Restorative practices at the heart of collective housing

WP 1 GOOD PRACTICES REPORT SYNTHESIS REPORT

1. Contents

1. Introduction

The report aims to provide knowledge on the use of restorative practices in neighbourhood conflicts and social housing and on good practices in this field both applicable to both partners of the project and actors outside the partnership. In particular, the report aims to:

- Provide an overview of the state of the art in the use of restorative justice in conflict management at the neighbourhood level and in social housing.
- Identify good/promising practices on the use of restorative practices in this area and extrapolate knowledge for the next phases of the project and more generally to inform the broader community of practitioners and policy makers in this area.
- Produce a catalogue of good/promising practices and a set of guidelines on the use of restorative practices in conflict management at the neighbourhood level and in social housing to inform the broader community and future phases of the project.

This report represents a synthesis of the main output of the WP1 of the Erasmus + project Harmony. The full version of this report includes a detailed analysis of the good practices mapped.

The report is structure as it follows:

- Introduction (chapter I), providing an overview of the report objectives and structure.
- The Harmony project and its intervention contexts: an overview (chapter II), introducing the Harmony project (partnership, aims, activities) and the characteristics of the intervention contexts where lessons learnt from good/promising practices will be put in place.
- Introduction to restorative justice (chapter III), providing a brief overview of restorative justice, with a particular focus on the areas tackled by the Harmony project (i.e. neighbourhood and collective/social housing).
- Methodology for the analysis of good practices (chapter IV), describing the methodology adopted for the collection and analysis of good practices.
- Good and promising practices mapped (chapter V). The detailed description of each practice is included in the full version of this report.
- Lessons learnt for the Harmony project (chapter V), providing a set of guidelines to be considered in the next phases of the Harmony project.

2. The Harmony project and its intervention contexts: an overview

The HARMONY project aims to develop and strengthen harmonious living within the city, particularly in collective social housing neighbourhoods, which are often marked by difficulties and precariousness. The project's goal is to promote and implement Preventive and Restorative Practices, inspired by the philosophy of Restorative Justice, to more effectively and sustainably prevent and resolve situations of neighbourhood conflicts, disturbances to residential peace, and, more broadly, public tranquillity. The project seeks to act on two levels:

- Foster an atmosphere conducive to harmonious living.
- Analyse and understand the specific and favourable conditions for applying restorative practices in conflict management and resolution in neighbourhoods and social/collective housing.

To reach these aims the project plans to analyse a set of good practices on the application of restorative justice in neighbourhoods and social/collective housing and to design, test and evaluate a restorative practices toolkit targeted to both stakeholders, including partners of the Harmony project, and residents in neighbourhoods and social/collective housing in partners' contexts. Furthermore, the project plans to adopt an implementation process coherent with the principles and values of restorative justice, actively engaging stakeholders in the design of the toolkit and its experimentation on the ground and evaluation. Additionally, it also plans to disseminate the project and its results beyond the project partnership both within and outside its local context through specific communication and dissemination activities.

The project Harmony involves a partnership composed of public bodies, research organisations, and NGOs with great experience in the restorative justice field: Municipality of Carvin (lead partner - France); Ligand (Belgium); Gabbiano association (Italy); University of Sassari (Italy).

The project plans to intervene, through the experimentation of restorative practices, in different territorial contexts: Carvin (France), Courtrai (Belgium) and Lecco (Italy). The paragraphs below include a detailed description of the three contexts. More details are provided in annex.

- Municipality of Carvin (France)

Carvin: main territorial, social, economic and criminal features

Carvin, a town of 18,000 residents in northern France, is part of the Pas-de-Calais Department within the Hauts-de-France region, close to the Belgian border and just 20 km from Lille's metropolitan area. Spread across 2,100 hectares, Carvin balances 600 hectares of urbanized space with 1,500 hectares of natural and agricultural land.

Historically, Carvin belonged to a significant mining basin cantered on coal extraction until the industry's decline in the 1980s, leading to economic hardship. In response, the town shifted its focus in the 1990s and 2000s, leveraging its proximity to major transportation routes, such as the Lille-Paris motorway, to develop logistics-based industries and generate low-skilled employment opportunities.

Governance in Carvin is managed by a Municipal Council of 33 elected officials led by the Mayor, with municipal elections held every six years; the current term will end in 2026. The political majority leans left, incorporating socialist, communist, and environmentalist values alongside representatives from civil society. Carvin's mining heritage has instilled strong community values of solidarity and mutual support, reflected in a highly organized civil society composed of associations and sports clubs playing an active role in community life. Participatory governance is also present, with the Municipal Economic, Social, and Environmental Council allowing residents to engage in local decision-making and project proposals. The municipality often secures additional funding from the state and other authorities for various initiatives, especially in housing renovation.

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Carvin's demographic growth has been steady, with a positive balance of 1,000 additional residents over the past five years. As of 2017, the immigrant population numbered 590, representing a decline of 14% over ten years.

The town faces higher-than-average unemployment, with 13% overall in January 2021 and 19.4% among youth under 25. The activity rate for the working-age population was 69.4%. The town's poverty rate has slightly improved, dropping from 22% in 2012 to 19% in 2018. Social challenges include a notable proportion of young people coming from low-education backgrounds and a significant number of children living in single-parent households. The elderly demographic is also growing, with projections indicating that 29.8% of the population will be aged 60 or older by 2042.

The town's criminal context has shown some improvement, with 577 incidents of delinquency reported in 2023, a decrease from the previous year. These incidents include burglaries (61 cases), assaults (129), property damage (204), vehicle thefts (73), non-violent thefts (98), and violent robberies without a weapon (12).

