TReP - 'Course Preparations' Recommendations Report

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Project Partners:

Introduction:

The output for the IO.2 – 'Course Preparations' phase of the TReP project, as stated in the original proposal:

"Will consist of a collaborative effort between partners to create a preliminary compilation of possible course content, which will be described in a recommendation report. Partners will investigate what components should be necessarily included in a course on restorative practices, what components could be optional, and what can be excluded entirely. Through the research conducted for the Regional Report and the investigations conducted directly for this output, partners will have a clear understanding of what the course to be developed should look like and what should be included. This will entail extensive research and a scrutinous selection procedure."

CDI in Ireland were tasked, as lead Partner for IO.2, with identifying a simple methodology for TReP partners to use when approaching RP practitioners, agencies, services, training providers, academics and experts in the field, as well as other likely contacts who would have some understanding of Restorative Practice within their work or profession, in order to gather relevant information. The high number of RP experts/services/practitioners that were approached was down to the fact that most of the TReP partners had a lack of working knowledge or understanding of RP. It was also felt that garnering information from alternate, germane sources, would augment the expertise of CDI in identifying potential content and structure for the online course. Each TReP partner took on the responsibility of making contact within a specified geographic area, via email. Contacts in the following countries were approached;

- Austria/Germany
- Bulgaria/Hungary/Poland/Romania
- Ireland/ UK (Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales)
- Malta
- Spain/Portugal
- Canada
- New Zealand
- United States

The emails sent, outlined the nature of the TReP project (including a 3-page summary of the anticipated outcomes and overall aims of the project – See Appendix 1.) and asked the following three, specific questions;

- **What are the key RP components, or core elements, that should be incorporated into an online course of this nature?**

- **What kind of structure should an online course of this nature have?**

- **What critical learning around RP skills, knowledge and understanding should participants on an online course of this nature be expected to have acquired on its completion?**

Approximately 105 contacts were made by TReP partners, resulting in responses from 34 practitioners/academics/experts/services (See Appendix – 2 for a list of these contacts) which falls within the 30-60% rate, seen as acceptable for this kind of enquiry.

> **Recommendations detailing which key RP components, or core elements, should be included in the online course:**

There was considerable agreement across the range of people and services who engaged with this enquiry, about what it would be essential to include in an online course in Restorative Practices. Recommended content therefore is as follows:

1. The course should include information and learning about the historical background, origins and development of Restorative Approaches, (including reference to indigenous processes,) with a review of the relevant literature available. The Restorative Approaches to be referenced will include Restorative Practice (RP), Restorative Justice (RJ), Family Group Conferencing (FGC), Victim-Offender Mediation (VOM), Mediation and other forms of conflict resolution and reparation. A further element of this aspect would be a piece around contrasting and comparing the range of Restorative Approaches both globally and locally, how Restorative Practice has evolved and changed and restorative theory developed, over time.

2. There should be an aspect around examining research undertaken and evidence gathered of RP applications in a range of situations. For example, domestic violence scenarios and sexual abuse scenarios, as well school settings/youth services/probation/police services etc., including critiquing film/video examples of RP facilitated in these scenarios.

3. There should be an aspect exploring how theories of change, strategy and decision making and how affect, connection and engagement theories have influenced/influence RP; of how shame and vulnerability affects individuals and communities and how we react to wrong-doing; as well as an exploration of regret and remorse.

4. There should be an aspect relating to an understanding of the status of national and international policy and legislation regarding RP and what developments there have been regarding its embedding into organisational structures and cultures.

5. There should be a section on exploring and understanding risk-assessment protocols for potential participants engaging in restorative interventions, where more serious harm has occurred; including an analysis of when to do it vs when not to do it. This should tie into a whole section on general preparation processes and procedures required in the planning of restorative interventions, including when and how RP could, and should be used to address serious harm, or in some cases when it shouldn't and why it shouldn't. An exploration of the phases of conflict should also be addressed here.

6. There should also be an aspect on the challenges, obstacles and threats facing RP and how to address these; as well as a section on how to implement RP – winning hearts and minds, challenging established practices and the practicalities of affecting a change in thinking, operation and policy.

In no particular order, there should also be a thorough exploration, examination and understanding demonstrated around:

7. The importance of relationships within RP, the need to develop positive inter-personal relationships and the importance of developing Social Capital within organisations. A section within the relationship aspect, should include an evaluation of the Social Discipline Window (McCold & Wacthel, 2000) and the Relationship Window (Vaandering, 2010) models and a comparison of these and other models.

8. How the repairing of harm by responding healthily to it when it has occurred and how to prevent and/or reduce further harm, is a fundamental element of RP. The preventative nature of RP should therefore be incorporated into this course.

9. How RP has become a global social movement of change, for the creation of a more democratic, caring and peaceful society and one that promotes community-building, Active Citizenship and a restorative culture.

