejudicial attitudes might be expressed in a clear and obvious manner, they can also be expressed in a subtle or latent way. Those who express themselves in this way suppress their prejudicial thoughts and feelings, as though they consciously wished to break a bad habit (Devine, 1989, 1991).

Despite this, negative attitudes often persist even when they are expressed more vaguely. Latent prejudice entails a negative emotional response towards members of other groups where the feelings are not so hatred and open hostility (typical of traditional prejudice) but rather a certain discomfort, insecurity or even fear. This leads to a person's avoiding contact with the other group, without displaying openly hostile behaviour (Meertens and Pettigrew, 1992). **This is in fact the most common form of prejudice in our society, where it basically manifests itself in avoidance strategies.**

Lots of awareness-raising strategies are aimed at promoting mutual knowledge between people that are part of the groups where the prejudice is present. The idea behind these awareness-

raising actions is that, if we get to know other people, we can begin to question the false beliefs and clichés that exist. Despite this, research conducted by people such as Muzafer Sherif (1967) question this affirmation. According to this author, **simply knowing the other is not sufficient to undo these beliefs.**

Common objectives need to be created, milestones that are hard to reach unless people from both groups collaborate and work together. That way the existence of a common challenge can help to create a new group and, above all, a sense of belonging. Here we should mention the potential that sport has to bring together people from very different backgrounds, precisely because it has the capacity to "create objectives and a team identity" shared by all members, which transcends prejudice and stereotypes. Likewise, many projects, aware of this potential, create groups of people who are bound by a common goal in order promote a shared identity that transcends place of origin (women, young people, artists, etc.).

How are stereotypes and prejudice formed? Why do they exist in our society? What role do they play?

13

Prejudice comes from various sources: social, psychological and emotional.

The first of these, **social,** shows that social inequalities foster prejudice. But also the other way round, prejudice is used to justify the economic and social superiority of those that have the most power. Therefore, prejudice and discrimination support each other: prejudice justifies discrimination and discrimination fosters prejudice (Pettigrew, 1980): the native population may see the foreign population having few qualifications and an undesirable attitude towards work (lazy, demanding, irresponsible etc.), in other words, as a group with traits that justify their relegation to subordinate jobs.

One of the effects of this is what is known as the Pygmalion effect according to which our negative behaviour towards someone - on the basis of specific characteristics we attribute to them without actually knowing whether they possess them - can elicit behaviour that sustains our discrimination.

For example, if we believe people who have migrated have no wish to integrate, we don't interact with them and that effectively contributes to their non-integration. Consequently, **regardless of any real or empirical basis the prejudice might have, the irony is that it is our own prejudice that acts as a powerful social mechanism to reinforce this real basis.**

There are other theoretical elements that help us to understand the social factors that lead to prejudice. One of these factors emerges when two groups are competing for scarce resources. This means that apprehensions and fears of people from ethnic minorities are more present among those competing for the same resources (jobs, welfare, public spaces, etc.), so that these fears become a means of channelling and expressing frustration and hostility (Pettigrew and Meertens, 1991).

Another factor is the need for status. To put it another way, to perceive that we have a particular social status, we need to feel that we are superior to other groups of people (Myers, 1995). This explanation helps us to understand the differentiation strategies and reticence towards the newly arrived immigrant population among people who have migrated and settled in a particular country for a long period of time.

14

The second aspect of prejudice is the one offered by **social psychology** which is closely linked with the way we construct our identity. When asked the question "who are we?" we could answer by making reference to the groups we feel we belong to and not to our own individual attributes.

For example, we might say that we are a Senegalese immigrant woman, we are from the middle class and a nurse. It is also a reflection of how we see ourselves and feel about ourselves. Another person in the same objective circumstances might have used other social categories to define herself: I am a mother, divorced, left-wing and an atheist.

However, what it is that makes us identify with one group and not another? And why is it that others sometimes categorise us in a certain way that does not correspond to the categories we ourselves really identify with? A woman might identify herself as European and behave as such,

while her neighbours continue to treat her as Senegalese, even though she was born in Europe, because her parents are of Senegalese origin (Pujal and Lombart, 2006).

Tajfel's theory of social identity enables us to understand a large part of this process of identification and de-identification. This theory encompasses three psychosocial processes: comparison, social categorisation and identification.

These three processes all make reference to the way we perceive other people and ourselves, taking as a basis for this perception people's sense of belonging to certain groups. For example, we might see a man wearing a tie and carrying a briefcase. We might automatically think that he belongs to the executive category or group and, based on this assumption, attribute a whole series of characteristics to him. For example, that he is a well-mannered person who is intelligent, well educated, with qualifications, serious, and so on. And in this way we put people into categories and assign them the characteristics that we believe are inherent to those categories. One of the effects of this categorisation is the stereotyped view of others it results in. So we act and interact with others not so much on the basis of who they are but rather the group they belong to, which we attribute certain characteristics to. The group category therefore provides an identity and social position and, at the same time, serves as a prism of the structure and perception of the social reality that surrounds us.

One of the consequences of categorisation is that we falsely accentuate the similarities between people belonging to the same category or group and exaggerate the differences between people from different groups. This perception is both a cause and a consequence of the scarce interaction between groups with different cultural origins: we perceive them as being very different and consequently we don't interact with them; and because we don't interact with them, we continue to see them as very different. In fact, the more familiar we are with the group in question, the more we perceive their diversity, and the less familiar we are, the more we see the stereotype (Myers, 1995).

It could be said that social categorisation has an instrumental value in the sense that it organises, structures and simplifies the information we have about our environment. It helps us

to know how we have to behave in certain situations, even if we have never been in those situations before.

But it also has an ideological value, of social control, in the sense that it structures society into groups based on the interests and values of the dominant groups. Through this process we establish differentiations of the "us" versus "them" kind, differentiations that are often based on competition or conflicts of interest rather than any real difference. In this regard, the *native* category only makes sense when the aim is to differentiate this group from the immigrant population, by creating differences between them (place of birth) that are quite feeble, rather than talking about other more reasonable similarities (fathers and mothers, profession, political ideology, etc.).

Our perception of reality is always more receptive to information that reinforces our assumed beliefs: we see what we want to see or what we have learned to see, while the situations that don't fit with this view are very easily overlooked. If, for example, we believe that immigrants tend to be criminals, we will pay more attention to news about criminal acts perpetrated by foreigners. In contrast, we will pay less attention to information that contradicts this idea. The media are well aware of the highly selective nature of perception and take this into account when it comes to capturing their audience.

With this process of selective analysis, stereotypes are constantly being self-confirmed. They are persistent and therefore difficult to change, even if we are presented with objective and contradictory information that could bring them into question. The third aspect of prejudice is the **emotional** aspect. This aspect is what makes it difficult to weaken people's prejudice by using logical arguments. Prejudice is not cold beliefs about other groups; it is beliefs charged with emotion and feeling, passed on to a large extent by family, friends or loved ones, and which generally contain the implicit message that others (the group against which the prejudice is directed or the out-group) pose a threat to our values and ethics and even to our possessions.

Therefore, the task of trying to alter or question social prejudice is as difficult as trying to change a feeling or emotion, which in the case of prejudice is censorious. This is why **actions to raise awareness of prejudice that is based solely on rational arguments have a limited impact,**

16

to the extent that they question the empirical basis of the prejudice but do not touch on the emotional elements of identification, understanding or assessment of the groups that are the object of the prejudice. Therefore, we should also mention that this emotional basis for prejudice (feelings of fear, mistrust, foreignness...) is one of the most significant obstacles to establishing inter-ethnic interpersonal relations. Even when there is no personal feeling of rejection, the establishment of inter-ethnic relations can be hindered by the condemnation these relationships receive from members of the same group (in-group). For example, the company that decides not to hire a gypsy as a sales assistant because this may lead to rejection among their clients; or the person who decides not to celebrate with someone who follows a different religion, because they are afraid of how their family will react.

Finally, prejudice is also the cause of counter prejudice. Perceiving rejection and being exposed to discriminatory situations can lead to mistrust among minority communities and defensive attitudes in relation to the rest of the population, and can make people show more suspicion, sensitivity and unconditional pride towards their own community. Sometimes these situations of discrimination are not real or have not been experienced first-hand, but among the group there is so much insistence on their existence that there is a tendency to perceive them. We are talking, for example, about discourses that constantly victimise the foreign population and hold the native population responsible for all their ills. Counter-prejudice is, in some way, the closure of a vicious cycle of prejudice that feeds situations of discrimination and social segregation.

2.2. Rumours

The rumours that we hear nowadays could be considered a modern-day form of what we know as "urban legends", stories that are passed on by word of mouth that cross borders and penetrate large swathes of the population, and become part of the collective imaginary. In the words of Allport and Postman (1967), they are "crystallised rumours".

Concerned about their importance and the impact that rumours can have in times of war, on the running of organisations or even on public health, a number of authors from the field of

social sciences have addressed this problem [Allport and Lepkin (1945); Allport and Postman (1967); Epstein (1969); Rosnow (1991); Knapp (1994); Neubauer (1999); among others].

One of the most recent authors, Sunstein (2010), offers us one of the most accurate definitions that could help us to understand the issue we are addressing here, rumours relating to the foreign population. According to this author, **rumours are statements about people, groups or events that are passed from one person to another without being proved to be true, and which are credible, not because there is any direct evidence to back them up but because lots of people believe them.** So, rumours often emerge and circulate successfully because they fit with the previously held beliefs of the people who accept them (listen, believe and spread), and also back up and reinforce these beliefs. This definition links rumours directly to stereotypes and prejudice as the main reason why some rumours and not others are accepted by people. However, we won't be offering any explanations here and we shall move on as this is not the only issue we will be dealing with in this section, where we are going to try and answer the following questions: why do we accept rumours, even the ones that are implausible and destructive? Why do some people believe the rumours while others find them absurd?

2.2.1   Importance and ambiguity

Allport and Postman (1947) were the first authors to highlight importance and ambiguity as the main factors that determine the predisposition to believe a certain rumour or not. They even came up with what is probably the most widely known formula to explain how rumours spread. According to these authors, the quantity of the rumour is the result of multiplying its importance by its ambiguity.

Importance has to do with the fact that the content of the rumour refers to some aspect, event or fact that directly affects the listener:

"For example, you wouldn't expect a citizen of the United States to spread rumours about the price of camels in Afghanistan, as this issue is of no importance to him. He won't be spreading

gossip about what goes on in an Albanian village, because he doesn't really care what they do there" (Allport and Postman, 1967. P. 16).

On the other hand, if a rumour is specific - with names of specific people, dates, places, etc. - it is more likely to be questioned by the listener.