In terms of *restorative justice*, Carvin aligns with national guidelines set by the French Ministry of Justice, which defines restorative practices as a voluntary, confidential, and supportive approach that complements the criminal justice system. These practices, facilitated by trained mediators, bring victims, offenders, and other affected parties into dialogue, focusing on healing, offender accountability, and reintegration. These measures can be implemented at any stage of criminal proceedings, remaining independent and without impact on judicial outcomes.

Carvin's *social housing landscape* includes 8,000 units, with 2,600 designated as social housing. These units are managed by social landlords responsible for construction, management, and allocation, often in coordination with local authorities like the mayor's office. In 2017, over half of Carvin's households owned their homes, and most residences (81.8%) were houses, with a significant portion of apartments (56.4%) being smaller than 60 m².

- Courtrai (Belgium)

Courtrai: main territorial, social, economic and criminal features

Kortrijk, or Courtrai in French, is a city that sits strategically within the southwestern corner of Belgium, nestled along the banks of the River Lys. This river has been a crucial artery for trade since medieval times, shaping the city's economic and cultural landscape. Positioned near the French border, Kortrijk benefits from its proximity to major hubs like Ghent and Lille, which is only 25 kilometres away. The city's connectivity, bolstered by a well-developed network of highways and rail lines, ensures its integration within Belgium and across the border, fostering economic and cultural exchanges as part of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai. A dynamic mix of urban and rural influences shapes Kortrijk's lifestyle and community dynamics, offering a balanced environment for its residents.

Kortrijk's governance is multi-layered, reflecting Belgium's federal structure. The City Council, elected every six years, manages local governance under the leadership of Mayor. The city's coalition includes centre-right and centre-left parties like Open VLD, N-VA, and Vooruit, which shape the city's policies in line with broader Flemish political trends. Civil society is vibrant and well-organized, playing a crucial role in various sectors such as healthcare, education, culture, and sports.

The social and economic profile of Kortrijk is marked by stability and diversity. The city's population stands at around 80,032 residents, with a relatively high density of nearly 992 inhabitants per square kilometre. Despite the city's stability, it faces an aging demographic, with a significant proportion of elderly citizens (21.59%) alongside a notable segment of young people and families. This demographic mix presents both challenges and opportunities for social planning and community development. The city has a multicultural composition, with immigrants and foreign nationals constituting over 11% of the population.

Kortrijk's economy remains diverse, featuring a mix of manufacturing, services, healthcare, and education sectors. The presence of industrial zones and business parks underscores its economic resilience. However, the unemployment rate, while not exceeding high, requires continuous attention to ensure the integration of youth and other vulnerable groups into the labour market.

Crime in Kortrijk is moderate compared to other Belgian cities, with a crime rate of 10.1 per 100 inhabitants.

Belgium has been at the forefront of integrating restorative justice into its criminal justice system, and Kortrijk is a prime example of how these principles are applied locally. Since the 1960s, Belgium has passed several laws that embed restorative justice practices, emphasizing mediation and community rehabilitation. One of the earliest pieces of legislation, the Youth Protection Act of 1965, set the stage for restorative measures in juvenile justice. It was followed by the Law of 10 February 1994, which formally introduced mediation in criminal cases, focusing initially on minor offences. This approach has since expanded to cover all phases of the criminal process, ensuring that both victims and offenders have opportunities for mediation, even in serious cases.

In Kortrijk, *restorative justice practices* are implemented through a network of specialized organizations. Moderator manages mediation for adult offenders, while Cohesie handles cases involving minor offenders. In the educational sector, Aura conducts restorative conferences in schools, aiming to resolve conflicts and promote a culture of accountability among students. The city's efforts extend to various fields, including prisons, schools, and refugee centres, where restorative practices are used to foster positive outcomes. For serious crimes, Kortrijk offers restorative mediation independent of the criminal process. Mediation can influence judicial outcomes, as judges may consider mediation results when sentencing. This model not only addresses immediate harm but also supports rehabilitation and community reintegration, ensuring that restorative practices remain a key component of Kortrijk's criminal justice landscape.

Social housing in Kortrijk is primarily managed by SW+, a company formed from the merger of two previous entities in 2023. SW+ oversees approximately 4,033 housing units, of which 586 are rental properties and the remaining are owned units. The company aims to expand, projecting a net growth of 963 owned properties while increasing rental units at a rate of around 40 per year. SW+ offers comprehensive support to residents through a team of property managers and rental counsellors, who not only handle technical issues and maintenance, but also engage with tenants on matters such as rent calculations, arrears management, and neighbourhood concerns. The system is designed to provide a holistic approach to social housing, recognizing the diverse needs of residents, 54% of whom are single-person families. The demand for social housing remains high, with over 9,560 eligible candidates on the waiting list as of the end of 2023. This indicates a critical need for expanding affordable housing options.

- Lecco (Italy)

Lecco: main territorial, social, economic and criminal features

Lecco, situated in the Lombardy region of Northern Italy, is a city located along a branch of Lake Como. It serves as the capital of the province of Lecco and spans approximately 45.93 square kilometres. Politically, Lecco has been governed by a centre-left coalition led by Mayor Mauro Gattinoni since 2010, although provincial governance has alternated between right and left-wing parties. Social policy governance involves multiple actors, including the District of Lecco, which oversees the District Social Plan across its 84 municipalities. The "Ambito di Lecco," comprising 31 municipalities, handles local social policy planning, often in collaboration with the Girasole Social Enterprise.

