



# TREP

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

## Final Report

**This report traces the steps undertaken by the transnational TReP Consortium to develop a unique online interactive course in Restorative Practices (RP) – a first attempt and important move in the field of RP. It will offer insight into the strengths and challenges encountered through the piloting of the course, provide recommendations for future course delivery and highlight its overall impact.**



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with input from all TReP Partners



MCAST



PARTNERSBULGARIA  
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## Introduction

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The Erasmus+ Project TReP was born out of a growing interest Europe-wide towards introducing alternative pathways to dealing with conflict and repairing harm when it arises. Council Recommendation 2018 concerning Restorative Justice In Criminal Matters recognises the benefits of Restorative Justice in offering an ‘inclusive and participative approach to justice which has been shown to help victims recover from crime, reduce reoffending and save public resources’<sup>1</sup>. Restorative Practices as a philosophy and skillset is not just reactionary in nature however. On the contrary, whilst being rooted in restorative justice principles of fairness, inclusivity and equity, it also offers tools and skills to cultivate social capital through the building and maintaining of relationships within communities with the belief that the more time spent on building relationships the less time is spent repairing harm. More specifically;

*Restorative Practices (RP) are an **evidence-based** philosophy and set of skills that help us to develop and sustain strong and happy organisations and communities by **actively developing good relationships, preventing the escalation of conflict and handling conflict and wrongdoing in a creative and healthy manner***

### *TReP Course Definition*

On exploring the project idea, it became evident that there was no European accredited online course on this subject and more awareness was needed around the benefits that such practices could offer to individuals / communities be it in the workplace, school, prison and any other spaces which see people coming together. This marked a unique opportunity for the introduction of an accredited course that would seek to fill this gap whilst also testing the possibility of bringing RP to an online format, something which has become increasingly in demand at a time where we are seeing a shift from learning in a physical environment to online learning.

In summary, the project aimed at:

1. Garnering a 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 a Regional Report.

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<sup>1</sup> [EFRJ Policy Brief CoE Rec.pdf \(euforumrj.org\)](https://www.euforumrj.org/)

2. Professional development of the professionals who partook in the course thus bettering their professional profile as well as enabling them to make use of restorative practices 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.

In order to meet its objectives, over the course of 3 years, the project saw 6 transnational partners with their own unique skill set, coming together to explore, develop and pilot the 'MCAST Undergraduate Certificate in Restorative Practices', an online EQF/MQF Level 5 Undergraduate Course of 30 ECTS, available on a part-time basis to participants throughout Europe.

## The Project Partners

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**Solidarity Overseas Services (SOS) Malta** was the lead on this project. It stands on a number of pillars including Social Solidarity; Volunteering; Overseas Development; and Research and Training. Within the pillar of Social Solidarity, the organisation implements projects focusing on social inclusion of disadvantaged groups such as migrants or the unemployed. SOS Malta advocates, in particular, for increased intercultural understanding and the introduction and implementation of measures that contribute towards the two-way process of integration and social inclusion of migrants living in Malta. Moreover, it seeks to develop and implement new and improved practices for social inclusion and to advocate for effective policies at local level.

**Partners Bulgaria Foundation** is a non-governmental organization based in Bulgaria. Since 1998 the foundation has worked to enhance civil society participation and promote a culture of peace, dialogue and conflict management on local, national and regional levels. Its mission is to reinforce democratic change in adherence to human rights principles by encouraging relevant actors to adopt and implement effective policies and practices in areas like judicial law, social care, child protection, education, economic development and ecology.

**The Childhood Development Initiative** based in Dublin, was established in 2003 and aims to break the cycle of child poverty in areas where it is most deeply entrenched by improving the outcomes for children and young people. CDI has designed, delivered and evaluated a suite of

programmes across a spectrum of local needs including language, literacy, health, early years, conflict management and community safety. CDI has been implementing a Restorative Practices Programme since 2010, a key part of which has been delivering training in Restorative Practices, targeting a range of professionals that work with children and young people as well as parents and young people themselves.