In contrast, if it is ambiguous it will be more difficult to dispel. For example, the rumour which states that Chinese restaurants serve dog meat is close enough to home and relevant enough, given that it refers to restaurants that everyone has been to at one time or another, and ambiguous enough, because it is not about a specific restaurant but rather about a type of restaurant.

Years later, Rosnow (1991) added two very important factors to this equation, which refer to the context and whether or not it makes it easier to spread rumours. We are referring to the possibility that such rumours arise from situations of widespread uncertainty and to the anxiety that such uncertainty can generate among the population. So if a group is facing difficult circumstances or danger, many of its members will be angry and want someone to blame. The worst situations can lead to feelings of being wronged by others, and when someone feels wronged they are more likely to accept rumours that justify their state of mind and point to someone to blame. This is one of the factors that can help us to understand why we now are hearing more rumours than ever which make ethnic minorities the "scapegoats" for the Welfare State deficits.

The arrival of foreign-born populations makes competition in the distribution of social benefits more evident. It should be pointed out that the allocation of welfare benefits has always generated unease, but in the current economic crisis, with the rise in the number of people experiencing economic instability, this is a particularly controversial issue. However, it overlooks the essential contribution that the foreign, mainly working, population, have made to the labour market and economic growth in Europe in previous years, which is what fuels the Welfare State and any public service.

2.2.2 The influence of others

Sunstein (2010) offers us a broader perspective which takes into account the influence that others and the group we belong to which spreads the rumour has on our readiness to believe the rumour. The author makes specific reference to three different phenomena:

- **Information cascades**: Often, rumours are spread through cascades of information. The basic dynamic behind these cascades is simple: at the point at which a certain number of people seem to believe a rumour, others will also believe it, even if they have good reason to believe that the rumour is false. Given that most rumours relate to subjects about which people have no direct or personal knowledge, they are often left in the hands of the masses. So, if the majority of the people we know believe a rumour, we will also be inclined to believe it. When we do not have our own information, we accept the opinions of others.

  Of course, people might have different levels of information when they come into contact with a rumour. Many might have absolutely no knowledge of the subject matter. So once they hear something plausible but worrying, those without any other information to go on may believe what they hear if they have no other knowledge or information that contradicts it. Some may have a certain amount of information, but not enough to contradict the opinions of others they trust. Lastly, there are the people who do have relevant and plausible information but who reasons, despite all that, for accepting the false rumour. According to the author, very often the rumour is initially spread by people who have little or no information about the subject, and as the number of "believers" increases, it makes its way to other people who do have more information but who end up accepting the rumour because "so many people can't be wrong". The result is that vast swathes of the population end up believing a rumour even when it is unfounded.

- **Conformity cascades:** Sometimes people believe a rumour because others also believe it. But on other occasions, they simply act as though they believe it. They censor themselves to go along with the majority. So conformity cascades offer another explanation as to how

rumours are spread. According to this theory, people sometimes falsify their own opinion or knowledge, or at least overlook their doubts, when faced with opinions expressed by the masses. Therefore, in a conformity cascade, people align themselves with the group to avoid having to face hostility from others and to keep the good opinion they might hold about them, without expressing their own opinions or doubts.

- **Group polarisation:** In the field of social psychology, it is believed that when people with similar ideas discuss their ideas, they normally end up adopting a more extreme position than the one they held before the discussion (Brown, 1986). In the context of rumour-mongering, the implications are simple: when the members of a group have a previously-held assumption and they hear a rumour that supports that belief, their internal dialogue reinforces the idea that what they believe is true. The exchange of information intensifies existing beliefs. According to this theory, people's opinions become more extreme when there are rumours to back them up, and because they gain confidence knowing that other people share their opinions.

This phenomenon plays an important role when it comes to accepting and transmitting rumours. When someone hears that foreigners are treated favourably by the public administration, they might get angry, not necessarily because they genuinely feel angry, but because they want to show they share the same beliefs as the other members of the group they belong to. The members of this group might even seem to be strongly convinced of this fact, while in private they might question or doubt the reasons why the administration would favour some people over others.

2.2.3. Prejudice and stereotypes as a substrate of rumours

According to what we have discussed above, a good way to fight rumours would be to offer people objective information to replace the falsehoods with the truth. However, experience shows us that this is not so straight-forward. The main reason for this is the existence of

previously held prejudice and stereotypes that make us more resistant to this information. As we have seen in previous sections, we do not process information in a neutral manner.

Our perception is biased and selective and this makes us accept information that supports our previously held beliefs and disregard or ignore any facts and information that calls them into question.

So, if we try to refute a rumour we have heard based on information such as statistics, facts or theories, we have to be aware that we could end up achieving the opposite effect: first, the other person might be annoyed by the correction and they might become defensive and this might reinforce even further what they already thought or might even radicalise their discourse. Second, even though it is unreasonable, the very existence of a correction might help to confirm that the previously held belief was true. "Why would you go to such lengths to refute an argument when there is no truth to it?" Third, the correction will focus people's attention on the issue in hand, and by focusing their attention on it, it might reinforce their need to have an opinion on the matter.

Lastly, making reference to the legitimacy of the source. It is difficult for people to be convinced by those who are involved in the rumour itself simply by offering them information, however objective and reliable it might seem.

Going back to the example of the Chinese restaurants, it is difficult to get people to believe the arguments of a Chinese restaurant owner ("Of course, what else are you going to say?"). And it is precisely the owner's involvement in the issue that would make people think that some personal interest lay behind the information. In contrast, if the opinion comes from someone who might be considered "one of theirs", that is, someone who they see as closer and a more legitimate source of information, they might be more predisposed to accept the information.

3.   Knowing yourself. Awaken your critical awareness

INITIAL EXERCISE: Below are four short biographies that relate to four different characters. Read them carefully and then pick out the person you believe each story refers to.

Biography 1: Born in the old part of town in a large European city. Since childhood, has always been very passionate. Very independent, has always fought for what he/she wanted. And the dream was to study biology, a course started when he/she was quite old because nobody trusted that he/she would finish it. But this person made it and graduated. Married very young, at the age of 19. Has no children, preferring to focus on his/her professional career.

When he/she has time, makes an attempt to be there for loved ones and to go on short breaks to Paris, a favourite city. Has visited fourteen cities around the world. Thinks he/she will have visited twenty cities before turning forty. Is very professional and serious at work but has no hesitation in smiling at anyone who notices him/her.

Biography 2: A naturally charismatic person. Loves his/her native city of Buenos Aires, but for the last twenty years has been living in Manresa, near colleagues who accept him/her as one of their own. A model of solidarity, has developed body and mind, always at the service of others. Is a hard-working, tireless person. Always offers words of support for those in need.

Born into a family that belonged to the Argentinian oligarchy and has seven brothers and sisters. Has always worked with poor people. Has travelled all over the world and is also educated in the arts. Among other things, he/she writes. And is not at all bad at it. Likes the contemplative life. Even though surrounded by more traditional and conservative people, is naturally left-leaning, politically speaking. Motto is live life with hope and passion. This is his/her daily challenge.

Biography 3: Born to exiled parents, this person arrived in Europe in the mid-1990s and studied Law at the University in a small town. Later moved to the capital of the country he was living in where he/she continued with studies, focusing on comparative law analysis. Met current partner. And came out of the closet. Managed to get married even though things have not been

easy. In spare time, this person plays the guitar, imitating the idol, Andrés Calamaro. Reads Almudena Grandes and admires Woody Allen. One dream is to appear in one of his films. This person combines work and interests with a commitment to defending the rights of gay and lesbian people.

Biography 4: An elite sports person, has won more than ten medals in different Olympic Games and is also a holder of a number of world records. This person is the best athlete of all times in his/her category and country. Many years ago, used to be a member of a terrorist group that assassinated a prominent businessman. Sentenced and sent to prison, went on hunger strike for more than 365 days. After leaving prison, this person abandoned terrorist activity and was dedicated to sport. And swimming is what he/she was best at. Following intensive training, managed to win a number of regional championships, then world championships and then went on to the Olympic Games.

Now answer the following question: which character do you believe each biography corresponds to?

• A cloistered nun

• A person who is paralysed

• A local police officer

• A member of parliament

Some final considerations

The biographies given in this section are based on real people. A local police officer who has fought hard to achieve his dream to become a biologist. A "left-wing" cloistered nun. A gay, rock-fan politician. And a paralytic former member of a terrorist group, winner of ten gold medals for swimming.

But what went through your mind when we asked you which character each biography referred to? Maybe "none of them", or maybe "any of them". You must at least have felt slightly curious. Possible exceptions?

Or part of a reality which is often hidden behind sweeping generalisations and the stereotypes and prejudice that we all have? Perhaps not about the foreign population, either because they are part of our closest circle or because we even identify with them. Despite this, developing a role as an anti-rumour agent requires us to reflect on ourselves. This is because we all have prejudice and stereotypes. We all develop a biased perception that helps us to see what we want to believe and which corroborates what we already thought. We can all be reticent when someone tries to call into question our deepest held beliefs. But how can we ask other people to change their beliefs if we are not able to self-reflect and also be open to changing the way we see the world around us?

In a conversation, one young woman spoke of the rejection she felt from her closest family and friends when she presented her new partner, a Muslim man. Her friends were overcome with fear and apprehension and her family forced them to convince her of everything that made them different and their union impossible. The people present at that conversation expressed empathy with the story, sharing the sense of indignation and injustice the woman expressed. The reaction was not as empathic when another woman shared the following reflection with the group: "My family and friends did not reject my relationship with a Muslim man. But they did reject my relationship with a local police officer". Foreigners residing in European countries are not the only people who are subject to a large number of clichés and misconceptions. There are many other groups that face a daily struggle to combat the social imaginary that prevails about them. The conservative priest, the ambitious and corrupt politician, the weak, helpless disabled person, the lazy, sullen civil servant, the flamboyantly gay, the square-headed Northerner..., and surely, between us all, if we look critically at our own conceptions, we could come up with an endless list.

With regard to rumours, we would be hard pushed to say that we have never believed an absurd rumour or even that we haven't been responsible for spreading one. I'm sure we have

all heard the odd conspiracy story about some corrupt governor or politician or other. Or about the carcinogenic effects of some soft drink or food. Or about the pharmaceutical industry's strategy to spread lice in schools. Or about the racist ideology of famous fashion designers. Or about a pop group's support for terrorism, and so on. Now, think about it, what evidence did you have to believe these stories? Were you really sure that you were being told the truth? Maybe some of these stories are backed up with facts, studies or evidence, but there are certainly many others that are not. So, what made you believe them? Maybe the credibility of the person telling them? Beliefs we already held about the way governments, pharmaceutical companies or the fashion world operate? The broad consensus and credibility of these stories within our sphere of reference?