Lecco has a population of 47,008 (2022) within a broader provincial population of 332,457. The city's demographic structure reveals an aging population, with 61.7% over 41 years old and a high dependency ratio. The foreign population represents 10.59% of Lecco's residents, primarily concentrated in central neighbourhoods (Local context diagnosis…). The local economy is resilient, marked by a stable business environment despite past economic crises. Unemployment stands at 3%, reflecting a slight increase, but the employment rate has shown positive growth, rising to 68% in 2023. Challenges persist with contractual instability, as fixed-term contracts dominate new employment.

Lecco ranks moderately in criminal activities, being 58th out of 107 Italian provinces in overall charges per population. However, it ranks 13th for voluntary homicides. Social conflicts, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising drug and alcohol consumption among youth present ongoing challenges.

Restorative justice in Lecco has evolved significantly since the launch of the "Lecco Restorative City" initiative in 2012. Initially, restorative justice was not well integrated into public policy or the legal

system. In the absence of comprehensive national legislation, local efforts were led by civil society organizations, municipalities, and probation agencies, supported by European Social Fund (ESF) projects and private foundations. The 2021 reform of the criminal justice system (Law No. 13478) provided a legal framework for restorative justice, defining it as "any programme that allows the victim of a crime, the person identified as the offender, and other community members to freely participate in resolving issues arising from the crime, with the assistance of an impartial, trained mediator." This law enabled the use of restorative justice at any trial stage and during or after the execution of sentences. It also mandated the creation of regional Centres for Restorative Justice to coordinate services locally, expanding beyond criminal justice to include community-based interventions targeting students, youth, and the broader population. At the local level, Lecco's restorative justice approach is highly community-driven, with the "L'Innominato" network—a provincial restorative justice organization—playing a central role. This network involves public institutions, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens to promote awareness, detect social conflicts, and implement restorative practices aimed at resolving issues before they escalate into criminal behaviour. Key features of this initiative include citizen-led forums ('agora') that act as sensors for social tensions, fostering dialogue, and aiming to repair relationships disrupted by conflicts.

Social housing policies in Lecco are guided by regional legislation (Regional Law 16/2016), which integrates housing services within the broader social services framework. The region has increasingly delegated responsibilities to municipalities, emphasizing collaboration and support for local entities in managing housing needs. In Lecco, the "Ambito di Lecco" leads local housing strategies, and since 2018, the Housing Services Agency—managed by Girasole Social Enterprise—has been pivotal in coordinating these efforts. The 2020 analysis by the Housing Services Agency highlighted a shortage of public housing amidst rising demand, especially for vulnerable groups affected by economic instability, such as families impacted by job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Lecco's 2021-2023 Social Plan emphasizes the need to strengthen social housing policies, developing new territorial strategies that shift the focus from traditional social housing to integrated housing welfare services, enhancing the skills of actors involved in housing policies and promoting an integrated approach that links housing with social, urban, education, and employment policies.

While the three contexts have their specificities when it comes to the two areas of intervention of the Harmony project (i.e. restorative justice and social/collective housing), they also have some **common features:**

- Social housing: all three cities focus on vulnerable populations, managing social housing policies through partnerships between local authorities, regional or national bodies, and private or non-profit organizations; social housing is closely integrated with broader social support systems in these cities.
- Restorative justice: framing of restorative justice within the broader national or regional legislative frameworks that promote these practices as an alternative or complement to the traditional criminal justice system; emphasis of the crucial role of the community and civil society organizations in delivering restorative justice services; focus on youth and educational settings as key areas for implementing restorative justice; mediation and restorative dialogue are central components of restorative justice practices; adoption of flexible restorative justice programmes, adapted to the needs of the participants and the community.

3. Restorative justice: an introduction

Various scholars (Lizzola, 2019; Patrizi, 2019; Fassin, 2018) point out that contemporary society is characterized, on one hand, by a weakening and fragmentation of relationships, in which fears, uncertainties, loneliness, and suffering emerge. If these emotions do not find a space for listening and meeting, they expand, increasing tensions and social fractures. To reimagine themselves and transform their negative emotions related to harms suffered or committed, people need their "truths" to be recognized and their need for balance to be heard (Patrizi P., 2019). This is precisely the need that restorative justice addresses.

Restorative justice offers an alternative to more traditional paradigms of:

- retributive justice, based on punishment and the principle of repaying the harm caused by the crime with the harm inflicted by the penalty
- distributive justice, based on the treatment and re-education of the offender

Restorative justice promotes a model of justice that "involves the victim, the offender, and the community in searching for a solution that promotes restoration, reconciliation, and a sense of collective security "(Zehr, 1990).

The European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) defines restorative justice as an 'approach of addressing harm or the risk of harm through engaging all those affected in coming to a common understanding and agreement on how the harm or wrongdoing can be repaired and justice achieved. (…) Restorative processes restore safety, security through bringing people together to undo injustice, repair harm and alleviate suffering.'

UNDOC (2006) pinpoints that restorative justice 'not only embraces restorative processes and steps to repair the harm, but it also focuses on structural and individual injustice (…) by identifying and attempting to resolve underlying causes of crime (poverty, idleness, etc.).' According to the UN, restorative justice can be:

- encounter-based, focusing on the meeting between parties even in the absence of a crime (e.g., a dispute between neighbours).
- reparative, focusing on the necessity of repairing the harm caused by the crime/wrong even without the direct participation of the victim.
- transformative, which not only emphasizes encounter and reparation but also seeks to identify and address the underlying causes of the crime/wrong to prevent future crimes and challenges people to apply restorative principles in their everyday relationships.

It is precisely this latter conceptualization of restorative justice that is particularly relevant for the Harmony project, as often conflicts in vulnerable neighbourhoods and in collective/social housing are triggered by systemic injustices, poor social and economic conditions, poor housing conditions, etc.