**The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)** is the leading vocational institution on the Maltese Islands. MCAST's mission statement emphasises the international dimension of the education and training to be provided to all its students. MCAST's curriculum is constantly tied to the needs of the labour market, while ensuring the educational development of the learner, facilitating one's lifelong learning process. MCAST has set up an organisation structure where Curriculum Development is strongly linked to Staff Professional Development, Research and Innovation, Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning and Entrepreneurship. This is supported by a strong Quality Management System.

Located in Tenerife, in the Canary Islands region, **Brainshuttle** is a company focused on the development of multidisciplinary e-learning programmes, covering the whole production chain: from the very first idea to the latest user experience. Brainshuttle delivers and develops courses in various desired disciplines, according to European Qualification standards, i.e. EQFS, which ensures international accreditation standards. They aim to create innovative learning spaces by making use of alternative didactic approaches, production tool support and excellent quality assurance methodologies.

**SGM Solutions & Global Media GmbH** is a Berlin-based company offering a wide range of services and products related to vocational and academic education. SGM's portfolio comprises the development, production and delivery of courses, curricula and material for teaching and learning. SGM provides services and products for all educational levels with a special focus on vocational training, academic education (including PhD level) and Continuing Professional Development (including train-the-trainer programmes).

# Project Development

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In order to successfully develop and implement the piloting of an EQF Level 5 part-time online course in Restorative Practices, the project was divided into the following interconnected stages:

## 1. A Research & Needs Analysis - The TReP Regional Report

*This stage was managed by SOS Malta with contributions from all partners.*

To ensure that the development of the Level 5 Course was in line with the current needs of both the direct target group (professionals working with people) and the indirect target group (disadvantaged groups), extensive background research was conducted. All partner countries were asked to simultaneously carry out preliminary desk research to understand what particular difficulties professionals have faced in attempting to implement and use restorative practice in their respective countries.

The TReP Regional Report includes a complete summary of the history and use of restorative practices in the respective partner countries, including background on restorative justice. It includes information on practices established throughout Europe and beyond, since these provide useful examples to follow. Furthermore it explores whether or not restorative practices are already being used in the partner countries, and if so, in which way, shape, and form.

The report also sought to outline those institutions already making use of restorative practices and identifies gaps in which more information and training on restorative practices is needed as well as contexts in which restorative practices would be beneficial.

A major conclusion emanating from the findings was that in order for a practice to be considered truly restorative it would need to target all players whether when building relationships, de-escalating conflict or repairing harm - **harmed - wrong doer - community**. The direct target group would be the practitioners, while the indirect target audience would be the vulnerable and anyone else who needs access to such practices. Examples of the former would be international and local experts experienced as:

1. Mediators present in the workplace to resolve internal disagreements,
2. The academic community including universities and research centres,
3. Social Services, with a focus on those governed by NGOs,
4. Public bodies and Institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interiors, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of the Labour and Social Policy, the State

Agency for Child Protection, the Agency for Social Support, Local Departments for Child Protection, Children's Pedagogical Rooms, and Local Commissions for Combating Juvenile Delinquency, as well as Correctional Facilities and The Police Force.

Furthermore, research evidence also depicted the fact that each partner country recognised and implemented practices in a different manner. For instance, while Ireland considers Restorative Practices outside of the wider context of Restorative Justice, other countries tend to consider it within this context which tends to be more reactive than pre-emptive.

Another evident gap was highlighted in that RP has been introduced, most commonly within an educational context such as schools but not generally in other environments such as the workplace.

This output prepared the groundwork for the design of the course and the promotional strategy to be used in attracting participants to the course and in disseminating the achievements of the project.

*The complete TReP Regional Report may be accessed [here](#).*

## **2. Development of the Course Guidelines**

*This stage was managed by the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) with contributions from all partners.*

The above mentioned research paved the way for the design of the course. The consortium met in Ireland in order to collaboratively compile possible course content and develop the guidelines that would shape the development of the content.

Partners investigated the components in order to establish which content to include in the online course on restorative practices, which would be optional and which would be excluded completely. Extensive research was carried out into the definition of keywords such as restorative practices, restorative justice, and alternatively dispute resolution. Furthermore, partners opted to engage in a short training in RP led by CDI, an opportunity used to complement research on the skills necessary to include in the course in order to meet the learning needs of the professionals attending the course.