In short, what we are trying to highlight through this reflection is that we are no different from the people to whom we, as anti-rumour agents, are directing our awareness-raising efforts. Therefore, empathy has to begin with acknowledgement of our own stereotypes or prejudice and our involvement in spreading rumours when we do not know if they are true or not. Constructive dialogue, even the dialogue we enter to raise awareness, is only possible if we recognise the other person as a valid interlocutor with whom it is possible to exchange knowledge and experiences.

If we are to bring about a change in others we need to start by changing ourselves.

4. Preparing the strategy: communication skills in face-to-face awareness-raising

The keys to strategic thinking mentioned up to now are elements to be considered prior to action. Preparatory elements that help us to understand what we are faced with both internally and externally. In this section we are now going to look at the elements related to the action itself. What do we have to do when we decide to take action to challenge a rumour or prejudice we have identified?

In the previous chapters we have shown that there are lots of rumours, stereotypes and prejudice concerning groups from a diverse range of geographical and cultural backgrounds living in our city. People who come from other countries and even their children who, despite having been born here, are still labelled as foreigners or immigrants and are often accused of being responsible for antisocial behaviour in the city or for the saturation of public services such as health, education and social services, among other things. We have all heard these kinds of rumours at work, at our children's schools, at the market and even at family gatherings.

What attitude do we need to take when faced with these kinds of comments? Unfortunately, in most cases, many of us simply listen or rather, we hear and rarely do we challenge such comments and rumours. Bad experiences or even fear of confrontation mean that we remain passive. However, we understand that the **people who make a commitment to becoming anti-rumour agents make a commitment to not only listen, but also to act.** In this section, we will try to develop a strategy for action that not only aims to provide arguments that can be used in response to the rumours we hear, but which above all provides the tools that will help us to achieve more effective communication and establish a productive and positive dialogue with the people whose awareness we are trying to raise.

The first step to achieving this, as contradictory as it may seem, is **to lower our expectations of the results we expect to obtain.** There is no magic formula in the communication process, no secret phrase or word and no powerful recipe or mysterious system that enables us to

persuade others. If this is what we are looking for, it might be more effective to turn to black magic or hypnosis techniques.

But changing the stereotypes and prejudice people hold is a long road that not only depends on what we say to someone at any given moment. Of course, we must not allow this difficulty to open up feelings of defeat, owing to a belief that our actions will have no influence on how other people think. Quite the contrary, we want to invite you to try. The great value of our role as anti-rumour agents is making small changes which will certainly be a big step. **Making our interlocutor go home with certain doubts or even taking on board a small part of our discourse into their way of thinking, should be seen as a huge success.**

The second premise, **to continue reading is to keep a positive attitude**. The attitude we tackle these types of situations with will be key to developing the skills detailed in this section. What is it that stops us from opening our mouths when we hear these kinds of comments? What holds us back? Surely the answer lies in the experiences we have had on previous occasions: confrontations or heated discussions. Situations that have made us feel uncomfortable, due to the emotional way in which we have responded and the frustrated or guilty aftertaste they have left us with.

This is probably one of the main reasons, when we hear some comment or other, for our inner thoughts getting us to imagine how unbearable the conversation would be or to ask ourselves "how do I get out of this now?" or "and what do I say to them now?". Keeping a positive attitude in these situations is key to determining the kind of answers we give. You can change the way you act if you focus on other thoughts, instead of the ones mentioned, such as "great, another situation for practising what I've learned and putting myself to the test".

Keeping an open mind and trying to learn from the various experiences we have and, above all, from the people we interact with is essential if we are to undertake this challenge with the energy it requires. Having a positive attitude in everything we do as anti-rumour agents is most important.

Once you undertake this challenge with a positive attitude, we suggest you put into practice a whole series of communication techniques we believe will help you to maximise the results you achieve through this awareness-raising process. These are techniques that are easy to explain and understand but which can only be mastered through training and practice (Fine, 2008). The expected results are as follows:

- **More respect:** Everyday communication is based to a large extent on imitation (for example, I raise my voice and the other person raises their voice, I smile and so does the other person). When we show an attitude of respect towards our interlocutor, we can influence that person, inviting them to employ the same attitude towards us. Have you ever been in a situation where you notice that the other person looks at you and speaks to you courteously while dismissing your arguments and calling your interests into question? Now think about the willingness with which you have listened to their arguments. Would you have responded differently if they had had a different attitude?

- **More influence:** When you are honest and attentive, you have a greater chance of getting others to participate and of reaching an agreement or finding common ground in the opinions expressed. You are more likely to achieve your goals through arguments that you won't regret in the future. For example: do you think you would be able to change the opinion of your interlocutor if you directly accuse them of being racist?

- **More at ease in cases of conflict:** Dispelling a rumour, highlighting a stereotype or prejudice can lead to a somewhat conflictive situation. Particularly because we are questioning deeply rooted ways of thinking which might represent the values of the other person. Responding to these situations, and not reacting defensively, that is, controlling our own feelings to focus on the communication elements, will make these situations less stressful for us and will help to ensure we are more in control of the way we respond, listening and showing empathy towards the person we are talking to.

4.1   Empathy and sincerity as the basis of effective communication

Although what we are saying might seem obvious to us and however convincing we might find the point we are trying to put across, we don't always get our message "across" to our interlocutor. Where is the problem? What are we doing wrong?

More than 2300 years ago, Aristotle established the basis of successful communication. According to him, empathy and sincerity are two of the basic elements for improving our interlocutor's predisposition and making them understand and take on board the message we are trying to pass on to them (Borg, 2007).

To communicate in a really effective manner, we need to be empathetic and able to take a step back from ourselves. Empathy means that we feel and understand to a certain degree what others are experiencing. To achieve this, we need to be able to take a step back from our own experiences, that is, be aware that we see things from our own, limited perspective. This way, we are able to understand that other people might experience things differently from the way we do and in this way we are able to put ourselves in their shoes (Qureshi, 2009).

The starting point for awakening empathy is not to see our interlocutor as "the enemy we need to defeat", as an opponent we have to square up to. "Man's inability to communicate is a result of his inability to really listen skilfully and with understanding to the other person" (James Borg).

In the previous chapter, we tried to highlight the fact that we all have prejudice or stereotypes, either in relation to people from different cultures or backgrounds, or many other groups that tend to be strongly stigmatised. And the fact that all of us, at some time or another, believe certain statements without having any information to corroborate what we hear, simply because these statements reaffirm beliefs we already hold. What we are trying to do here is to awaken everybody's critical awareness, blurring the boundaries between the categories of "us" and "the others" and getting closer to the people whose awareness we want to raise, who are probably much more like us than we might think at first glance.

Understanding why people think the way they think and say what they say is the first step to empathising with them, even if we don't agree with the arguments they put forward.

Ultimately, empathy is based on sincerity. Sincerity is essential to feeling empathy, but being sincere is not enough, you need to convey this to the other person. If you express sincerity, that is, show that you really care about the feelings, problems and concerns of the other person, the conversation will take on a different tone. The other person will be more receptive to your questions, they will explain more things to you, and this will help you to lead the conversation in the direction you want to take it.

But remember: trust comes from relations, and not from personality. Therefore, we are talking about an aspect that needs to be worked on and not an inherent quality of the person.

So empathy and sincerity are two qualities that have to be shown to improve communication processes (Borg, 2007) and, consequently, an individual's success when it comes to putting their point of view across to their interlocutor. What elements help us to develop empathy in communication and express this towards our interlocutor?

4.1.1   Active listening

The act of communicating begins with the ability to listen to what the other person has to say. But listening is more than just staying quiet while the other person speaks. Active listening should help us to understand the thoughts, feelings and actions of the other person.

All too often, we think that listening is a passive act. Even when we're being too passive, we feel a constant need to talk. I'm sure you've come across people on more than one occasion who seem to feel the need to talk compulsively, constantly interrupting with superfluous considerations. They make responses that add nothing constructive to the conversation or which even take the conversation off on a tangent. This attitude is based on the mistaken belief that talking constantly is communicating, without taking into account that listening attentively also forms part of communication.

However, listening is not only saying nothing while the other person talks, it involves making sense of what they tell us, and not only with words. Later on, we will also be talking about how listening is more than just paying attention to the words our interlocutor says, it is about listening to the whole person; what they tell us with their body, what intention they give the words through the tone they use, and so on.

4.1.2   What do we need to avoid in order to listen actively?

One of the main obstacles to active listening is the speed with which we think. While we can say between 120 and 150 words per minute, our mind enables us to think at a speed of 600 to 800 words per minute. So we are able to think much more quickly than we can speak. We think approximately five or six times faster than we speak and this is why we tend to think about other things and not about what is being said.

The thoughts of the listener always run ahead of those of the speaker. When we are listening to other people, our mind has time to stray from the words they are saying to us. That's why we often lose our concentration and even start to think about other things that capture our attention during that time (Borg, 2007). Hasn't it ever happened to you that, while listening to someone, you end up thinking about what you need to buy for dinner that evening?

When the subject of the conversation is a rumour we want to dispel, the problem is that while the other person is talking to us, we are thinking about what we can say as a counter argument. **But remember, there is no perfect argument. What we have to find is the best argument for the person we are talking to.** If we don't listen to them first, it will be hard for us to find a suitable response. It might seem as though you are listening, but actually you are simply waiting for your turn to speak. Making light of a serious issue, we might want to remember Groucho Marx's words when he said: "It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt."

The way you listen and respond to other people is very important for improving the act of communication and the interaction itself. If you listen emphatically, you are conveying the message that you are interested in everything the other person is saying and you are making an effort to understand their point of view. If you do the opposite, the other person will think otherwise and lose interest in continuing the discussion: "What's the point if they're not listening to me?"

Therefore, we are not only talking about listening, but also about showing that we are listening. This way, the person we are talking to will feel more comfortable, they will express their point of view more openly and this will enable us to understand it better. What's more, we need to be aware that the more interest we show in what others are saying, the more likely they are to listen to what we have to say.

How can we show that we are actively listening? (Borg, 2007):

Don't interrupt: Interrupting is a sign that you are not listening, or that you are wanting to divert the other person's line of reasoning towards your own, or that you are one of the many people who like to talk more than they like to listen. The other person is less likely to listen to you attentively, when it's their time to, if you cut them off mid-sentence. The next time someone interrupts you, think for a second about how that makes you feel. Do you feel like carrying on the conversation with that person?

Don't finish the other person's sentences: Another very unpleasant habit, which happens repeatedly, is finishing the sentences of the person who is talking. This doesn't mean you can't do this from time to time, for example, when the person goes quiet and can't find the right word to express what they want to say. But don't let it become a habit. If you do, very often you will find that irritating your interlocutor to the point that they feel they are not in control of their own ideas. You also need to bear in mind that you may be wrong in your reasoning and assuming the wrong ending, that you're even bringing in new arguments or rumours on top of the ones you are trying to challenge.