Irrespective of whether restorative justice is conceptualized as encounter-based, reparative or transformative, its _core values_ are:

- *Respect*, meaning 'looking again from the point of view of the other, to putting oneself in the other's shoes and then respond[ing]' (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 32).
- *Dignity*, referring to 'worth … that cannot be substituted. People have dignity because of the essence of who they are and cannot be replaced' (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 32).

- *Mutual concern*, consisting of '(…) the reciprocal, interconnected caring' (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 33), which regards the interconnectedness nature of our societies.
- *Solidarity*, consisting of 'the interdependence and diversity of people and the critical importance of the quality of relationships to individual's wellbeing and social cohesion. It provides an opportunity to reconnect and to learn how to fulfil one's obligations to each other's wellbeing' (EFRJ, 2021).
- *Truth*, referring to recognising everyone's truth and everyone's need for his/her truth to be listened to and recognised.
- *Justice*, consisting of engaging people in just relations and making them more accountable for their actions to prevent injustices and to repair the existing harm.

As to the *principles* of restorative justice, these are:

- Focus on inter-personal relationships

The starting point in "how we feel when we are together" focuses on relationships rather than rules, people rather than policies, valuing capacities rather than assessing skills, creating meaning rather than imposing knowledge, asking rather than telling, and well-being rather than success." (Evans and Vaandering, 2016)

- *Active participation*, i.e. passing from viewing citizens as passive actors (*doing for*) that are a target of conflict resolution intervention to active participants (*doing with*), taking responsibility for conflict management.

"A restorative approach at community level is translated in practice through the activation of participatory processes (doing things with people), considering that what happens between two or more people or among groups does not concern only them, but the entire community within which events and conflicts have occurred." (Patrizia Patrizi, 2017)

- *Volunteering,* i.e. focusing on non-coerced participation of all parties
- *Confidentiality*, i.e. discussions within restorative interventions are confident, not being disclosed to third parties
- *Transparency, i.e.* the rules of engagement must be constructed with the participants and all the steps of restorative interventions need to be shared since the very beginning with all participants
- *Fairness*, i.e. restorative interventions put equity at their centre and create the conditions for all to participate in the most effective way, paying particular attention to power imbalances aiming participants.

Such values and principles are not purely theoretical but form the core of all restorative processes. This means that for an intervention to be truly restorative, it is not enough to merely use restorative tools; the process of their delivery must also align with restorative values and principles.

When it comes to its application fields, in recent decades, restorative justice has expanded significantly into various sectors. Although it initially focused on criminal offences, its potential in other areas has gradually become apparent. Wachtel (2004: 207) points out that "restorative justice is only one area that can gain from a restorative approach." Adopting this perspective more broadly involves rethinking how institutions like "schools, businesses, and public administration" are structured (Mannozzi & Lodigiani, 2015), as well as how youth initiatives and services for underprivileged or high-crime communities are implemented (Mannozzi, 2019). It also includes

creating systems and services aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts within communities (Shearing & Wood, 2003). Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of equipping people with skills that enable them to participate actively in civic life, rather than being passive subjects of the legal system (Chapman et al., 2015). This underscores the necessity for individuals to develop the abilities and values of cooperation and dialogue, particularly when conflicts arise. As a result, restorative practices are increasingly being implemented in different areas of society, including schools and social services, and more recently, within communities through initiatives like the development of restorative cities. The aim is to equip individuals with the skills to handle conflict and harm in a safe, respectful, and constructive way across all levels of the community.

While restorative justice in the criminal justice is acknowledged and embedded in the legal framework worldwide, **its application at community level (i.e. neighbourhoods, cities) remains stills limited** (Vasilescu, 2023). Applications of restorative justice at community level have been registered in Albania (e.g. Tirana), Australia (e.g. Canberra, Newcastle), Belgium (e.g. Leuven Restorative City, Ghent - Burenbemiddeling), Canada (e.g. Vancouver, Nova Scotia), Italy (e.g. Lecco, Como and Tempio Pausania restorative cities which are engaged in the Harmony project), Netherlands (e.g. Amsterdam and Utrecht), New Zeeland (e.g. Whanganui), South Corea (Seoul), UK (e.g. Hull, Bristol, Leeds, Portsmouth, Southampton, Stockport) and US (Oakland, Vermont, Detroit).

When it comes to **collective/social housing, restorative justice applications are also still limited**. However, some applications, have been registered in countries with a long tradition in restorative justice such as, for instance, the UK (e.g. the Restorative Communities Programme implemented in in supportive housing and Restorative Approaches in Housing – RAIH), Austria (e.g. Vienna Wohnpartner implemented in Gemeindebau estates), Italy ("Passaporta" – Como) and Sweden (e.g. restorative justice practices in a day centre – Klaragarden - and in a halfway house for homeless people – Bostallet). The chapter "Good/promising practices mapped" discusses in detail the Austrian, Italian and Swedish cases.

The analysis of these and other practices (see chapter 5) underline that restorative justice in the **collective/housing context aim to address interpersonal conflicts, build positive relationships in the community, and reintegrate marginalized individuals** back into supportive networks. These practices focus on resolving harm, promoting accountability, and establishing connections within the community. As it will be further on detailed, restorative practices in these settings allow residents to express their feelings, understand the impact of their actions, and collaboratively find solutions that restore relationships. However, the analysis of the literature reveals that **implementing restorative practices in collective/social housing is not without challenges**: e.g. integration of restorative practices within a wider policy aimed at dealing with systemic injustices, structural problems or overlapping issues like mental health disorders, substance abuse, and criminal histories; need to ensure volunteering participation in residential housing contexts (e.g. supportive housing) characterised by the existence of a "managed community", which may make people feel compound to attend restorative practices, underpinning the principle of free engagement; cultural and organizational resistance of both staff and citizens. These aspects will be further deepened in the following chapters.