Once all the data was evaluated and categorized accordingly, all partners had a better understanding of how the course would develop and what shape it would take, including the following elements:

- 1) A blend of theory & practical
- 2) Self-study
- 3) Peer Practice
- 4) Live Tutorials

The decision to deliver the course online was to ensure flexibility thus making it available and accessible to all. For the pilot course, it was intended that professionals from all over Europe would be invited to participate, at no cost. In addition, the course was run on a part-time basis offering participants the flexibility of participating, while also keeping up with work commitments.

*The following 3 stages occurred simultaneously, however for the purposes of this report they are being described separately.*

### **3. The Course Design**

*This stage was managed by the Childhood Development Initiative with input from all partners. Content writing was the sole responsibility of CDI.*

The course preparations laid the groundwork for the meticulous and detailed planning and design of the Level 5 pilot course that would take place next. Through this output, the consortium selected and designed the final contents and structure of the course which involved 1) Articulating the learning objectives; 2) Writing up the course content and compiling the syllabus; 3) Timing of topics; 4) student & teacher course material; 5) Identifying appropriate instructional strategies; and 6) compiling compulsory and extended reading lists.

In order to stagger the content within the time-frames provided, a topic-based syllabus was compiled and divided into 5 units which would total to 150 contact hours and 600 hours of self-study (520hrs self-study + 80hrs Assessments). The units were to be divided as follows:

**Unit 1 - Background and Introduction to Restorative Practice**

**Unit 2 – Restorative Practice, Restorative Approaches and Alternative Dispute Resolutions**

**Unit 3 – Restorative Language and Restorative Conversations**

**Unit 4 – Facilitating Restorative Circles, Meetings, and Conferences**

**Unit 5 – Restorative Practice and Legislation - Policy and Implementation**



In order to ensure that enough time was allocated to content creation, once each unit was complete, it passed through the accreditation process and was then transposed online. This allowed the necessary flexibility to ensure the quality and completion of the course was not compromised in any way.

The **methods of assessments** were also developed at this stage with the assessment criteria designed based on the learning objectives and outcomes each unit was set out to address.

*Access the complete pilot course structure [here](#)*

## 4. Developing the Online Component

*This stage was managed by Brainshuttle (BS) and SGM Solutions (SGM) with input from all partners.*

Following course content creation and accreditation, the next step was the transposition of the course content into an engaging and interactive e-learning format. The course was designed in a way that would keep learners engaged through a feeding of the senses - information was presented in a mix of formats, offering a blend of voice recordings that introduced each lesson and section, interactive infographics and sections for reading.

To ensure the sustainability of the course after the project end date it was decided to use Moodle as the Learning Management System (LMS) since Moodle is the LMS implemented at MCAST for their students. Therefore, once the course was developed into the proper e-learning format by SGM and BS, it was migrated to the MCAST Moodle system. Being a highly technical output, it required the teams of IT experts at SGM and Brainshuttle to put their heads together to ensure that what was produced is ultimately sustainable and easy to maintain, accommodating any necessary updates that would need to be made in the future by MCAST. The focus in developing the course into an e-learning format was the students' learning experience. Due to the practical aspect of Restorative Practice, a lot of research was required to be performed by both SGM and Brainshuttle, in order to identify the most suitable e-learning format to ensure the efficiency of learning, to maintain an engaging and appealing format and to assure the compatibility and perfect integration of the courses into the MCAST Moodle platform.

This entire course design process was carried out in a meticulous and detailed manner in order to ensure adherence to international accreditation standards.



## 5. Accreditation

*This stage was managed by MCAST*

Once course content and assessments were complete, and before the materials were migrated online, they were submitted to MCAST, as a self-accrediting body to accredit the course in accordance with the Bologna Process, providing the course with a pan-European accreditation.

The accreditation of training providers and related programmes is governed by SL 327.433 – Further and Higher Education (Licensing Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations within the Malta Education Act. By virtue of these regulations the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is a self-accrediting provider, for programmes up to and including level 7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework, directly pegged with the European Qualifications Framework.

The college is required to maintain a robust internal quality assurance system that is institutionalised within the structure, policy and operations of MCAST. This is done in line with the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

## 6. Pilot Course Implementation

### I Launch of the Pilot Course

An online launch of the pilot course took place on 29 October 2020. This event was used as an opportunity to attract participants to the free course as well as other stakeholders that could be interested in course uptake following the pilot stage. 130 people from across Europe attended the launch.