By never assuming we know what our interlocutor has to say we may avoid making mistakes and that will help us to understand better the point the other person is making. With regard to the issue we are dealing with here, I'm sure that many of us have the feeling that we have heard the same rumours so many times that we could practically spell them out on hearing "the first notes of the song". However, remember that we all like to be listened to, and if you do listen, and you listen right to the end, you might discover subtle differences or new arguments that might be of use to you when putting your point across and on future occasions.

Example:

Neighbour 2: Have you seen that the Chinese are opening shops in the neighbourhood? As if we didn't have enough with the idiots we already have around here. It's like an invasion and I wouldn't be surprised if other shops have to shut down. Of course, since ...

Anti-rumour agent: (Interrupting her) They don't pay taxes or respect opening hours. But how do you know this?

(Because the anti-rumour agent didn't listen to what she was going to say, they took it for granted that the neighbour was going to repeat commonly held rumours, though she could well have been about to repeat only one of them or even a completely different one instead.)

Talking over the other person: Another bad habit is talking over someone when they are speaking. When we do this, we are conveying the message that we are not in the slightest bit interested in what they have to say or, even worse, that what we have to say is more correct or important. All of us at one time or another have talked over other people, either out of excitement, the desire to show empathy or simply with the intention of putting the other person down. Now, remember that if the person doesn't feel they are being listened to, they are unlikely to listen to us. If we do this often, we need to try to avoid doing it and the first step to this is to become more aware and pay attention so as not to do it again.

Paraphrasing: Listening empathetically is the key to fostering interpersonal relationships. Paraphrasing is a very powerful technique as it enables the person who is talking to us to see the ideas and feelings they have expressed from the point of view of the other person. When

you paraphrase what someone has said, you are not adding anything new to the message, but rather you are echoing what you have understood. The listener is simply telling the speaker, using their own words, what they have understood by what the other person has said. That way we convey the message that we are making an effort to understand what they are telling us and it's a very good way of showing we were listening. It also helps to give our interlocutor a clearer perspective on the implications of their line of thought. Implications that they might not be aware of.

Example:

Anti-rumour agent: So you are upset because the owners of the shops you now shop are not native but foreigners?

Neighbour 2: Well, I... That's not exactly what I mean. In fact, I don't shop there, I do my shopping at the supermarket farther away. But I preferred it when I used to do my shopping here. The butcher's that used to be on the corner, do you remember?

Anti-rumour agent: Oh yes, of course, we used to go there too when we were little, didn't we? And why did it close?

Neighbour 2: It closed when the supermarket opened. But I'd known her all my life and she used to put the meat we like to eat at home to one side for me.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, of course. Have you tried any of these new butcher's? I'm sure you'll find one that has good meat too and they'll eventually get to know what you like. What does it matter if it's run by a foreign family? Since we all shop at the supermarket now, there are hardly any small shops left. I suggest you give it a try and then tell me how it goes.

We have a much greater chance of being listened to and taken into consideration if we are able to get to the bottom of the argument being put forward by the person we are talking to. The most charismatic people are those that are able to hear and express a real interest in what the other person is telling them.

Ask questions to show interest and to fully understand the reasoning behind the other person's argument: Active listening means getting a better understanding of the person you are talking to and this is not always easy. For this reason, you sometimes need to ask questions that enable you to get to the bottom of the arguments being presented.

Don't be afraid to ask why. If you have a good understanding of their reasoning and the feelings behind it, you will be able to adapt your answer to your interlocutor.

The best way to gain the trust of your interlocutor is to show interest politely and with humility and respect. Try to offer explanations that take into account their point of view. Remember that by asking questions you can also find out if there are any underlying concerns behind their argument.

Example:

Service user: At Social Services, you have to go in wearing a headscarf to get any benefits. If you're from here, they're not going to give you anything!

Anti-rumour agent: How do you know this? Do you need some sort of support?

Service user: I don't, but my sister does. Very soon they're going to be throwing her out of her flat. The poor woman can't pay the mortgage.

Anti-rumour agent: And has she been to Social Services to talk to them about her situation? This service operates according to legal regulations and criteria that don't take into account the nationality or religion of the person asking for help. If your sister needs help, the professionals running the service will assess her case and they might be able to offer her some sort of alternative.

Questions can also be a great tool for reflection and you can even replace your arguments with questions that make the person reflect on the implications of what they are saying.

Example:

Work colleague: I'm really worried. My daughter, Joana, has just been assigned to start at the local neighbourhood school.

Anti-rumour agent: And what's the problem?

*Work colleague***:** Listen mate, didn't you know the neighbourhood school is full of immigrants?

Anti-rumour agent: And...?

Work colleague: Well, these kids don't understand a thing and so my daughter is never going to make any progress.

Anti-rumour agent: I can understand that you are concerned about your daughter's education, as we all are. But how do you know that going to school with kids from other countries will prevent her from learning? What if it's the other way round? Before you get too worried about it, perhaps you should go and talk to the head teacher of the school so they can tell you a bit more about their curriculum. Maybe you could also ask the parents of other children in the school for information. And if you like what they tell you, why don't you try it for a year, and if you really don't like it, then change schools? Sending her to a school where all the children are native won't guarantee that you'll like the school either, will it?

4.1.3. Valuing the other person

In previous chapters we have seen that the rumours that are most frequently spread are those that we experience close to home and that relate to issues that concern us and that respond to our fears and worries. This is precisely the part we have to value the most. Under no circumstances should we dismiss a family's concerns about their child's education, about the financial situation of a friend or relative, or their own financial worries. Acknowledging and valuing their concern can help to ensure they listen more openly to our reasoning, even if it contradicts their own.

Example:

Carla: The truth is that with this crisis, the country is in a terrible state. Have you seen how many young people are unemployed? How do they expect them to become independent? And on top of that, all the benefits end up going to foreigners, who are the only ones who have a job.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, it's true that lots of families are going through a hard time at the moment. And we've all been affected to some extent.

Carla: Yes, my son is out of work now, and the poor man has two children.

Anti-rumour agent: You must be finding it really tough. When it's happening to our own children we really suffer. Has he tried to see if he's entitled to any sort of benefits, or if there is a service that can help him?

Carla: Didn't I just tell you that they give all the benefits to foreigners?

Anti-rumour agent: But has he tried? If he doesn't go and talk to the City Council, he won't know if they can help him. Remember, services and benefits are for the people who need them the most, regardless of whether they are foreigners or natives.

It is also possible that the person has had an unpleasant experience which has reaffirmed their way of thinking. One of the main premises for establishing effective communication is mutual respect. That's why a good strategy is to value the other person, provided we do so in a sincere manner.

Example:

Anti-rumour agent: Goodness! I can understand that it must have been really awful when you were robbed on the metro. It must have been a really unpleasant experience. But you can't say that all Moroccans are thieves simply because one Moroccan boy robbed you on the metro. If it had been a native boy, you wouldn't be thinking that all natives are thieves, would you?

In order to treat the person with respect, focus on the problem that needs to be resolved, which in this case is to dispel a rumour, and not so much on the person responsible for spreading that rumour. Communication which is aimed at the person can make the interlocutor defensive and can create a situation where we blame the person rather than offering solutions and counter arguments. For example, we could say to the other person: "you always believe what everyone tells you, you are not in the least bit critical", or instead you could say: "We're bombarded with so many of these types of rumours that it's really easy to end up believing some of them, as so many other people believe them, don't you think?

Remember: don't dismiss the other person's opinions, however much you might disagree with them. Valuing the experience of your interlocutor and highlighting the points you have in common in relation to what you both think can help to support your arguments, and even if they are very different from the other person's they will be better accepted.

Conversations in which the other person is valued help people to feel engaged, valued and accepted. On the other hand, conversations in which the other person is looked down on make people feel disengaged, undervalued and incompetent. Communication that undervalues our interlocutor is related to a sense of superiority, it is rigid, insensitive or indifferent.

Remember: Don't blame others if you don't want them to become defensive. Nobody likes to be called racist or ignorant.

4.1.4. Attention

Most of us have a pretty short attention span. It is very difficult to maintain a constant level of interest. We only pay attention when our interest in the conversation increases. We already mentioned earlier that it is difficult to stay focused when our minds work five or six times faster than our interlocutor is able to speak. So we start to think about other things, such as how we are going to respond to the person, without listening carefully to what they are saying.

Example:

Work colleague: The other day someone stole my mobile phone outside my front door. It was a foreigner. All these people do is rob us.

Anti-rumour agent: Don't say that, my friend. Just because a foreigner steals your wallet doesn't mean they're all thieves. Were you able to call home so that someone could come and get you?

How do you think your work colleague will feel if this is the way you respond? Do you think they will feel motivated to carry on the conversation? Here is where we can pose other questions: what can we do to make people listen to us? What can we do to hold their attention? First of all, we need to avoid long-winded arguments in which we refer to abstract concepts such as globalisation or multiculturalism. It is much more effective to offer brief, clear arguments that get straight to the point of the conversation; and to use examples and arguments that the person has already given, but reducing them to shared points, common ground. On the other hand, we have already talked about how powerful questions can be when it comes to getting someone to reflect and also to hold the person's attention and interest.

Really try to establish dialogues in which both parties listen and contribute and avoid long monologues in which all you demonstrate is everything you know about immigration.

4.1.5. Communication needs time

Haste is the worst enemy of effective communication. Choosing a good time, place and company is important if we want our message to have any kind of impact. If we simply approach anyone at any time or place, it is fairly likely it'll be the wrong time or place. Have you ever felt that people avoid you because you are "always talking about the same thing"? Your words are likely to be more effective if you say them at the right time.

- **Choose a good time**: On many occasions a rumour comes up as the central theme of a conversation from the start. On occasions, it comes up indirectly, when the discussion is revolving around some other issue.

Example:

(Waiting in line at the fruit stall at the market.)

Anti-rumour agent: Hi, Maria, how are you? How's the little one?

Maria: Really well, getting bigger every day. She's started school now and we're really happy. To be honest, it wasn't easy finding her a good school. As you know, our neighbourhood is getting worse by the day with so much immigration.

By making this comment, Maria is making two assumptions: first, that the arrival of the immigrant population is the cause of the deterioration of some neighbourhoods, and secondly, that they bring down educational standards in schools. The first thing we need to ask ourselves before trying to dispel these rumours is whether it's the right time to do that. We know that in a few minutes time, Maria will be served by the sales assistant at the fruit stall and we will be saying good-bye, until the next time we meet. Are we sure this is the best moment? Would we have enough time, in two minutes, to challenge these comments? Do you believe you could grab her full attention in such a short space of time? Would she listen to you? And most importantly, would you listen to her?

Sometimes, the best strategy is to walk away and wait for a better time to resume the conversation in a calm manner, when you have time to listen more attentively to the person's explanations and to find the best and most convincing argument to respond with.