4. Mapping and analysing good practices: the methodological framework

Defining good and promising practices

A good practice is a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results. It "is not necessarily exhaustive or perfect. Rather, it represents an available solution to a specific problem in the light of the available resources and working environment in the given context." (EIGE, 2013)

The concept of "good practice" refers to: "any experience/initiative displaying techniques, methods or approaches which:

- produce results coherent with the definition of restorative justice and, in particular, document the transformational aspect of the restorative approach in terms of changes in conflict management, thereby producing sustainable, long-lasting effects in terms of interpersonal relationships.
- are particularly effective in delivering restorative justice as a transformative strategy to conflict management.

Thus, good practices are practices that (1) have been working well (the practice is finished, or at least shows substantial achievement attributed to the practice itself); (2) can be replicated elsewhere; (3) are good for learning how to think and act appropriately.

Considering the still limited use of restorative practices in collective/social housing, the project has extended the research of interesting practices also to practices that could be potentially interesting for the Harmony project, but that do not fully comply with the selection criteria defined for the selection of good practices. Thus, promising practices mapped consist of:

- interventions that are not referring directly to restorative practices, but that are relevant for preparing the conditions for the delivery of restorative practices.
- interventions characterised by limited evidence on their effectiveness and/or sustainability, but with a strong level of relevance for the purpose of the Harmony project.

Selecting good and promising practices

The main *selection criteria* used for the selection of the practices included in the next chapter are:

- *Relevance for the project purpose*, i.e. development and testing of a toolkit of restorative practices for the conflict management in neighbourhoods and collective/social housing.
- *Effectiveness*: i.e. practices that show effective achievement in terms of restorative conflict management in neighbourhoods/social housing; practices have achieved an observable and demonstrable result in restoring interpersonal relationships.
- *Transferability and replicability*, i.e. features of the good practice can be reproduced elsewhere; particular attention paid to success factors that have to be taken into consideration (extrapolated), in order to ensure the success of the practice when replicated elsewhere, and to the interplay between these factors and context conditions.

In selecting good and promising practices, the following *principles* have been respected:

- Paying attention to the fact that an in-depth analysis has been conducted of the effectiveness of a practice.
- Looking for the "underlying idea—an idea about how the actions entailed by the practice work to solve a problem or achieve a goal" (Bardach, 1998); how the practice created value (i.e. exploiting which latent opportunities/challenges?).
- Paying attention to both the mechanism for achieving success and to the features activating the respective mechanism.
- Describing generic vulnerabilities, i.e. vulnerabilities that could lead to a good practice to fail in the target site context.

Steps for selecting good and promising practices

The process for collecting and analysing the good and promising practices included in the next chapter is synthesised in the figure below.

Figure 1 Main steps in collecting and analysing good practices
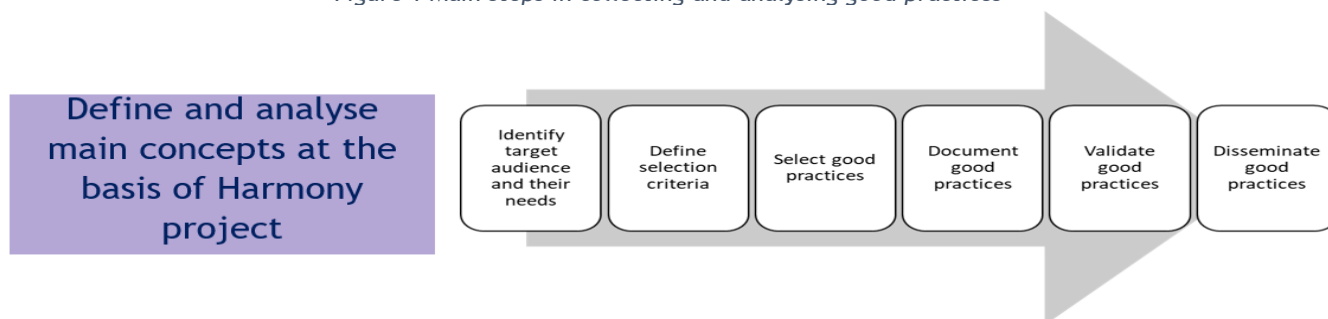
The collection and analysis of good and promising unfolded in the following steps:

i. Definition of the main concepts at the core of the Harmony project: i.e. restorative and collective/social housing. This step included the following activities:
   - definition of the templates for the mapping and analysis of the literature and good practices.
   - review of the literature on restorative justice.
   - desk analysis of local/national contexts in collective/social housing and restorative justice in France, Italy and Belgium.
   - partners' online meeting.
ii. Identification of the target audience and of their needs:
   - definition of the target audience of the analysis of good and promising practices: i.e. Harmony partners that will be directly developing and testing on the ground the toolkit of restorative practices; local stakeholders in the intervention contexts, including also supporting partners.
      - meetings with local stakeholders in the collective/social housing field and in deprived neighbourhoods, where restorative practices may be applied, aimed at operationalising the main project concepts (i.e. restorative justice and practices at community level, and in particular in neighbourhoods, especially vulnerable ones, and in collective/social housing) and gathering information on stakeholders' needs in relation to the project topic. To this end, 2 focus groups at local level with relevant stakeholders were organized in France and Italy. In addition, in France a questionnaire was submitted to stakeholders in this area.