10. Restorative Language, including the work of the Centre for Non-Violent Communication and work exploring the free expression of emotion and the role of emotional intelligence within Restorative Practices should be included.

11. The role of Restorative Conversations in RP and the use of Restorative Questions in a variety of contexts.

12. Fair Processes and consciously being fair.

13. The background to, use, facilitation and implementation of different kinds of 'Circles' within organisations.

14. The importance of and ability to, facilitate effective restorative meetings and conferences and the acquisition, development and demonstration of the range of skills required to do that. (These would include active listening, being fair, consistent and explicit, coaching, balanced-facilitation and an ability to relinquish power in facilitation skill development, reflection, preparation for restorative interventions, de-escalation, use of language etc.) There also needs to be an understanding of the psychological processes at play during restorative interventions.

15. The need for self-reflection and analysis of how "What I think I'm doing now is RP," when it may not be; and therefore, a focus on "What I need to do now to be restorative/more restorative within my work and relationships?".

16. The links between RP and positive mental health and well-being.

Recommendations for Possible TReP Online Course Methodology:

Feedback from the multiple sources contacted for this report, included two clearly stated concerns about how a 100% online course could work to skill anyone in the use of Restorative Practices. First and foremost, every restorative practitioner pointed out that **relational learning** is a core requirement for any Restorative Practices training and they all expressed concern about how this could be facilitated in an online setting. Their second concern was about ensuring that the course would offer opportunities for individual and group-based, reflective practice and learning.

Some, (not all) practitioners mentioned the need for the course to include an assessment process, that would include course participants being observed demonstrating a range of restorative skills; from the use of restorative language to the facilitation of restorative circles, meetings and conferences.

A number of ideas about online methods that would support the development of RP Skills were put forward as follows:

- Provide regular engagement online for participants, via tutorials, role-playing scenarios, circle discussions and creating a safe space for interaction.
- Group project work – to help model the restorative approach (working 'with,' being fair, etc.)
- Regarding training people to facilitate restorative justice or practice conferences, it was proposed that course participants work through examples for themselves to determine [risk] assessments, [rehabilitation] plans, etc.
- Design questions for reflection purposes and incorporate 250-500-word assignments on own practices.
- Model Reflective Practice through circles [online].
- Provide a place for participation/practice/role play with others.
- Required participation in Communities of Practice (perhaps primarily through national and professional hubs).
- Possible observation on-site or based on video recording (both options to be paid for by participant/organisation).
- A 100% online element, gives scope for greater practice of restorative language, (perhaps through multiple choice options – e.g. doable requests, selecting feelings and needs from list); Enforcing learning of restorative questions and fairness elements, noting that the questions can vary somewhat in practice and as between models (e.g. conversations, meetings, conferences); Deepening knowledge according to participant's individual interests, e.g. select option if want more on, say, emotional ranges.
- Could exercises that are currently group exercises be done individually? E.g. generating words to express feelings when our needs are met and not met, asking how people deal with anger and shame, and responding to videos – probably can with a bit of creativity?
- Could we ask participants to summarise key learning from modules and can the answers be checked electronically by say, matching key words or multiple-choice questions?

Anticipated Critical Learning Acquired from an Online Course:

1. The most cited response given to this question was for participants to acquire **listening skills**, i.e. active listening and/or 'deep listening'.

2. A requirement for restorative facilitators to have **good emotional intelligence** and the **ability to be present to everyone's needs** during restorative interventions, came across strongly from contributors.

3. Another requirement identified was for participants **to understand and be able to distinguish between different Restorative Approaches, and their application, in different settings.**

4. Expertise with the **use of restorative language** was also highlighted as a critical learning objective for the course.

5. As was the ability to identify and design **RP implementation strategies, as part of a restorative culture** within organisational structures.

6. Finally, the ability, through self-reflection, **to identify how RP could be incorporated within participants' professional (and personal) lives** was also deemed important in terms of the anticipated critical learning from the course.

Conclusion:

From a range of responses, across a range of European sources and beyond, a number of key congruences around possible content, structure and critical learning for an online course have emerged. Hopefully they have been captured in this short report.

It is clear that some aspects of the course composition will require a high level of imagination and ingenuity on behalf of TReP partners, to incorporate what constitutes essential Restorative Practice, both academically and practically, in a relevant, meaningful and creative way. This will be particularly challenging when incorporating the relational learning aspect of the course.

Addendum:

Following the TReP partners' visit to Ireland between the 24th and 28th of June, to participate in all CDI's core RP training courses, a partners' meeting was held on the 28th of June 2019, to review how the learning from the training might be incorporated into course design considerations and to further reflect, via a "Next Steps" exercise, on the kind of preparations that would be required to facilitate an effective undertaking of the IO. 3. phase of the project – 'Course Design'.

