

# Focus Experience

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## Title

# Community promotion and intervention in the neighbourhood of Los Ámbitos in Rivas Vaciamadrid

## Basic data

**City:** Rivas Vaciamadrid

**Country:** Spain

**Number of inhabitants:** 80,000

**Topics:** associationism and participation, civics, culture and leisure, information, lifelong learning, policy administration, urban development and welfare.

**Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities:** 1, 2, 4, 9, 14, 16, 17, 20

## Summary

The City Council of Rivas Vaciamadrid, through the Department of Social Services, promoted the setting in motion of a Programme of Community Promotion and Intervention in the neighbourhood of Los Ámbitos that would allow, by means of a coordinated, participative and transforming action, the prevention of the generation of processes of social exclusion and marginalization as well as possible conflicts that could alter the social peace of the municipality.



## Starting situation

In 2003, the government of the Community of Madrid, through the Institute of Housing proceeded with the adjudication and the delivery of 386 social dwellings for the quota of special needs, located in the municipality of Rivas Vaciamadrid, of these 254 were in the neighbourhood of Los Ámbitos.



**Rivas Vaciamadrid promotes social cohesion in the neighbourhood of Los Ámbitos**

The adjudication of the housing by the quota for special needs includes a profile of population with indicators of social exclusion, such as, for example: single mother families, victims of domestic violence, insufficiency/lack of economic resources, unemployment, informal economy, labour precariousness, or belonging to ethnic minorities such as the gypsy people, etc.

The delivery of these dwellings was carried out without prior notification and negotiation with the municipality, which impeded a planned integration of these families and meant that it was necessary to search for a solution for this unexpected reality. This led, initially, to taking emergency measures such as the massive schooling of the minors, the opening of files in the Social Services, carrying out the procedures and the updating of Minimum Insertion Incomes (economic aid for people without resources accompanied by actions of social and labour insertion), etc.

Subsequently, an action was carried out with the aim of integrating the more than 200 families into the community, avoiding social alarm and the generation of a "nucleus of risk" that could turn the neighbourhood into a marginal "ghetto".

## Objectives

The aim of this intervention, managed by the Social Services, was to coordinate the common work of the various public administrations (Community of Madrid and the City Council of Rivas Vaciamadrid), of the areas of social protection (health, education, employment, culture and social services) and the active participation both of the inhabitants of these dwellings and of the associations of the area.

- To promote the social inclusion through actions of community promotion and intervention, to level the existing inequalities, to foster the full exercising of citizenship and to generate social cohesion.
- To achieve an improvement in the living conditions of the citizens through educational and participative processes.

### Specific goals:

- To boost the awareness of the recently arrived population of their situation, their needs and possibilities.
- To highlight the positive aspects of the community breaking down stigmatizing images.
- To establish interventions oriented towards promoting dialogue and the improvement of neighbourhood coexistence.
- To involve the families in the life of the communities of neighbours.
- To foster the active participation of the new families in the life of the neighbourhood and the municipality.
- To promote the creation of spaces for meeting and community work.
- To foster the sense of belonging.
- To promote the coexistence and dialogue among the different ethnic groups and nationalities.

## Methodology

By means of studies carried out by the social services and of the knowledge of the population that resides in this area, it has been confirmed that it is an area which suffers from strong situations of inequalities compared with other areas of the municipality. Broadly speaking, the factors or problematic situations detected include: a concentration of social housing and of vulnerable groups, a high rate of neighbourhood conflicts, a high rate of non-payment of rents or community charges, informal economy, labour precariousness, lack of knowledge of municipal resources, concentration of beneficiaries of the Minimum Insertion Incomes, illiteracy, lack of social skills, housing illegally squatted, etc.

Faced with this reality, different interventions have been set in motion:

1.- Interventions oriented towards achieving the socio-educational normalisation of the population and the acquisition of skills and competences for the personal life and the life in the community life:

- Group actions have been carried out that respond to the needs detected in the community; currently there exists a group which is informing about the municipal resources and services, and another in the social skills acquisition for the community life by means of literacy training.
- A community intervention has been carried out in close coordination with the social workers of reference in the area.
- A daily work is being done in terms of social education with the neighbourhood so as to provide them with the necessary social skills.