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➢ partners' online meetings.

iii. *Definition of selection criteria (see above)* including the identification of the selection criteria. The selection of good practices occurred in three steps:

- Initially, a long list of practices has been drafted by each partner based on the review of the literature in the project area and discussions with relevant stakeholders. To this end, a common template has been provided to ensure homogeneity in the information collected.
- Secondly, partners met online to discuss the mapped practices.
- Successively, 10 good and promising practices have been selected based on the criteria identified previously and discussions between project partners.

iv. Documenting and validating good practices, comprising the following activities:

- Collecting information on the mapped practices through desk analysis and, where necessary to fill in information gaps, interviews to relevant stakeholders.
- Elaborate the information collected previously and draft the good/promising practice common template.
- Extrapolation of the main lessons learnt from good/promising practices
- Partners' meetings online and in person to discuss and validate practices analysed and their use on the ground in the Harmony testing intervention context. In this occasion the Harmony partners also had the opportunity to meet with actors involved in one of the good practices mapped (i.e. Lecco restorative city, with its Intermediary Body L'innominato).
- Drafting of the good and promising practices report.

v. *Dissemination of good/promising practices and of lessons learnt*, including specific events for the dissemination of the initial analysis of lessons learnt from good/promising practices and favouring local stakeholders' capacity building on this topic. Before the final version of the report, two events have been organized in the project countries (France and Italy), while the others will take place in the next period in order to disseminate the final report.

5. Good/promising practices mapped

Overall, **10 practices** have been mapped within the project:

- **Wohnpartner: restorative practices in Gemeindebau estates in Vienna – AUSTRIA** (good practice)

Wohnpartner represents a significant initiative in Vienna's social housing context, integrating restorative practices to address intercultural conflicts and promote social cohesion within the Gemeindebau estates. Established under the city's public housing administration, it employs approximately 150 staff members, including mediators with diverse cultural backgrounds, ensuring effective communication and cultural sensitivity in conflict resolution. The programme combines conflict management measures, such as mediation for disputes over noise, shared spaces, or cultural misunderstandings, with empowerment initiatives like community-building events and training.

Wohnpartner organizes activities like Hof-Cafés, informal gatherings that foster dialogue and trust among residents, and the Welcome Neighbour programme, which supports the integration of new tenants.

Mediation sessions are tailored to the complexity of conflicts, often conducted in neutral community spaces to encourage openness.

Intercultural mediators bridge gaps in understanding and build trust among diverse resident groups.

Key outcomes include improved social cohesion, reduced conflict escalation, and empowered residents equipped with conflict-resolution skills. The initiative also enhances inclusivity, integrating residents from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Wohnpartner's decentralized structure and collaborative approach with public agencies and community organizations ensure accessible, responsive support embedded within the neighbourhood. The programme underscores the importance of cultural inclusivity, local presence, proactive engagement, and flexible mediation.

- **BURENBEMIDDELING (Gent) – [mediation for neighbours] – BELGIUM** (good practice)

It is a good practice for resolving conflicts between neighbours without escalating to legal action, aligning with HARMONY's emphasis on restorative practices. Managed by the municipality, it relies on two full-time professionals and a network of 40 trained volunteers, selected through a rigorous five-day training program and ongoing development sessions. Most cases are referred by the neighbourhood police, reflecting collaboration between community stakeholders.

The programme addresses typical neighbour disputes such as noise, parking, and shared property issues, offering an average of 350 mediations annually, with a 90% success rate for cases that proceed. Volunteers invest about six hours per mediation, ensuring thorough preparation and engagement. Mediation is always voluntary, and interpreters are used when

language barriers arise, though sessions are conducted in Dutch. Volunteers are trained in cultural sensitivity to handle the diverse backgrounds of participants.

Outcomes include improved mutual understanding, reduced escalation of conflicts, and strengthened community ties. The mediation process fosters open dialogue, often preventing parties from pursuing court action or other adversarial steps. However, challenges remain, as only about 50% of referrals result in active mediation, often due to one party's refusal to participate.

The relatively limited scope of mediation makes it efficient for small-scale disputes, but the program could explore additional interventions for cases where mediation is not feasible. The approach demonstrates the value of integrating mediation into broader community safety and social cohesion frameworks.

- **Restorative Conferences – BELGIUM** (promising practice)

Restorative Conferences (RCs) are a widely recognized practice within restorative justice, offering a structured method to address harm by involving all parties affected by a conflict. In Flanders, Belgium, RCs are integrated into justice, education, and youth care systems, reflecting their adaptability to diverse fields. They emphasize repairing harm through inclusive dialogue, making them highly relevant to the HARMONY project, particularly for addressing neighborhood conflicts involving multiple stakeholders.

RCs are employed for varied conflicts, including youth offenses, school disputes, and workplace issues. The process includes a preparation phase where facilitators meet participants individually to build trust and clarify expectations, followed by a formal conference involving all parties in a restorative circle. Participants share experiences, emotions, and responsibilities, collaboratively crafting a plan to address the harm. The conference concludes with a follow-up phase to ensure commitments are upheld.

Key outcomes include emotional relief, strengthened relationships, and reintegration of offenders into their communities. Victims gain a voice to express their needs, while offenders take responsibility and empathize with those affected. Research and practice highlight high levels of participant satisfaction, particularly in education settings where relationships are ongoing, and restoration fosters long-term cohesion.

Critical lessons include the importance of thorough facilitator training to ensure RCs are conducted safely and effectively. Preparation is essential to address participants' initial resistance, with skilled facilitators reorienting concerns into opportunities for dialogue. RCs are particularly impactful in settings where participants are interconnected, such as neighborhoods, and where mutual restoration can significantly improve group dynamics. In Flanders, the presence of multiple trained facilitators within organizations enhances the sustainability and success of RC implementation, allowing for co-facilitation and peer support. These factors, alongside the structured yet flexible nature of RCs, demonstrate their potential to address complex social conflicts and foster inclusive, restorative communities.