Andy Battell and Claire Casey - CDI, Tallaght West, Dublin, Ireland – 29/06/19

Appendix 1.

<u>TReP – Online Course in RP</u>
(Further information)

TReP - online training in Restorative Practice, is a project implemented by an international partnership established between SOS Malta, The Childhood Development Initiative (CDI), Partner Bulgaria Foundation, SGM Solutions & Global Media GmbH, Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology and Brain Shuttle. The project is funded by the Erasmus Programme of the European Union.

Goal and objectives

The overall goal of this project is to create a course that will be conducted entirely online in Restorative Practices for a Level 5 Undergraduate Certificate, accredited, through MCAST, (Malta College of Art Science and Technology) by the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) and therefore, recognised throughout Europe via the Bologna Process. The need for a course of this type is evidenced by the growing interest in Restorative Practice in Europe as well as by the fact that no such course is available online in Europe, (outside of Ireland and the UK) which therefore currently requires interested participants to travel and study domestically or abroad, incurring high costs. In order to ensure consistency across all participants and accreditation by MCAST, the course will be developed and run in English. Finally, beyond being conducted fully online, the course will also be carried out on a part-time basis. This is essential, since the main target groups for the course are professionals such as law enforcement officials, teachers, and psychologists, who are already working in the field. A part-time course will offer these participants the opportunity to gains the skills and knowledge necessary to implement Restorative Practices as well as to keep up with their regular work commitments.

It is evident from its definitions that Restorative Practice can be a powerful tool in, not only mitigating conflict, but also in preventing it from happening in the first place, or, at least, reducing the possibility of it happening and the damages that result from the conflict. The course to be developed through this project will target police, other law enforcement officials, teachers, councillors, psychologists, professionals working with domestic abuse victims, lawyers, and other relevant professionals. Hence, although the course will directly relate to the participants of the course, its impact will be far greater. In fact, the main motivation of this project is to encourage the use of Restorative Practice in schools, for victims of domestic abuse, migrants and with other vulnerable groups. Although the use of Restorative Practices for this project will not be limited to the aforementioned groups, they will be given a special focus, since our background research and consultations show that these three groups are most vulnerable in conflict situations.

The transnational component of this project is vital. Firstly, Restorative Practices are relatively new in Europe (compared to, for example, North America, where they are more widely used). In addition to this, there are few experts in the regions where the project is to be implemented, including Malta, Spain and Bulgaria, that have the knowledge and expertise around RP to formulate an entirely new course on such an innovative subject. Thus, we will benefit greatly from collaboration with other experts in the field. Secondly, as

the course will be available online and thus across Europe, the development of the course by a consortium of organisations in various European countries will enrich the contents of the course as well as increase its possible impact by raising awareness of it throughout the continent.

Why create an online course in Restorative Practices?

Although several courses are available on the theory and use of Restorative Practices, most of these are only available locally and require participants to reside in the country in question in order to participate. Examples of such courses include:

- the certificate in Restorative Practices and mediation offered by the University of Maynooth, which has to be taken there at the University in Ireland (https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/undergraduate-studies/courses/certificate-restorative-practice-and-mediation);
- summer courses offered by our partners, the Childhood Development and Initiative, which also have to be taken on-site and which are not accredited according to the Bologna Process (http://www.restorativepracticesireland.ie/summer-course-teachers-2017/);
- the diploma in Restorative Practices offered by the City and Guilds, which is only available in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland and which is a Level 4 diploma.(https://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and apprenticeships/justice/community-and-youth-justice/7441-restorative practice#tab=information&acc=level4);
- a registry of on-site trainers of Restorative Practices in various locations published by the Restorative Justice Council (https://restorativejustice.org.uk/trainers-register);
- an online course in Restorative Practices offered by the International Institute of Restorative Practices, which is an American-based organisation and, as such, follows the US credit system (https://www.iirp.edu/education-programs/graduate-education/course-offerings/fully-online-courses).

Consequently, Restorative Practices are not widely used in conflict management with students, domestic abuse victims etc. within the rest of Europe, since few people have access to obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge to implement such practices. In addition, most of the courses available in Europe are located in the United Kingdom (and Ireland,) known for having some of the highest tuition fees for higher education in Europe. In view of this, the course that will be developed for this project will be the first affordable course in Restorative Practices that is available to participants across Europe and, therefore, that will enable professionals working in the relevant fields to gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to implement Restorative Practices in their work with students, victims of domestic abuse, migrant, and other vulnerable groups.

In addition to being the first course on Restorative Practices to be widely available and affordable for all Europeans, it will be the first course made available entirely online by a Maltese educational institution. In this regard, this project will not only innovate the various possibilities of alternative dispute-management throughout Europe, but it will also contribute to innovations within the Maltese Education Sector.

