

STAY TUNED – CITY IMPLEMENTATION CASE EXAMPLE

Summary

Case Example Title and City:

A catalyst for change in a Roma neighbourhood

Municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni (Greece, greater urban area of Thessaloniki)

Case Example Summary (6 lines max.)

The municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni has a significant Roma community, with a high level of very early school drop-out coupled with a range of social and economic problems, including poverty and health challenges. The municipality have worked via a team based in a new community centre, established within the Roma neighbourhood of Agios Nektarios, in the Menemeni district of the municipality. This team have led a new approach to engaging Roma families and children, helping them to connect with support services and re-connect with the education system.

Solutions offered by the case example

WHAT was the action being implemented? (1 line)

Establishing a new community centre team to work within the community and act as brokers to connect local people with professionals and services they need.

The CHALLENGE with this implementation: (4 lines)

The biggest barriers the municipality have always faced with implementing the measures to support this particular community is that, whilst they can offer the right things, the specific culture within the Roma community means that there is resistance to real engagement: a general lack of participation at an individual level and a pretty low view of education in general. Education is not a priority, so the support on offer is very often not taken up.

The city staff are often seen as outsiders in Agios Nektarios. The community are less trusting and less likely to engage positively with the support on offer. This completes a cycle of challenging circumstances, whereby the root of the social challenges are essentially the same issues as the implementation challenges: difficulties in getting the community to engage cause the initial problems and also makes implementation of (good) interventions much more difficult.

How was the above challenge overcome? (6 lines)

What action did you take (activities) to deal with the above challenge?

Did you try more than one activity? How well did it work - Was the challenge completely solved, partly solved or not at all solved?

The team used the opportunity of a new community centre being established within the Ag. Nektarios neighbourhood – they used this centre as a base for services, with people working day-to-day in the community, on the ground.

By interacting directly with people within from community, rather than going through proxies (where messages may get distorted or watered-down), the team built up a much more nuanced picture of the local people and the problems they experienced. This helped them to understand better why previous support hadn't worked well.

They were also regarded less and less as "outsiders". They were recognised. All this helped them to gain the trust of the community. From that, they worked with them to "nudge" them towards (re)engaging with education, either through the second chance school or the remedial teaching offer. Once back in the education system, talking about their future (and the place of education in that future) became easier. This (slowly!) leads to a greater engagement with society as a whole.

What difference has this approach made? (10 lines max.)

During the implementation process the team noticed that they finally achieved a good level of cooperation with the general population and the local stakeholder team. Working from "within" the community was essential to success in this area.

This has helped the team to change the whole dynamic of the work of the municipality in Ag. Nektarios. For the first time, people from the community are dealing directly with people from the municipality; they are accessing help and support for themselves. Previously, such contact with the municipality was channelled through community leaders. The community centre being part of the community is making support more accessible and empowering local citizens.

The municipality team have become a stronger link between the parts of the whole education process. Before that they didn't have that strength. They are becoming facilitators, improving the methodology and tools so they can implement stronger actions in the future. The team say that the community now feel that more included in the whole policy of the municipality.

What lessons might other EU cities take from this Case Example? (10 lines max.)

The team knew beforehand that working from within the community was key, but now they have a clear ideas of what that means in practice. It's easy enough to say, "we will work in a

bottom-up, community led way” but the practicalities of how you do that are not always so straightforward.

The team have used the community centre to engage directly with the local citizens and develop a different credibility with them. The team are not viewed with suspicion; not as the outsider and this put them in a different position, where they could now support and influence people much more effectively.

The power of this direct contact also wasn't fully understood beforehand. City staff rarely had much direct contact with the specific people they were supporting as this was often brokered by community leaders. Now, the team understand the local people much better as well as their needs, challenges and their priorities, hopes and dreams. This improved understanding is critical to designed and implementing future support programmes.

In this way, the team's approach is a strong example of understanding and working with the conditions for implementation when trying to get new projects and policies working effectively. The same measures implemented elsewhere would work better or differently, but in the specific conditions present in Ag. Nektarios, a different approach to implementation was required.

The team took the time to understand those conditions. They understood the motivation of the local people, their concerns and the details of their challenges much more deeply than before. They used this to adapt their approach to work better within the specific context.

The team have also realised the different role that the municipality can take in supporting education success – becoming a broker in the process; linking together all the aspects that affect educational success (but not necessarily being the people who intervene directly in all cases)

Key Facts and Figures:

Start and end dates of case example

Date of preparation of this case example
April 2019

Who prepared the case example?

Budget

Extra information and hyperlinks

Annex

At least 2 good quality photos to be included