- **Community conference » or « Neighborhood conference** » developed by Eigen Kracht Centrale – **BELGIUM AND NETHERLANDS** (good practice)

The "Neighbourhood Conference" model by Eigen Kracht Centrale (EKC) in Belgium and the Netherlands is a community-driven restorative practice focusing on empowering residents to collaboratively address conflicts and nuisances in their living environments. Inspired by indigenous practices, the model places residents at the heart of problem-solving, encouraging dialogue, mutual understanding, and the creation of a shared action plan to resolve issues and rebuild social cohesion. Its relevance to the HARMONY project lies in its potential to address neighbourhood conflicts in social housing contexts by involving all affected stakeholders.

The conference process begins with a request from an institution (e.g., municipality, housing association) to EKC, followed by preparation by an independent, trained volunteer coordinator who facilitates the conference. Participants, including victims, offenders, neighbours, and informal networks, discuss the conflict's impact and focus on creating actionable solutions. Solutions are community-driven and aim to avoid coercive measures.

Key outcomes include strengthened community ties, improved trust, and actionable plans to address ongoing conflicts. Evaluations indicate the model's success in fostering collaboration, though challenges persist in engaging all stakeholders and ensuring follow-through on agreements. The model's success depends on neutral facilitation, the active involvement of affected parties, and robust follow-up mechanisms.

The practice shows the importance of ensuring independent coordinators, adequate training, and fostering trust in the process. This model highlights the power of community-led restorative solutions in creating sustainable harmony in neighbourhoods.

- **Médiation nomade – The word is stronger than violence** (« La parole plus forte que la violence ») – FRANCE (promising practice)

The Médiation Nomade initiative operates in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods across France, leveraging a mobile approach to foster dialogue, reduce tensions, and identify solutions for local conflicts. Using a customized truck, the association creates informal spaces in public areas, equipped with tables, chairs, and refreshments, to facilitate discussions in a neutral and welcoming environment. Targeting young people and residents, Médiation Nomade promotes dialogue between individuals and local actors, focusing on building trust and understanding.

The practice, founded by Yazid Kherfi, emphasizes preventive action by addressing issues such as noise, gatherings, and community disturbances through spontaneous and inclusive interactions. Mediators, often with shared life experiences, embody neutrality and act as bridges between residents and institutional actors. Their approach relies on key principles such as non-judgment, separating individuals from their actions, and fostering mutual respect.

While not explicitly restorative, Médiation Nomade aligns with restorative practices by encouraging community participation in identifying and resolving conflicts. Outcomes include fostering empathy, increasing dialogue, and directing residents to local resources. Since its inception, the program has held over 260 events, offering a model of engagement outside typical institutional frameworks.

The practice reveals the importance of mobility, cultural sensitivity, neutrality, and the creation of safe spaces for open dialogue. The adaptability of this practice highlights its potential for addressing urban conflicts and building community resilience through innovative, community-cantered approaches.

- **Como and Lecco Intermediary bodies – ITALY** (good practice)

The intermediary bodies in Como and Lecco exemplify a community-driven restorative approach aimed at fostering social cohesion and addressing conflicts. Their relevance to the HARMONY project lies in their ability to intercept social tensions, empower citizens as restorative "antennas," and embed restorative principles and values into daily interactions. These bodies provide a neutral space for dialogue, enabling the community to collectively identify and address social fractures, creating sustainable restorative practices.

In Como, the initiative emerged in 2018 under the ConTatto project, while in Lecco, it began in 2012, both involving diverse community stakeholders, local institutions, and civil society organizations. These intermediary bodies act as meeting points where trained citizens, institutions, and community members collaboratively resolve conflicts and promote restorative culture.

Key activities include interactive training, fieldwork, and participatory governance. Members are trained in restorative practices and gradually empowered to participate in their implementation. These initiatives address issues like neighbourhood disputes and relational fractures.

Outcomes include increased community responsibility, enhanced conflict management skills, and greater cohesion. Members report shifts in perspective, improved empathy, and active participation in creating solutions for local tensions.

Challenges include the need for strong initial leadership, consistent team stability, and sufficient time and resources to build trust and social legitimacy.

This practice reveals the importance of inclusive governance, sustained community engagement, and tailoring interventions to local contexts. By equipping citizens to manage conflicts restoratively, the intermediary bodies demonstrate the transformative potential of embedding restorative practices into community frameworks.

- **"Passaporta" – promoting restorative values, principles and practices in collective housing** – ITALY (promising practice)

Passaporta," implemented in Rovellasca, Como, aimed to address social tensions in a public housing complex through a restoratively oriented approach. The practice aligns with HARMONY's goals of embedding restorative justice in social housing, demonstrating effective conflict management, and community engagement.

Initially, the project analysed tensions in an ALER housing complex through interviews and observation, identifying micro-conflicts rooted in cultural biases and power dynamics. It then created a neutral, inclusive space, "Passaporta," outside the housing complex to reduce stigma

and broaden engagement. Activities included individual listening sessions, creative workshops for children, and public events on themes like migration, designed to encourage trust, dialogue, and restorative practices.

Outcomes included increased trust in the Passaporta as a safe, neutral space for conflict resolution and its recognition by local institutions as a valuable resource. The project also fostered community understanding of restorative justice and facilitated connections among diverse residents.

Key success factors were the project's non-judgmental approach, skilled staff with restorative training, strong collaboration with local authorities, and active promotion of the space. However, its sustainability was hindered by a shift in local government and the COVID-19 crisis.