Anti-rumour agent: Oh, I'm quite interested in what you're saying about the neighbourhood. How about we go for a coffee and you tell me all about it? If this isn't a good time, we could meet up another day, what do you say?

There are some situations when we know we won't be seeing the person again, perhaps because we don't even know them. Such as, for example, when we hear two people talking on the bus or metro. Our gut reaction might be to make some sort of sarcastic comment that makes our point of view very clear, to counteract what we have just heard, for example "yes, obviously, and I've heard that they even pay for Chinese shop keepers to go on holiday in Tahiti". But we need to bear in mind what the real impact of our comment would be. Maybe it would leave us with a clear conscience: "I've said what I think". But are we really making that person reflect? Or are they more likely to feel offended and to respond by radicalising their discourse even further?

- **Choose a good place**: Just as important, or even more important than the time, is the place. We need to take into account the visual distractions that could make our interlocutor more interested in or concerned about aspects other than our conversation. If we want to take up the issue with Maria again, perhaps her work office is not the best place. As we try to put forward arguments and talk about the subject, she will probably be more interested in the mountain of paperwork piling up on her desk.

> *Example:*
>
> *Maria's thoughts*, while she talks to us: "I've just remembered that I have to send a message before twelve and I need to print off the Power Point for the meeting. Let me see if I can get this over with quickly and get on with it."

Choosing a good time and place helps to ensure our interlocutor will be more predisposed to engaging with us. A quiet place, free from distractions, will enable us to concentrate more on the conversation.

- **Avoid interruptions**: One of the aspects most likely to distract our interlocutor's attention is constant interruptions to our conversation. If there is a momentary interruption, it is likely

that the person we are talking to will lose concentration for a few seconds. Resume the conversation by giving a brief summary of what you were talking about just before you got interrupted. This will help you to pick up the thread and will also help the other person to better visualise your arguments and demonstrate a logical, structured line of thought.

Just after a telephone conversation with her husband, Maria hangs up the phone and comes back to the conversation.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, Maria, you were telling me that you were very happy to have found a school outside the neighbourhood for your daughter. I know it's a difficult choice to make and entails a lot of responsibility. What I was saying is that, the fact that there are foreign children in a school, doesn't mean it's a bad school. There are even schools that have undertaken educational projects that see diversity as an educational opportunity. Some of them have had some really interesting results and are even coming high up in school evaluation tests drawn up by the local government.

Knowing when the right time and place is, or rather, knowing when the wrong time is, will help us to ensure our interlocutor is more predisposed to maintain an effective, better quality dialogue. Challenging people at any old time, in any old place to try to raise their awareness of these issues will make you come across as a person with bad timing who is always going on about the same issues.

- **Choose your company well**: Sometimes the people around us will ruin any attempts we make to hold an in-depth conversation. Perhaps they are a person who constantly interrupts our interlocutor, with accusatory arguments about the prejudice they might be expressing or using arguments that might even be counterproductive. The outcome of this conversation is most likely going to be a defensive attitude that could lead to the person taking an even more extreme position which is difficult to shift. So a better strategy might be to find a moment when you and your interlocutor are alone, and a space where you can avoid the feeling of confrontation, of "us against them".

- **Silence:** Silence can be an equally effective tool in all kinds of conversations. The problem is that many of us feel uncomfortable around silence. How do you normally react to silence? Does it seem like it goes on forever? Do you try to fill it with the first thing that comes into your head? Do you fidget in your chair waiting impatiently for the other person to say something... whatever that might be? Do you feel as though you have said something wrong?

When we talk or listen, silence serves to give both people time to think. Understanding the other person is not an automatic process. It often requires time for reflection. But we are not very accustomed to respecting this. Silence can lead to feelings of discomfort and we feel the need to be preparing our next intervention when the other person is speaking in order to fill any gaps that might arise. But if we do this, we are not listening. In our haste to share our thoughts we talk too much and we even interrupt the other person, just to make sure our point of view is heard (Fine, 2008).

4.1.6. Staying relaxed: how to approach more complicated conversations

Possibly one of the aspects that most complicates the communication process is the emotional aspect. The way the different parties feel (angry or happy, for example) can have an impact on the way the communication process goes.

I'm sure we have all realised at one time or another that we find it easier to communicate with people that we like than with people we find unpleasant. Our attitude towards the person we are communicating with and our emotional state have a major impact on this entire process as they influence our ability to communicate. This is why it is so important to be able to identify and be aware of our feelings. How do we communicate if we are angry, sad or anxious? And if we feel uncomfortable with the person we are talking to? (Qureshi, 2009).

At the beginning of this chapter we said that one of the main reasons why we often prefer to keep quiet than challenge rumours and stereotypes is fear of confrontation. Because these

issues are ideologically and emotionally loaded, dialogue can end up turning into a direct confrontation, an argument, and we often do not know how to control it. What's more, the effect of these situations is not to raise the awareness of the different parties, but quite the opposite. Normally, the interlocutors end up radicalising their initial discourse, reaffirming what they thought at the start. Below are a series of recommendations that could help you to deal with these situations.

- **Breathe and stay calm**. Don't make accusations, remember that you are not confronting an enemy. You are talking to a friend, colleague or service user. Communicate your differences but also highlight the points you agree on. If you remove affirmations that are emotionally loaded and work on the basis of mutual agreement, you will find it easier to talk to that person.

What happens in these kinds of situations, when we try to dispel a rumour, is that the issue often triggers strong emotions in us, either because we feel a sense of injustice, or because we identify with the people the rumour is about or because we feel it is our responsibility to change the opinion of the other person.

Example:
(Two neighbours meet on the stairs of their building.)

Neighbour 1 (in an agitated tone): These young North Africans in our neighbourhood do nothing but hang out on the street. Well, I say nothing but I'm sure they're on the look out to see what they can nick. Let's see if they'll throw them out, once and for all, and send them back to their own country. Let them deal with them over there.

Neighbour 2: Hey, these people have done nothing to you. If they were young natives, I'm sure you wouldn't be talking like this! You could also go back to your own village since you weren't born here either!

Neighbour 1: But I'm from this country and they're not!

Have you ever had a conversation like this? Can you identify with this type of reaction? If you feel like you are starting to get angry, take a few minutes to breathe deeply, calm down and then speak again. It is easier to ruin a personal or professional relationship when our emotions bring out the worst in us.

- **Don't match their hostile attitude:** When you are dealing with an aggressive person who uses hostile communication techniques, perhaps because the issue touches a nerve and they have let their emotions run free, try as hard as you can to remain calm.

  If you match this type of energy with your words, tone of voice or body language, all you will do is raise your own and the other person's anger levels, and you are very unlikely to listen to one another. You need a lot of self-control to ensure this type of attitude does not affect you. Most of us would react by responding in the same way, as a defence. Take a deep breath and remember that you will be better protected if you are the one who keeps calm. Now, more than ever, try to listen to the other person, empathise with them. Try to see what is happening as objectively as possible and not in an emotional way. Don't allow your feelings to get the better of you, leading you to adopt a defensive attitude.

- **Maintain an open body position expressing a willingness to talk:** Show the palms of your hands, nod, rest your hand on your chest and try not to cross your arms. As we will see farther on, these are all postures that help to show a receptive, non-confrontational attitude and a willingness to talk.

- **Think about your presumptions** about your interlocutor or about the conversation itself, as these will affect your attitude.

  If from the outset you believe the conversation is going to be unbearably complicated, then it most probably will be because your attitude will make it so. However, if you believe that,

regardless of the outcome, you will be able to get something positive out of all this, then you probably will.

Think about the other person: how do they see the situation? How do you think they perceive the problem? What are their concerns, doubts and fears? This way you can start seeing the person you are talking to in a different way, not as an opponent, but as an interlocutor.

4.2. Non-verbal communication: what we express with our body

Have you ever mistrusted a person for no apparent reason? It was probably due to their body language.

Our ability to communicate not only resides in our ability to talk and express ourselves through verbal language: we also communicate through gestures, postures, eye contact, our hands, smiles, etc. everything that is referred to as non-verbal communication or body language. Before we deliver any verbal message, we are already communicating. Many body language experts say that the best way a person can communicate is by keeping their mouth shut.

This statement may seem both disconcerting and paradoxical. But have you ever tried to talk to someone without moving your body (head, arms, hands, eyes...)? It is almost impossible.

So much so, that the psychologist A. Mehrabian classified aspects of human communication in percentages and gave more importance to body language (55%), than to words (7%) which come behind tone of voice (38%).

To maintain effective communication, we need to understand other people's emotions. Body language is the main way we communicate our emotions to another person, so being able to interpret body language and show empathy towards the other person is essential.

Try to notice if your interlocutor is expressing sadness or worry through their facial expression; if they fold their arms and lean back with a frown then they might be switched off from what you are saying; if they tap their feet fast or look at the clock, it might mean they think the conversation is going on for too long, even if they don't say anything to you. In short, allow their body to tell you how they are feeling.

However, these expressions are not always universal. This is not only a question of culture but is also due to the individual's personality. Therefore, we need to interpret non-verbal behaviour with an understanding of the context and be open to other ways in which emotions are expressed. It is likely that, at some point, your gestures or words will also be misinterpreted.

We are not always aware of what we convey to others through our body language. But it is important to pay attention and learn to control our body language, to ensure it backs up what we are trying to express through the arguments we put forward. If you want people to see you as a secure, honest and informed person, use tools such as the following:

- **Smile**: Have you ever noticed how powerful a smile can be? Smiling not only makes you more open towards your interlocutor, it also helps you to relax and feel more positive. Smiling is a good practice but of course this does not mean you need to smile all the time, particularly if someone is telling you about a problem or a concern.

- **Eye contact**: If you look the other person in the eyes, you will instil a sense of trust and will show that you are listening and are interested in the conversation. However, try not to keep your eyes too fixed on the other person as they might find this intimidating, particularly when it is you who is speaking.

- **Nod your head**: When the other person is speaking, you can reinforce this listening posture by gently nodding your head and in this way you reinforce the impression that you are listening attentively to what the other person is saying. What's more, because of the mirroring effect, the other person is more likely to nod their head too when you speak. This

subtle movement not only helps to convey that you are listening, it also really helps you to pay more attention to what the other person is saying.

- **Stay still!**: Moving your feet nervously, playing with a pen, constantly touching your hair, rubbing your hands together, are all movements that give the impression of being nervous or at least of having little interest in the subject of the conversation. Try to ensure your movements are gentle and in keeping with a calm, trusting attitude (but without expressing arrogance or passivity).