### II Selection of Participants

The target number of recruits for the pilot was 25 (5 per partner country, however not limited purely to the partner countries and some promotion of the Course reached out to the wider European audience).

The following selection criteria were devised for the purposes of applying to the pilot:

- *All applicants must have a minimum of 12 months experience of working with people.*
- *Applicants must possess a relevant full EQF Level 4 qualification or higher or apply as a mature student (age > 23 and relevant CV/motivation letter) and demonstrate that they stand to benefit and show that they are able to follow the programme through an*

*interview held for the purpose. Shortlisted persons will be called for an interview to assess their suitability for the chosen programme. The Selection Board may require candidates to undertake additional studies as part of their acceptance. The Board reserves the right to evaluate the prospective candidate's competences through an assessment.*

- *All applicants must submit a motivational letter highlighting why they are applying to the course and how the course will benefit their work and/or studies.*
- *Having an English language standard, at a minimum of B2, is desirable.*

By the end of the application period, 34 participants were eligible to participate in the course and it was decided that all would be admitted, pre-empting possible early drop-outs.

### **iii The Pilot Course (January 2021 - October 2021)**

The Pilot began in January 2021 and took place over the course of 10 months.

Partners recorded feedback from students and integrated their feedback at various stages of the process.

The piloting of the course included the assessment of the individuals participating in the course. Upon course and assessment completion, participants received a Level 5 Undergraduate Certificate on Restorative Practices of 30 ECTS.

# Evaluation of the Pilot Course

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## I The approach

As previously mentioned, the main objective of the pilot study was to evaluate the strengths and challenges of the course and to make the necessary changes required to ensure that the final product offers future learners an efficient and effective course.

Here it is pertinent to mention that, initially, the idea was to integrate a final evaluation survey at the end of the course. However, the consortium decided that it would serve both the project and the learners to integrate an evaluation at the end of each unit. By doing so, the consortium were able to assess the feedback received, understand what was working and what was challenging and integrate general improvements throughout the duration of the course thus, not only meeting needs of future learners, but also meeting the needs of the pilot learner cohort and improving their course experience<sup>2</sup>.

## I Reduction in Student Numbers

Over the course of the 10 months the course saw a decline in the number of participants from 34 to 18. Hereunder is an overview of the feedback received through evaluation and live tutorials that will offer an insight into the challenges experienced that resulted in this large reduction in numbers.

## III Feedback and Integration of Changes

**Unit 1:** 27 participants completed the Unit 1 evaluation survey and the main issues reported in the survey results related to technology. Navigation through the selected digital platform, Moodle, was not immediately intuitive. There were also a few technical aspects of the design that were depicted as a challenge in the survey results. However, it was also acknowledged that these issues were resolved within a timely manner when they were reported to MCAST. Participants clearly expressed the desire to be able to export or download material and information from the learning platform in order to better facilitate both the learning process and their completion of assessments. The results also highlighted issues related to time constraints, whereby the volume of the content vis a vis the time allocated was unrealistic

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<sup>2</sup> Here it must be noted that the consortium were limited in the adjustments that could be made to the course because they were working within budgetary constraints.

given other work/life commitments. The content was perceived as extremely extensive and the assessment tasks demanding, especially for non-native speakers.

On a more positive note, the survey results of the first unit clearly showed that the participants appreciated the content and the course design, the tutorials and the guidance and expressed clear interest to persist with the course content.

By the end of Unit 1 the participant cohort had reduced to 26 participants.

**Unit 2:** 19 participants completed the Unit 2 evaluation survey and the second run of surveys proved to be very informative in that it depicted a lack of signposting in the course content and material. The feedback also highlighted the volume of the content. In fact, time constraints were once again listed as a suggestion for improvement, namely the possibility of abridging or downsizing the reading content or shifting altogether to short videos in order to be in line with the stipulated number of self-study hours.

The online portal, Moodle, was also a source of participant frustration, mainly related to the functionalities offered by the platform. Specific reference was made to the integration of text boxes into the online platform as the format for responding to questions posed to learners throughout a lesson.