Online course

Since the primary output of the project will be the Level 5 accredited course on Restorative Practices, by the time the project is completed, the partners will have designed and developed a certified and internationally recognised online training course in Restorative Practices, developed by renowned experts in the field. The course will consist of an e-learning training programme encompassing learning contents, learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences), and an assessment system compliant with the European and Maltese Qualification Framework requirements. This will be produced using ICT-based methodologies and delivered in a digital, multimedia and interactive format, fostering an innovative and attractive approach to teaching and learning; which we will make available in an accessible learning management system. As such, the project will produce an accredited qualification (Level 5 according to the MQF) and, therefore, the validation of learning outcomes across non-formal and informal media through the adaptation of an electronic tool for experiential learning, which will promote a better understanding and recognition of the qualification in Europe and beyond; improve competences linked to the professional profile of participants and, therefore, practitioners of Restorative Practices; and enable to use of Restorative Practices as a means of alternative dispute resolution with vulnerable groups.

In short, the results expected throughout the project are:

1. Better understanding amongst relevant practitioners and stakeholders of what Restorative Practices are and the benefits that they can have in work with vulnerable groups, through the publication of the Regional Report.
2. Professional development of the professionals who partake in the course thus bettering their professional profile, as well as enabling to make use of Restorative Practices as a form of alternative dispute resolution with the people and groups that they reach out to.
3. Empowerment and protection of vulnerable groups and other persons experiencing conflict, through the use of Restorative Practices by means of techniques suggested by participants (professionals) of the course.
4. Innovation and excellence in online education across Europe.

Needless to say, and most importantly, since this course will offer innovative practices to professionals, it will also indirectly affect the people to whom those professionals reach out. In fact, although professionals such as police, councillors, teachers, psychologists, etc. are the direct target group of the course that will be developed, it is their students/clients/victims, etc. that are the main motivation of this project.

We believe that creating an adequate tool is paramount to equipping professionals with the tools and techniques necessary for utilising and developing Restorative Practices in the field.

Appendix 2.

Respondents and contributors to recommendations for the report:

1. Tony Walker, Director of Service Delivery – Restorative Solutions (UK)
2. Catherine O'Connell – Edward M. Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention National University of Ireland, Maynooth (Ireland)
3. Michelle Stowe – Connect RP Training and Consultancy (Ireland)
4. Mick Levens – Margaret Thorsborne and Associates (UK)
5. Fiona Dwyer – Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (Scotland)
6. Dr Ian Marder, Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Law – University of Ireland, Maynooth (Ireland)
7. Dr Kieran O'Dwyer – Restorative Practices Ireland (RPI) (Ireland)
8. Haley Farrar J.D – Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand)
9. Terence Bevington – Conexus Conflict Consultancy (UK)
10. Lindsay Malone, Faculty of Lifelong Learning, Carlow Institute of Technology (Ireland)
11. Paul Moran, Head of Training and Consultancy – L30RelationalSystems (UK)
12. Anna Gregory, Restorative Facilitator – Peacemakers (UK)
13. Vincenç Rullan – The Restorative Practices Association from the Balearic Islands (Spain)
14. Àngels Garcia Cunyat – The Restorative Practices Association from the Balearic Islands (Spain)
15. Ricard Vila I Barceló – The Restorative Practices Association from the Balearic Islands (Spain)
16. János Wagner – Partners Hungary Foundation (Hungary)
17. Elina Popova – South-West University Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)
18. Oana Bajka – Intercultural Institute Timisoara (Romania)
19. Desislava Anzova – SWU Neot Rilski & DSK Bank (Bulgaria)
20. Roxana Mihaela Diaconu – Teachers Training Centre Bucharest (Romania)
21. Galina Kovacheva – Varna Open University "Chernorizets Hrabar" (Bulgaria)
22. Agnieszka Kosowicz – Polish Migration Forum Foundation (Poland)
23. Grozdanka Stamova – High School Stefan Karadja (Bulgaria)
24. Lavinia Visan – Liceul Teoretic "Petru Cercel" Targoviste (Romania)
25. Rumen Petrov – New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria)
26. Dobrinka Chankova Professor, PhD – South-West University Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)

27. Christoph Willms – The Service Office for Victim-Offender Mediation and Conflict Settlement (Servicebüro für Täter-Opfer-Ausgleich und Konfliktschlichtung) (Germany)
28. Charlie Mifsud – RISE (Malta)
29. Dr Kevin Sammut Henwood – RISE (Malta)
30. Dr Trevor Calafato, Lecturer, Criminology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing – University of Malta (Malta)
31. Joyce Damato – Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security (Malta)
32. Maria Arpa – Centre for Peaceful Solutions (Malta)
33. Carmen Borg – Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security (Malta)
34. Dr Joan Camilleri, Manager – Mount Carmel Hospital (Malta)