- **Maintain an open posture**: Folding your arms, hiding your hands on the chair or even touching parts of your face gives the impression that you want to protect yourself or that you disagree with what the other person is saying. Try to keep your hands relaxed at the sides of your body, on your lap or on the table. When you talk, face the palms of your hands towards your interlocutor, lean forwards to show interest and place your hand on your chest to show that your words are sincere.

4.3. The voice

Tone of voice, intonation and modulation can help to calm a person down or exacerbate their anger: the same message, depending on the tone used can either bring interlocutors closer to you or push them away). How a message is expressed is sometimes even more than its information.

For example, if we react to a rumour we've heard by asking: "And how do you know this?" This same question could have completely different meanings depending on the way we ask it.

We could use an intonation that expresses sincere interest in which our tone of voice does not convey to the other person that we already know the answer, but that we are asking a genuine question. This way, the interlocutor has to make an effort to give us an answer. Or we could ask the same question but with a sarcastic or ironic tone and convey to the other person that we

are not really expecting an answer, wherein the question itself implies that we are accusing the other person of believing or spreading rumours.

We also need to pay attention to the volume and speed with which we speak, as this could affect the other person's ability to understand what we are saying. For example, a person who talks too quickly might lose the attention of their interlocutor. But they might also lose interest if we talk too slowly.

The tone of your voice, or more precisely, the volume with which you speak, tends to be associated with your mood. Here again, we need to be cautious about these kinds of interpretations. What does it mean when a person speaks loudly? And softly? Many northern Europeans who do not understand Spanish may think that Spanish people are constantly arguing. In contrast, many people from southern countries may tend to think that northern Europeans have no feelings.

Obviously, Spanish people are not always arguing and Northern Europeans do have feelings but what happens is that we attribute different meanings to the tone of voice, meanings that are culturally based (Qureshi, 2009).

4.4. The language we use

The correct intonation, open body language, empathy, respect and sincerity are communication techniques that can help to ensure our message is well received by the person we are talking to. But there is another aspect which is also fundamental: we need to speak the same language. And we are not referring to cases where one person is speaking in one language, for instance Catalan, and the other is speaking in another language, like Spanish or English. We're talking about using similar terms and expressions.

Our advice here is try and avoid politically correct language full of technical jargon and words that tend to be used in more academic contexts. When listening to our interlocutor, we should

try to pay attention to the expressions and words they use so we can then use the appropriate language to get closer to their points of view.

Conceptualisations, theories and statistics help to give us an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of immigration, but it doesn't make sense to use them if the person we are talking to does not use these terms. If they're talking to us about people and we're talking about demography, we'll find it hard to come to any sort of understanding.

It might even give an impression of superiority that could offend the other person. This doesn't mean that we should resort to foul or offensive words, just try to make them as close and familiar as possible.

Example:

Service user: I've just been to the doctor's and I'm completely shocked. The waiting-room was full of immigrants. There was even one of those blokes wearing a turban on his head! I had to wait for an hour to be seen and I'm not surprised, with all these people coming over here to get treated!

Anti-rumour agent: Sir, remember that foreign residents here are helping to rejuvenate our population. It's been estimated that our country will have the oldest population in the world, second only to Japan, by 2020. Families that come here increase the birth rate and increase the number of young people, which means an increase in the active population. The contributions they make to Social Security are greater than the amount they cost the health system. What's more, the Declaration of Human Rights recognises that everyone has the right to health care, regardless of their nationality. Oh, and "the man with the turban", as you put it, is most probably a Sikh.

After reading this example, what do you think the person we are talking to will think? Do you think they will have listened right to the end? Even if they have understood perfectly what we have said, they're probably thinking we're a bit pedantic, aren't they?

Let's use the same example but this time using language that is closer and more similar to the way the other person talks:

Neither of the two answers will probably convince the person of your argument, but which do you think might make them pause to reflect more? Which of the two answers would at least get them to listen to us?

4.5.   Sustainability strategies

Up to now we have been talking about listening to the person and later responding in a respectful, suitable way that invites dialogue... In this section we will be looking at some of the response strategies we can use. However, as we have mentioned before, there is no perfect argument. In all cases, we have to try to find the best argument to reach the other person and which we feel best about.

We also need to stress that there are no magic bullets. Changing such deeply rooted ways of thinking and feeling, as prejudice tends to be, cannot be achieved in a single conversation. We need to set ourselves a more attainable and realistic goal: to awaken people's critical awareness when it comes to rumours and stereotypes, sowing the seeds of doubt, creating space for reflection.

We should also point out that the strategies we put forward here are not exclusive. When we establish a conversation with another person we need to bear in mind that we will not simply be challenging a rumour and then leaving the conversation there. It is highly likely that the other person will put forward counter arguments that make the conversation go on for longer and which will probably be reasoned and even convincing. This is why we need to make use of a range of responses, using different arguments over the course of the conversation.

- **Questions as a key tool.** Questions are a means of showing interest in what our interlocutor is saying and they help us to understand their argument or problem more clearly. They also help us to maintain interest in our interlocutor because they oblige us to pay attention to the conversation. Moreover, if what we aim to do is sow seeds of doubt, if might be much more effective if it is the other person who comes to the conclusion we want to transmit, rather than us.

  Now, as a tool for reflection, we need to take care to ensure our intonation is correct. It is very easy to sound sarcastic when we ask questions that we think we know the answers to. If we ask the question sarcastically, the person might feel offended and radicalise their discourse or become defensive. So we could ask the person if they are sure of what they are telling us and how they know that, without sounding like we are accusing them or discriminating against them:

> Really? And the person who told you this, how do they know? How did they learn about this?

- **Inviting people's curiosity and encouraging them to check their assumptions.** When there is doubt, it is important to encourage the person to try to find out the real situation first-hand, emphasise the possibility of getting directly informed through official sources and not to let themselves be taken in by everything they hear. It would be more effective for us to do that than to tell them outright the way things are, wouldn't it? Why should they believe us any more than the person who shared the rumour with them?

> *Example:*
>
> *Anti-rumour agent*: Do you know how the system works for awarding state benefits and meal vouchers? Have you checked to see if there is a clause that benefits foreigners? As far as I know, you can ask the City Council about it. Why don't you go there and ask them? They might surprise you. We hear so many things that it's hard to know what to believe, it's better to find out for ourselves, don't you think?

As well as encouraging them to check official and public sources, we could also encourage them to experiment and find proof before making certain assertions.

Particularly with regard to issues related to positive intercultural community relations, as we often accuse foreigners of not wanting to integrate without doing our own part in the matter.

Example:

Neighbour: Those people in flat 4 on the first floor, the Dominicans or Cubans or whatever they are, they're too much. Yesterday they were playing music right up to eleven in the evening!

Anti-rumour agent: Have you tried talking to them?

Neighbour: You can't talk to these people.

Anti-rumour agent: If you don't try you'll never know. What have you got to lose? Maybe they don't know they are bothering you. If you want, I can come with you.

Let's learn to take a closer look. Taking a closer look means moving closer to look, for the sole purpose of seeing what we've got in front of our very eyes. Without any expectations, without having decided beforehand what we think or feel, how we judge the situation we are presented with.

- **Find common ground.** You need to reinforce the arguments that emphasise aspects that all people share. We don't have to deny differences but we do need to acknowledge they are not just down to cultural factors. We are all different and yet very similar. Mankind's concerns, expectations, worries and dreams are usually very similar, even though we speak different languages. Our arguments could help us to find common ground and overcome socio-cultural differences, that is, find a common identity as parents, workers or fans of the same local football teams.

Example:

(At the end of the school year, the parents at a nursery school decide to get a gift for the teacher. When leaving the school two mothers discuss the matter.)

Anti-rumour agent: So, has everyone paid their contribution to the teacher's gift?

Mother: Yes, yes, everyone has paid. Well, everyone except the mother of the Pakistani girl.

Anti-rumour agent: Oh! And why hasn't she paid?

Mother: Because we didn't tell her about it.

Anti-rumour agent: And why didn't you tell her?

Mother: Well, because she won't understand us. And I'm sure she won't want to pay.

Anti-rumour agent: But her daughter goes to the same school as ours. Imagine how you would feel if all the other mothers gave the teacher a gift and no-one told you about it!

We need to bear in mind that many of the people we want to talk to will have had their own migratory experiences. A good way to find empathy and highlight common ground is to remind them of their own experience, make parallels with the way they did things and above all with the feelings they felt.

55

Example:

Man (around 70 years old, with a strong Andalusian accent): My goodness, look how many people there are out on the street. This neighbourhood isn't what it used to be. It's full of immigrants and they're all hanging out on the street. Can't a man enjoy the sun in peace?

Anti-rumour agent: You are Andalusian, aren't you? My mother is too. And when did you come to live here?

Man: Oh, about forty years ago.

Anti-rumour agent: And have you always lived here, in this neighbourhood?

Man: Yes, as soon as I got here, I bought a little flat. 25,000 pesetas it cost me. It doesn't sound like much, but it was a struggle for me to pay it!

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, here in this neighbourhood there are a lot of people from Andalusia and other places in Spain... I bet a lot of Catalan people complained about the number of immigrants living here at that time, didn't they?

Man: Yes, they used to call it La Triana [neighbourhood in Seville].

Anti-rumour agent: And how did these sorts of comments make you feel?

Man: Not that great, to be honest. But we came here to work, not to steal.

Anti-rumour agent: And the people who come here now, don't you think they have also come here to work? In fact, many of them are going to other countries to find work these days.

Man: Yes, to find a way to make a living.

Anti-rumour agent: Like everyone else, to make a living.

We need to be aware that, after a conversation like the one we have just described, we shouldn't expect the other person to openly show that they agree with us. However, they might find they can relate more easily to the people they were talking about and go away thinking a bit more about our reasoning.

- **Prioritise positive messages over "non-negative" messages.** For example, don't just say that immigration and crime are not the same thing, but rather highlight the social and economic benefits that immigrants bring to our society. This is important because, generally speaking, there are few visible examples of successful immigrants or the benefits of immigration. Mostly, when we talk about immigration, we do so thinking about the people with the most troubles, which are often the people who have just arrived or have not been here long, or whose administrative situation here is irregular.

Example:

Primary health-care centre user: Can you believe it, when I opened the door to the surgery, I was greeted by a black man who was almost 2 metres tall? I think he was the doctor, but I'm not sure whether I should trust the prescription he gave me.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, lucky doctors are coming here from other countries, otherwise I don't know what we'd do! The primary health-care centres struggle to find qualified staff. And did he treat you well?
Service user: Yes, the same as they all do. I was dealt with in two minutes!

Anti-rumour agent: And how are things going with Blanca? (The woman who looks after her, who is originally from Colombia.)

Service user: Really well. She is very warm and kind.

Anti-rumour agent: You also had trouble finding someone to help you out at home, didn't you?