Nonetheless, the participants also praised the amount of work that had already been covered and expressed great interests in the topic of restorative practice and its application.

By the end of Unit 2, we had 20 participants.

Following feedback received from the first 2 units and whilst students were following Unit 3, partners held a meeting to discuss how they could improve the participant experience for the remaining Units 4 & 5. It was decided that the tasks throughout each lesson would be substantially reduced, and it was agreed that all learning journals would be removed except for the one at the end of each Unit. Furthermore, a workbook was to be created on Microsoft Word to replace the integrated text boxes that proved to be a repetitive frustration for the learner cohort.

The consortium also discussed being flexible with deadlines and extending the course from the originally anticipated 8 months to 10 months to allow participants more time to complete the course.

**Unit 3:** 16 participants completed the evaluation survey for Unit 3 and time pressure was once again listed as a constraint, together with the clarity and amount of the content. These

challenges seemed to be of significant importance given the fact that each Unit witnessed the loss of a handful of participants.

Nonetheless, from a pilot study perspective the fact that the list of issues remained the same throughout the course offered reassurance that no further major issues were present.

By the end of Unit 3, there were 19 participants in the Course.

**Unit 4 & 5:** By the time Units 4 & 5 had reached completion, the most persistent concerns which were not resolved were related to the time required to complete the course and the amount of content.

18 students completed the course.

## **IV Overall Findings**

### **Strengths**

1. The satisfaction rating for the course was high overall. The 18 participants who completed the course found the course to be both useful and inspiring; they also demonstrated progress in their knowledge and skills in RP.
2. Course content was presented in a comprehensible manner and almost all participants expressed a high level of understanding.
3. Most participants perceived the content in all modules to be consistent and relevant. Participants found the content to be informative and interesting; they also expressed praise for the variety in types of materials offered - from videos to reading materials. Throughout the evaluation phase the content and the examples presented were rated as either good or high quality.
4. Among the most useful and interesting parts mentioned by participants in each Unit were case studies, videos, podcasts, talks, RP theorists, practical references and examples.
5. The legibility of text and fonts, the quality of video and audio materials and the visual design including the images and graphics used were rated as rather satisfactory or completely satisfactory.
6. Tutorials were evaluated as very successful, useful, informative and inspiring. Their value was related not only to information sharing but also to group bonding and social-emotional learning.

7. The establishment and operation of Peer Practice Groups was evaluated as a highly useful and successful element of the Course.

## Challenges

1. The content was presented with a satisfactory level of clarity and logic but the presentation of the data could be improved further.
2. The volume of information was found to be too extensive and overwhelming given the time constraints as well as given the EQC level of the course (EQC Level 5 Undergraduate). Some students found the content to be quite complex and difficult to absorb within the course framework.
3. Repetition of information was also perceived as an issue as it demanded more time without the added value of learning something new.
4. Most students found the relevance of the assignments satisfactory; a few, however, found the assignments to be “completely relevant”.
5. The issues related to the navigation of the e-learning portal were consistent throughout the course. Instructions related to platform navigation would have been useful in the form of short videos or infographics at the beginning of the course.
6. Language barrier challenges were reported as a persistent issue as well, and in fact this was one of the main reasons the pilot study experienced several drop-outs – even though participants had the minimum level required they still found it difficult to assimilate the data in a second language.

*For the full evaluation report click [here](#)*

## Recommendations

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**Creation of a Booklet** In the near future it may be opportune to develop a course booklet that could be made available to participants beyond their period of study. Furthermore, an official publication containing the course information, may be considered by the course authors in the future.

**Content Validity.** The content of the course would need to be adapted and kept up-to-date in order to remain aligned with any changes in the global and local contexts.

**Live Tutorials** Now that the course is beyond Pilot Stage it will become a part of the MCAST official course list for the next 3 years. In order to sustain this and facilitate the live tutorials it would be ideal to develop in-house capacity to oversee this aspect of the course. Other viable local options are learners in the pilot course from Malta who successfully graduated in November 2021. This could be approached incrementally, offering a shadow learning option, whereby a CDI tutor would pair up with a potential MCAST / local tutor in order for the latter to shadow and learn from the former - a form of Training the Trainer. Once local tutors have gained enough training and experience, their knowledge can then be cascaded internally at MCAST through CPD workshops, hence expanding and capitalizing on in-house resources.