2.- Interventions for the social inclusion of the population in the city of Rivas:

- Activities developed in the municipality are organised in the neighbourhood (cultural, sports, leisure, environmental, etc.).
- In necessary cases the neighbours are motivated and accompanied in the use and utilisation of the municipal resources.



**The neighbours participate in the management of community activities**

## Assessment

3.- Interventions for suitably organising the management of the communities of neighbours:

-The situation is analysed in terms of the state of infrastructures, services, maintenance, non-payment, and community management in the areas of intervention.

-The management of this is assessed: calls for meetings, elaboration of minutes, payment arrears, etc.

-Home visits to the management boards are made so as to offer them support in their responsibilities.

4.- Interventions aimed at promoting dialogue and the coexistence between different cultures and nationalities that coexist in the area from the perspective of citizenship:

-Mediation actions are carried out for the resolution of conflicts in the communities of neighbours.

-Strategies of social intervention are set in motion aimed at reducing the number of conflicts and to develop the feeling of belonging in the neighbourhood and the municipality.

-The diffusion within the neighbourhood of the intervention strategies so as to increase the participation.

-Community meeting activities are organised in the area with the aim of getting the participation of the greatest number of neighbours in the programming and setting in motion of these (Spring Festivity, Water Festivity, etc.).



**Intercultural dialogue is favoured through workshops**

5.- Intervention of coordination with the Institute of Housing of Madrid, the Institute of Re-housing and Social Integration, or any other organism of the Community of Madrid and the General State Administration.

6.- Project of Social Grants for Youths Committed with the Community. From the Area of Social Policies grants are offered to youths of between 18 and 25 years old registered in the municipality and living with their families, which counts on a training and work and/or association experience in social intervention. In this way the youths can take advantage of the granting of social flats from the City Council in the area of Los Ámbitos, in exchange for the commitment to actively participate in the projects developed by the Social Services in the area.

## Social and urban context

The municipality of Rivas Vaciamadrid, with an extension of 67.4 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 81,884 inhabitants (figures from 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015), is located in an area to the south-east of the Community of Madrid, 15 kilometers from the capital and with a tertiary economy: services represent 77.4% of the local employment.



**Los Ámbitos neighbourhood, Rivas Vaciamadrid**

The project is developed in a specific area of the municipality, the neighbourhood of Los Ámbitos, where a concentration is produced of social housing and of vulnerable groups dedicated to the informal economy, or in a situation of labour precariousness. Currently this neighbourhood is made up of more than 17 nationalities.



## Assessment

After these years of intensive work and various readjustments to the team of community intervention, the creation has been achieved of various cohesive groups of neighbours that reflect on their situation and are working on the continual improvement of the neighbourhood. The neighbours are aware that their neighbourhood has improved considerably since their arrival; there exist many more public and private facilities close to their homes, the accesses and transport have improved, and they have the opportunity of actively participating in the municipal life.

The work with the communities of neighbours continues to develop in an intensive way given that there is evidence that the conflicts between neighbours have reduced and the situations of risk derived from the bad state of the infrastructures and common facilities have reduced too.

It is worth highlighting that the annual call for the Spring Festivity is now fully organised by the neighbours, with some specific support from the Department of Social Services, which has become an annual event, in which the different cultures of the neighbourhood take part.

### Strengths:

- The members of the team of community intervention have become figures of reference in the neighbourhood.
- There exists a greater involvement by the neighbours in the meetings of the communities of neighbours, as well as a greater degree of participation and transparency of the board meetings.
- An improvement has been achieved in the neighbourhood coexistence, although support in mediation is still required between neighbours and cultures in certain moments.
- A reduction has been produced in terms of the occupation of the common areas, and the respect for these has increased.
- Various cohesive working groups have been created which work according to common interests: festivities commission, empowerment group for women by means of literacy skills acquisition, etc.
- The youths of the project of social grants actively participate in the development of the programme and in the life of the neighbourhood.

### Weaknesses:

- The coordination with the other administrations is the aspect where greater difficulties have been found throughout the project.
- Lack of staff for intensifying the work carried out.

### Future proposals:

- Setting in motion a Management School for the management boards of the communities of neighbours.
- Updating of the Guide of the Communities of Neighbours, as a tool for working with the neighbours.

## Contact

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