The rumour that states that shops run by foreigners don't pay taxes is one of the most widespread. One way to respond to this would be to question the source of the information and even invite the person to talk to a foreign shop owner to corroborate their statement. As an additional strategy, we can also present the benefits we get from these types of shops. Arguments that are very rarely used:

Example:

Anti-rumour agent: Do you know where I can go to buy a loaf of bread at this time of day?

John: Yes, at the *paki* here on the corner. I'm sure they'll be open. These people never close, not even for lunch! More than once I've been tempted to call the police, but I'm sure they wouldn't do anything. They don't even make them pay taxes!

Anti-rumour agent: Well it's lucky they are open for these types of occasions, isn't it? Have you never appreciated having a shop that's open at this time of day?

John: Don't worry because soon everything will be open, they're even buying up the local bars.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, if it weren't for them buying these premises, we wouldn't have a single bar left to go to, to have a beer.

- **Posing questions about generalisations and exaggerations.** We need to convey the message that we all have personal characteristics or circumstances that make us unique. We cannot presume that someone will behave in a particular way, just because they come

from a particular background. So we can highlight just how ridiculous some exaggerations are.

<div style="background-color:#dd:">

Example:

Neighbour: Have you noticed we have some new tenants in the block? And these are Moroccan too, like the last ones. You'll see, we're going to end up with the same problems as before. These people are really dirty and you can't get them to clear the stairway. They don't know how to live as part of a community, and I bet they're not paying their share of the communal charges for the stairs.

Anti-rumour agent: Yes, it's true that the last family did cause problems for everyone. But have you had the chance to speak to this new family? They're not necessarily the same.

Neighbour: No? If they're from Morocco, then I bet they lived on top of each other in a little old house in a village in their own country. How do you expect them to understand that they need to clean the stairs and pay the communal fees?

Anti-rumour agent: Oh! So you have spoken to them? (No, no...) So how do you know where they come from, how they lived and whether or not they cleaned the stairway? The people in flat four are also from Morocco and we've never had any problems with them.

</div>

Lastly, we should also mention that conversations also come to an end and that this is just as important as the start. If you are the person who has to go, try to be as courteous and sincere as possible, explaining as far as you can, the reasons why you have to go or why you have to end the conversation. But also be attentive and try to notice if the other person has to go. If the person is looking around the room or they fall silent, then it is time to end the conversation. Whatever you do, try not to be one of those people who carry on the conversation indefinitely. If you really want to continue, ask them if you can meet up another time to discuss the matter further.

4.6. Additional considerations to be taken into account in different awareness-raising contexts

All the techniques we have discussed up to now can be applied in any face-to-face awareness-raising context. However, there are probably some people reading this guide who will find themselves in situations where they are not trying to raise the awareness of a friend, relative or

work colleague. We are referring to situations where you are dealing with a user of an organisation, public service or facility who has shared a rumour, either in the form of a complaint or simply as a passing comment. In these cases we also have a responsibility to try to challenge these false conceptions. In fact, lots of the examples we have seen show a degree of mistrust with regard to the way public services, or the organisations that provide services for citizens, operate. People often assume there is little transparency in the management of these types of services and that foreigners are treated favourably or under special conditions when it comes to benefits. What's more, many of the clichés to a certain degree call into question the professionalism of the staff who work there, as it is believed that they constantly allow themselves to be cajoled. There is a belief that the professionals are more permissive with foreigners, put fewer bureaucratic hurdles in their way and don't follow the criteria for awarding benefits.

On the other hand, as for rumours that accuse immigrants of making excessive use of public services, we find that this implies categorising people as either first- or second-class citizens, according to their nationality or place of origin. As though not only having been born here but also being the son or daughter of native parents gives people the right to special treatment over others.

On the one hand, the professional dealing with a service user has a responsibility to try to challenge these statements. Using the techniques we have explained but, in this case, respecting professional distance.

Being too familiar or treating someone more as a friend than a service user might make the other person think you want something and could make them mistrust what you are saying.

On the other hand, as professionals, we should not dismiss a user's complaints, first of all because behind the complaint there might be a real need. If this is the case, as professionals we have to signpost the person to the service that can best meet their needs and assure them that

their nationality will not in any way affect the way they are treated by other professionals. Whether or not you are a foreigner is not a valid criteria for receiving benefits or accessing a service.

We also need to try to deal with users' complaints with a positive attitude. If we show a willingness to listen to the complaint and try and give an assertive answer, we will find it easier to turn the conversation around without getting worked up. A complaint can be seen as an opportunity to try and find out how our service is seen by members of the public and can even be an opportunity to take action if we think it would be a good idea to make improvements.

Lastly, we should mention **the responsibility we have as professionals when it comes to spreading or dispelling rumours**. Saying nothing when someone makes a false statement and not challenging what they say can be seen as agreeing with what they've said and legitimising it even further.

5. Awareness of our strengths and weaknesses. Self-assessment

All skills require practice. To become an effective anti-rumour agent, it's not enough simply to read this guide. Practice and experience will help us to fine tune our technique and arguments, and to develop our own personal style, the one that works best and is most in keeping with the way we are and our usual surroundings. We shouldn't lose heart if our first self-assessment is negative. We should use this as a chance to improve, to highlight and work on our weakness and to value and reinforce our strengths.

Some interactions will go badly because we need to improve our technique but others will go badly because we have come across a person who is particularly stubborn when it comes to changing the way they think and reflect. Don't lose heart!

The questionnaire presented below offers a means of systematising our self-assessment. We can fill it in ourselves. If another trusted person has listened in on the conversation, we could

also ask them to fill it in for us so we can assess how they have seen us from the outside. We can even compare our self-assessment with the one completed by another person to see how aware we are of our own strengths and weaknesses. It is possible that we are too critical of ourselves or that we are not aware of our weaknesses. This comparison exercise could be very useful.

Lastly, we need to bear in mind that it is a self-assessment and therefore an exercise in self-knowledge: it is important to be as honest and objective as we can with our answers

My performance as an anti-rumour agent

This first block of questions can be answered either by anti-rumour agents who have received specific training and are part of an anti-rumour network, or by people who are not familiar with or linked to this kind of joint action and who have recently been in situations where they have tried to challenge a stereotype, prejudice or rumour through face-to-face dialogue with people around them.

Think about one of those conversations in which you have acted, either consciously or unconsciously as an anti-rumour agent, and answer the questions, giving each statement a score from 1 to 10 (in which 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree). Scores of under 4 will show the weak points we need to work on. Scores of over 7 show the skills we have made the best use of in that interaction and which are most likely our strong points. This is just a guide. Of course, the results for each situation need to be put into context: for example, we might consider that the place was not right but that it was the only place possible.

Try to do the exercise on the following pages a number of times, thinking about experiences of different conversations you have had - it is important that you are able to remember them in detail. Compare the results and look to see if there are aspects that crop up time and time again as weak points. If this is the case, try to think about what strategies would help you to improve these weak points.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. **My attitude** during the interaction was right. I used the conversation as an opportunity to improve my communication skills and did not see it as an uncomfortable or "bad" situation I needed to get through.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

2. **I listened attentively and I understood the other person's reasoning**. I can even repeat part of the conversation word for word.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

3. **I did not interrupt or talk over** the other person while they spoke.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

4. I used techniques such as **paraphrasing and asking questions** to understand the other person's reasoning better and keep their attention.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

5. I showed the person I spoke to that I **value their experience and do not judge them** (either the experience or them as a person).

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

6. The conversation took place at an ideal **time**.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

7. The conversation was held at a suitable **place**.

   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

8. If there were **other people present during the conversation**, they did not interfere in the dialogue in a negative way.

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

9. I felt **comfortable and relaxed** during the conversation. I even enjoyed it.

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

10. I managed to **control my emotions** and respond calmly. I did not react in an emotional or heated way.

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

11. I paid attention to my **body language** and controlled it. I remember the posture I adopted and I think it was right.

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

12. I maintained **eye contact.**

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

13. I **smiled** when the situation required it.

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

14. I used body language that **conveyed that I was listening** (nodded my head, relaxed movements, no nervous tics...).

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

15. I maintained **open body language**, showing a willingness to talk (body leaning forwards, hands open, hand on chest to show sincerity...).

Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly agree

16. My **tone of voice** was suitable (relaxed, free from irony, showing real interest...).

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

17. I used **language and vocabulary** similar to what the other person use to make it easier for us both to understand each other and I used specific and good illustrative concepts.

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

18. **The arguments I used in my responses** were appropriate and convincing.

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

19. I made the other person **reflect** on their presumptions and even to rethink some of their reasoning.

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

20. The conversation enabled me to **get closer** to the other person and build a more trusting and respectful relationship. If we meet again, I think we will both be happy about it.

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

21. I honestly believe that the conversation has enabled me to **learn something new** or think about things I have never thought about.

Strongly disagree   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Strongly agree

Notes on Self-assessment: My performance as an anti-rumour agent

- What are my most frequently recurring strong points?
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What are my most frequently recurring weak points?
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What will I do to improve my weak points?
  _____
  _____
  _____

Being an anti-rumour agent

Here we have a second block of questions designed to make you reflect on the extent of your affiliation to and identification with the role of anti-rumour agent. It is important to reflect and reach honest conclusions on the extent you are motivated to become an anti-rumour agent and make the continuous improvements this role requires.

Of course there are no right or wrong answers. It is about taking an in-depth look at what drives you and what holds you back when it comes to developing an active role as an anti-rumour agent. Asking ourselves if we truly believe that our work is worthwhile, what this enriching experience would mean to us and, above all, what we would enjoy about doing it. Only with this conviction can we find the motivation that will enable us to develop and constantly improve our skills as anti-rumour agents.

1. Section 3 of this guide invites us to become aware of our own prejudice towards groups of people that we have very little direct knowledge of. Often our opinions and assumptions about these groups are based on what we have heard in the mass media or are based on the opinions of family members or friends.

   Now think about some of these groups you might hold more deep rooted prejudice against, and remember a situation in which someone has tried to challenge or contradict your opinions about them, and has provided you with different information or considerations.

   What attitude did you adopt in that situation? Did you become defensive, or try and listen to what the person was attempting to say, open to the possibility of learning something new from them? Do you think you were able to hold a constructive conversation, or was your only objective to discredit or take apart the other person's arguments to continue defending your own initial opinion?

2. Being an anti-rumour agent requires you to put into practice a set of communication skills. Everyone starts out with these skills developed to different degrees. Some people may be particularly eloquent and self-confident when it comes to talking and holding conversations with others, while some may feel less self-confident in these situations or find it harder to put together a convincing argument on the spot. However, in addition to communication skills, there is another element which is essential in becoming an anti-rumour agent, which is the willingness to consciously exercise this role. However good our communication skills might be, if we are not motivated to make an active commitment to talking to people who spread rumours or negative prejudice, we will probably not have any impact when it comes to dispelling rumours or putting a stop to prejudice. Communication skills can be improved with training. The level we start at is not as important as our determination to improve our skills little by little. Our willingness or motivation to become an anti-rumour agent will depend on our convictions and the extent to which we are involved in certain social causes. These can evolve over time though they depend above all on the level of coherence between what we think, do and want.