**Assessment.** It would be useful to optimize the volume of assessment tasks and reduce these to two; for example, one multiple choice questionnaire and an assignment of 1000 words. This recommendation will be investigated further in order to identify the assessment method most suited to measure learning acquisition while meeting time restraints.

**Evaluation of the course.** The evaluation method adopted throughout the pilot study proved to be very detailed and useful. Moving forward the same method of evaluation could be adopted. However, it need not be as detailed as the questionnaires distributed during the pilot study. Official course participants will only be asked to provide feedback on the learning process related to each Unit.

**Prevention of Drop-Outs.** The pilot course has shown that the level of English required by participants needs to be set higher in order to ensure that the participants are able to cope with the reading material the course has to offer. Relevant education and former experience are also important. In addition, basic technical skills are required as well. Other factors that should be considered in order to prevent high numbers on drop-outs would be to set realistic expectations with regard to the intensity of the course and the time required to complete it. It is



strongly recommended that this course be offered for completion over a minimum of 18 months.

**Support.** As mentioned in previous sections, the course content as well as the time-frames imposed can be perceived as quite taxing to some participants. As such, it was suggested to implement a ‘support mechanism’ or a ‘buddy system’ in order to serve as a point of reference throughout the learning process. This should also include a brief induction on Moodle in order to pre-empt any navigational issue the users might have on the platform.

## Impact

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### I General

One of the major attributes of the course is the blended format of delivery. The course offers a pathway to relational learning that is accessible to all in view of the fact that it takes place online. It consists of a blend of interactive online learning, tutorials with professionals, as well as, and probably most importantly, peer-practice wherein groups are formed and through the various sessions, confidence, trust, morale and connections are built.

The course was created to target a wide cohort of professionals who work with people, offering strategies that could complement practices already in place to build community in the workplace and also offered alternative pathways to dealing with conflict that are inclusive, fair and culturally sensitive and aimed at building rapport amongst everyone.

It is in fact the strong bond and sense of camaraderie created between the participants during the course that guarantees future opportunities to maintain such relationships and share best practices beyond the conclusion of the course. This can in turn serve as the foundation for a global network of people practicing restorative practices, enabling its localization in various contexts and ensuring future research to analyse best practices and whether they can be translated into the various contexts.

### II Partner Impact

#### **Solidarity Overseas Services (SOS) Malta**

The TReP Project was the first Erasmus+ K2 programme project wherein SOS Malta led the consortium. It provided an opportunity to manage a transnational partnership whilst

developing the approach to guide project implementation. In its essence, the role offered us experience in building and maintaining relationships between the partners and problem-solving whenever there was miscommunication or other challenges that presented themselves. On an administrative level, the process gave us experience in designing templates for the various stages so as to ensure the proper checks and balances throughout. TReP was also a unique opportunity for SOS Malta to innovate and oversee the development of an accredited course of this kind. With the TReP project coordinator taking up the course, it also provided an in-depth insight into the mechanics behind Restorative Practices, knowledge and practice which will be transferred to building further capacity within the organisation.

### **Malta College of Arts and Science Technology (MCAST)**

The impact of the pilot course on MCAST has a number of dimensions. First it was a challenge to plan and develop the accredited course by engaging with professional partners beyond the boundaries of the institution. This provided valuable lessons on how to plan and administer such collaborations in future.

Secondly, the complete running of the course online, on our IT platform enabled our technical staff to experience new methodologies of working and delivering course material. Similarly, for our lecturers engaged in the correction of assessments. It was the first time that the entire course was delivered and corrected in the virtual environment.

The third impact is that through participation in this Erasmus+ project MCAST has acquired new knowledge in the area of Restorative Practices. We hope to be able to share this knowledge with learners in the yeast to come.

### **Partners Bulgaria Foundation (PBF)**

The TReP project has impacted PBF in a number of ways. It has added a new dimension to our core mission of promoting a culture of conflict resolution. It has helped increase our capacity to apply alternative resolution methodologies, including RP in schools, organisations and families, which enrich our current work. The pilot course itself has helped spread the knowledge of RP, making it more popular amongst Bulgarian professionals even though those who signed for the course could not complete it for various reasons. Irrespective, they have become part of a core RJ-RP group in our country therefore Increasing the number of professionals in Bulgaria to engage in RP methodology in social care, schools and private consultancy work with families and groups..The pilot course has offered a training programme which can be adapted and simplified for short training courses.