67

In the coordinates axis below, the horizontal and vertical axes show, respectively, degree of communication skills developed and extent of affiliation to the "cause" of the anti-rumour agent. Which coordinate-axis quadrant would you currently put yourself in? What made you choose that quadrant?

3. Think of five reasons or grounds for encouraging you to become an active anti-rumour agent and note them down on the left side of the scales. Now think of five reasons or grounds for holding you back and deterring you from becoming an anti-rumour agent and note them down on the right side of the scales. If these scales were real, which side do you think you would go with?

Reasons for becoming an anti-rumour agent	Reasons for not becoming an anti-rumour agent

4. If you review your experience as an anti-rumour agent, would you recommend that anyone you know (friends, family...) join the cause and become an anti-rumour agent? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Finally would you like to be part of a network of anti-rumour agents in your town or city, and why?

6. How do you think an anti-rumour network could support and promote the work of anti-rumour agents? What kind of activities would you suggest?

6. Going a step further: dimensions to anti-rumour agents

As we already mentioned at the beginning of the guide, anti-rumour agents are a key part of anti-rumour strategies and anti-rumour networks, like those put in place by the Barcelona City Council and European cities participating in the Council of Europe's Communication for Integration Project (C4i). Anti-rumour agents are therefore very recent and are under constant development and taking on new roles and initiatives.

The skills and tools we use in this guide only serve to help with one of the four aspects of the anti-rumour agents' work: raising public awareness through interpersonal dialogue. There are three further areas of action, depending on the interlocutors and targets of the actions to be carried out. In this section, we will explain in more detail the specific aims of each dimension and the actions that can be carried out in two areas: internal work to strengthen the network and the strategy and external work, with actions aimed at the general public.

None of the following dimensions can be achieved as a single, isolated initiative. Quite the opposite, they are all interrelated. So, besides taking on the commitment to carry out face-to-face awareness-raising, anti-rumour agents must go a step further in their daily work. Impact may be much greater by joining forces and working at several levels on raising awareness. Our action therefore should become part of a global anti-rumour strategy, which in turn should be based on the work of an anti-rumour network of trained anti-rumour agents.

Anti-rumour agents as members of an organisation/service

Most of the people making up an anti-rumour network should be members of a city's local organisations: organisations working in a diverse range of fields, such as culture, local associations, education, sport and social action. It is in this area of action that anti-rumour agents play a crucial role, which is to raise awareness within the organisation itself. So their duty and primary goal are to get their organisations on board the project. In short, to introduce them to, raise awareness and promote comprehensive anti-rumour work inside the organisation itself, turning it into a strategic line of action. Sometimes this can be a simple task,

as the organisation might have quite high levels of awareness or may even have embarked on such actions before. On other occasions, it may require a greater awareness-raising effort, either because it is not a priority for the organisation or simply because they are not clear what role they can play in this kind of campaign.

Apart from that difficulty, this area of action has a two-fold approach:

- **Internally**: Anti-rumour agents can encourage their organisations to become more closely linked to anti-rumour work through various initiatives. For example, promoting debates within the organisation about cultural diversity and their position on this issue and the work they are doing in this regard (the challenges and opportunities it entails, what it means to foster intercultural relations, all the rumours related to diversity, etc.). It will also require that the organisation and its members get familiar with available materials and resources, have up-to-date information and, where possible, provide training on how to deal with rumours and stereotypes about cultural diversity.

- **External aspect:** The organisation can carry out external work whenever it is essential to carry out specific projects and campaigns that prepare the ground for raising awareness among the general public. To do this, it is important for the organisation to have knowledge of the particular needs and characteristics of the neighbourhood where they carry out their action. This will ensure best use is made of available resources and materials and that they are adapted to the specific needs of the neighbourhood.

  And as a source of information, the organisation should also make use of its own tools and communication resources as a way of informing and raising awareness (website, newsletter, mailboxes, Facebook, etc.).

The mass media

Anti-rumour agents have yet another role to play in raising awareness and forming alliances, and that is in the area dealing with the mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc.).

The impact the mass media has both on the spreading and dispelling of rumours makes it necessary to involve anti-rumour agents in this area, covering two separate aspects:

- **Internal aspect:** In the case of anti-rumour networks, agents can help with the construction and use of a **website** as it's a powerful channel for promoting an anti-rumour strategy and its messages. Anti-rumour agents will have to play an active role, proposing new resources and promoting these among members of the organisation, other organisations and the general public.

- **External aspect**: initiatives need to be carried out to promote collaboration from the **mass media** (local media, general-interest media and immigrant media organisations). They could propose articles, interviews and content that call into question existing rumours and offer a positive view of the cultural diversity found in our city.

The Networking Dimension for Anti-Rumour Action

Lastly, the third dimension relates directly to the aim of promoting networking as a form of anti-rumour action. As we said at the start, the initiatives carried out - in face-to-face awareness- raising, as a member of an organisation or with the mass media - should not be seen as isolated actions, but rather as part of a more global strategy in which working as a network is not just a goal but also a way for anti-rumour action.

So even though this is another area of action, it should be understood as a goal in itself, given that working as a network gives strength and legitimacy to the action being undertaken.

Fostering and strengthening action through anti-rumour networking will ensure there is a base of associations with the capacity to get engaged, be committed and take joint action in achieving the objectives to be achieved.

Some lines of actions already being developed, for instance by the Barcelona Anti-Rumour Network, focus on working with organisations at two levels:

- Participation in the construction and reinforcement of the strategy, structure, running and actions of the Network.
- Promoting genuine networking between organisations that are part of the platform.

The first level can be developed within a work context by engaging organisations with the greatest capacity or willingness to get involved in a steering/executive group or committee. A key task to get started is the drafting of an anti-rumour action plan, as the Barcelona Anti-Rumour Network did. This may include drawing up the priority objectives, areas of action and initiatives that need to be carried out during the first stage of launching anti-rumour action through the network.

The second level of networking is to find new organisations to join the Anti-Rumour Network (providing them with information and raising their awareness of the importance of fighting stereotypes, prejudice and rumours), and collaboration between organisations to boost the impact of the initiatives, spreading the work to several territories (neighbourhoods and districts) and areas of action (young people, women, health, education...).

In short, as we said at the start of this chapter, anti-rumour agents engage in several different approaches in order to implement awareness-raising initiatives, and try to promote alternative and really effective actions. We are continuing to discover new creative and innovative working methods that respond to an increasingly complex, fast changing phenomenon and environment.

7. Bibliography and reference resources

In addition to the communication skills that can be learned and developed, note that there is also a need for us to keep informed and broaden our knowledge if we are to fight rumours. In other words, raising arguments based on information as a further set of the intercultural skills. In this section, we offer you a range of resources, some of which are more theoretical, others more practical or even recreational, to keep the window open to continuous learning. There is no aim here to provide an exhaustive list of all the resources and bibliographies available but rather a selection of what we consider to be the most important or useful for the subject concerned. Spanish bibliography from the original version has been included although often lacking a translation into English.

Allport, G. and Postman, L. (1947). The psychology of rumor. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Allport, G. (1954): The nature of prejudice. Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Banton, M. (1967): Race relations. London: Tavistock, p. 8.

Borg, J. (2009): Persuasion. The art of influencing people. Madrid: Pirámide.

Brown, R. (1986): Social Psychology, 2nd Ed., New York: Free Press.

Delgado, M. (1998): Diversitat i integració. [Diversity and Integration] Barcelona: Empúries.

Devine, P. G. (1989): "Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components". Journal of personality and social psychology, no. 56, p. 5-18.

Devine, P. G.; Hirt, E. R.; Gehrke, E.M. (1991): "Diagnostic and confirmation strategies in trait hypothesis testing". Journal of personality and social psychology, no. 58, p. 952-963.

Fine, D. (2008): The fine art of confident conversation: how to improve your communication skills and build stronger relationships. Madrid: Temas de hoy.

Giménez, C.; Malgesini, G. (2000): Guía de conceptos sobre migraciones, racismo e interculturalidad. [Guide to concepts on migration, racism and interculturality] Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.

Meertens, R. W.; Pettigrew, T.F. (1992): "Le racisme violé: dimensions et mesure", a M. Wieviorka (dir.), Racisme et modernité. Paris: La Découverte, p. 109-126.

Muñoz, J.; Vázquez, F. (2004): Procesos colectivos y acción social. [Collective processes and social action] Barcelona: UOC.

Myers, D. (1995): Psicología Social. [Social Psychology] Mexico: McGraw-Hill.

Pease, A. (2004): The art of negotiation and persuasion Madrid: Amat Editorial.

Pease, A.; Pease, B. (2009): Body language. How to read others' thoughts by their gestures Madrid: Amat Editorial.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1980): "Prejudice", in Thernstrom et al. (ed.), Harvard Encyclopedia of American ethnic groups. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Pettigrew, T. F.; Meertens, R.W. (1991): "Subtle racism: its components and measurement", paper presented at the Three Days on Racism conference, Paris.

Rosnow, R. L. (1976): Rumor and Gossip: The Social Psychology of Hearsay. New York: Elsevier.

Sherif, M. (1974): "Conflicto y cooperación" a Torragrosa, J. (comp.): Teoría e investigación en la psicología social actual. [Conflict and co-operation. Theory and research in contemporary social psychology] Madrid: JOP.

Stolcke, V. (1994): "Europa: New Boundaries, New Rhetoric of Exclusion" in: Various authors. Extranjeros en el paraíso [Foreigners in Paradise]. Barcelona: Virus, p. 235 - 266.

Sutton, M.; Perry, B.; Parke J.; John-Baptiste, C. (2007): Getting the message across: using media to reduce racial prejudice and discrimination. Department for Communities and Local Government.

Sunstein, C. R. (2010). Rumorology. Barcelona: Debate.

Various authors (2004): Erradicación del chabolismo e integración social de los gitanos en Avilés; investigación, evaluación y propuestas. [Eradication of slum and substandard housing and social integration of the Roma community in Aviles; research, evaluation and proposals] Asturias: Universidad de Oviedo, Aviles City Council.

There are certainly a good number of resources and materials in your own cities that deal with rumours, stereotypes and discrimination, where you can find useful tips for awareness-raising and enriching your experience as an anti-rumour agent. Don't hesitate to check them out and share them with others engaged or interested in anti-rumour action for improving intercultural relations in your city or town and fostering awareness of the benefits and advantages of cultural diversity.

C4I - COMMUNICATION FOR INTEGRATION