### **Childhood Development Initiative (CDI)**

The TReP project was the first Erasmus+ K2 programme project that CDI was a partner to. When we signed up for the project, it was anticipated that the course that would be developed would be fully blended - i.e. that the course would start and end with the participants undertaking training together in person at MCAST. Because the project received 80% of the original proposed budget, these face-to-face training sessions and two other planned transnational meetings were taken out of the programme of work. This posed an unexpected challenge which was met by the provision of live tutorials via Zoom and the establishment of Peer Practice Groups among the participants.

Overall the impact of the TReP project on CDI has been that we were provided with an excellent opportunity to learn about the provision of online training (at a time when online provision became the only viable option for training delivery) and about how to manage a substantial transnational European-funded project. While it became far more work than we had originally anticipated, participation in the TReP project has been a very worthwhile experience for CDI.

### **SGM Solutions & Global Media GmbH (SGM) and Brainshuttle**

SGM and BS, as the technical partners in this project, were responsible with the transposition of the content development into an appropriate e-learning format. The major challenge in this project was finding the most appropriate format compatible with the Moodle platform that ensures an effective and engaging learning experience for the students. Due to the specifics of Restorative Practices which have a high practical component and the use of soft skills are utterly important, it was necessary to apply new methods and new tools in the process of creating the e-learning course. Therefore, SGM and BS has gained a lot of experience in implementing within their workflow new technologies and tools that will be used in future developments. Considering that BS and SGM had to work in parallel processes complementing each other's tasks, an efficient communication and process control methodology had to be implemented. This gave both partners the opportunity to gain valuable experience that can be used in future collaborations with other partners.

## **On Moving Forward**

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Restorative Practice is a new concept which can only be useful when put into practice. Restorative Justice and RP should be introduced to students and practitioners at university level. The subject is currently included in the Law Program, however it ought to be extended

and covered also in courses such as Social Policy, Anthropology, Psychology, Criminology, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Social Care and others. This will enhance the relevant practice and will create a substantial national experience.

Given the right training, education professionals in schools could adopt restorative practices. RP could also be adopted in schools as a conflict resolution methodology and an instrument to deal with school aggression and bullying.

Locally, the current centralised governance system of state schools is not favourable for introducing restorative practices. There is a lack of knowledge among school directors, psychologists, councillors and teachers on the subject, in fact it could also be stated that schools lack the skills and resources to be able to work with different conflict situations. A special campaign should target schools whereby adequate training of teaching and non-teaching staff is provided.

Information campaigns should also target the general public, including media campaigns, meetings with schools, municipalities, service centres, as well as , but not limited to, juvenile detention centres. In fact, with reference to the latter, it is especially important to promote restorative practices among the judiciary system in general.

The target outcome of these campaigns would be to engage institutions as social partners in promoting restorative practice. Involving the relevant institutions and professionals in restorative practice discussions, conferences and initiatives will in turn elevate the profile of the practitioners working in the field and will pave the way for policy changes.

It is also essential to apply efforts towards the development of community practices, identification, and recruitment of facilitators. It is important to conduct training sessions for professional groups such as police, youth workers, juvenile delinquency pedagogues, social workers from the Directorates for Child Protection, and others, as well as to identify situations and cases where restorative practices can be used as preventative interventions.

Finally, further mapping of good practices locally and internationally would enrich the knowledge in this area. It is important to study the effect of successful projects, measure and analyse their impact in order to inform the relevant policy changes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Extract from TReP Proposal

## Final Conference

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A final conference was held at MCAST in Malta - this was a local multiplier event which was originally envisaged as an international event however due to the pandemic it was decided to shift local.

The conference was attended by 28 participants from MCAST and also included participants from diverse professional backgrounds including teachers, counsellors, parole department, police officer and community workers.

This was used as an event to disseminate the project results and to discuss the role of restorative practices within our social fabric.

Final event report can be accessed [here](#).