Lessons provided by this practice include the importance of trust-building, the neutrality of facilitators, community-driven legitimacy, and minimizing overreliance on political actors for long-term sustainability. Preparatory phases and local "antennas" are crucial for fostering engagement and embedding restorative principles in complex social contexts.

- **Tempio Pausania Restorative City – ITALY** (good practice)

Tempio Pausania, Sardinia, became Italy's first restorative city in 2012, showcasing how restorative practices can foster community cohesion and conflict resolution. Initially addressing tensions around the establishment of the Nuchis prison for mafia detainees, the initiative bridged gaps between residents, detainees, and local institutions through restorative circles, conferences, and participatory activities. Led by the University of Sassari's Restorative Practices Team, the project expanded to schools, municipalities, and social institutions, embedding restorative values into daily life. Initiatives like Photovoice workshops and the "Apprentice Facilitators" program empowered youth to mediate peer conflicts, fostering inclusion and respect. The Co.Re. model (Community of Restorative Relations) guided interventions across individual, cultural, and ecological levels, enhancing social cohesion and well-being.

Outcomes included over 900 participants in restorative conferences, reduced prejudice, stronger community networks, and increased trust between citizens and institutions. The initiative also inspired other Italian towns and developed innovative tools like the Restorative Counselling Service in schools. Lessons for the Harmony project emphasize the importance of a multilevel approach, blending top-down governance with grassroots engagement. The need for trained restorative practitioners, participatory governance, and long-term planning was pivotal. While COVID-19 posed challenges, the project's adaptability highlighted the resilience of restorative frameworks.

Tempio Pausania illustrates how restorative cities can cultivate inclusive, proactive communities, providing a replicable model for collective housing and broader societal contexts.

- **Restorative Lunch to Inspire Innovation («Pranzo Riparativo per Ispirare innovazione») – ITALY** (good practice)

The "Restorative Lunch to Inspire Innovation," held in Tempio Pausania, Italy, in November 2014, was a pivotal event showcasing the integration of restorative justice principles into a community

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context. Organized by the University of Sassari's Restorative Practices Team in collaboration with Nuchis Prison and local institutions, the lunch addressed conflicts between the community and the newly established prison. Approximately 130 participants, including inmates, citizens, local authorities, magistrates, lawyers, and victim association representatives, shared a meal at tables themed around restorative values like trust and respect. This setting fostered dialogue, breaking barriers between participants and offering inmates a rare opportunity to engage with the broader community.

The event, organized during the International Restorative Justice Week, served as a platform for discussions on conflict resolution, inclusion, and justice. Facilitators guided interactions, while attendees contributed by sharing food and ideas, symbolizing collaboration and mutual support. The lunch inspired subsequent restorative activities, such as workshops, community dialogues, and educational programs, embedding restorative practices in local schools and institutions.

Key outcomes included enhanced community trust, awareness of restorative justice, and stronger ties between institutions and citizens.

The event highlighted the transformative potential of restorative justice in resolving tensions and building cohesive communities.

The practice demonstrates the importance of innovative engagement tools, like shared meals, to foster trust, raise awareness, and initiate restorative dialogues in housing and community contexts. It also underscores the need for trained facilitators, collaborative planning, and adaptive approaches to overcome logistical and bureaucratic challenges, ensuring sustained community impact.

- **Restorative practices within a residential setting for homeless people – SWEDEN** (good practice)

The Stockholm City Mission's restorative practices within residential settings for homeless individuals exemplify an innovative approach to community-building and conflict resolution, aligning closely with the goals of the Harmony project. Implemented in Klaragården, a day center for homeless women, and Bostallet, Scandinavia's first halfway house for homeless people, these practices integrate restorative values into everyday operations. This approach addresses homelessness and associated mental health challenges, fostering accountability, reconciliation, and reintegration rather than exclusion.

Key restorative practices include impromptu conferences, formal restorative meetings, and family group conferences. These methods address behavioral issues, rule violations, and strained family relationships, emphasizing personal responsibility and community reintegration. Klaragården focuses on immediate conflict resolution in a nurturing environment, while Bostallet employs a progressive housing model, guiding residents toward independence through a structured, supportive framework.

Outcomes include significant cultural shifts within these settings, enabling residents to rebuild trust, repair harm, and foster stronger relationships with staff, peers, and the broader community. Notable examples include transformative interactions with mentally ill individuals, showcasing the potential for tailored restorative interventions. Public events, such as art

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exhibitions and community outreach, further strengthened ties between Bostallet and its upscale neighbourhood, reducing stigma and fostering goodwill.

Lessons emphasized by this practice regard balancing empathy with accountability, structuring clear processes, and tailoring practices to diverse populations. Furthermore, the practice shows that strategies like restorative practices, community involvement, and proactive media engagement successfully counter opposition, creating a welcoming and integrated environment.

The above-mentioned practices have both a conflict prevention and conflict management purpose. To achieve this purpose the practices, use **various and integrated types of activities**:

- *Restorative interventions*, such as, circles, mediation, conferences (including also community or neighbourhood conferences), family group conferences, restorative meetings, etc. Restorative interventions are used both to manage and prevent (e.g. circles) conflicts.
- *Community building interventions*: e.g. creation of intermediary bodies, creation of social spaces (e.g. restorative corners, social café, neighbourhood welcome programme, social events, restorative lunch). While not restorative, these interventions are particularly relevant both for preventing conflicts and for the creation of the conditions to implement restorative interventions. For instance, the existence of intermediary bodies allows to detect harms and suffering within the community, to enhance networks at local level and to provide resources (e.g. social legitimacy, knowledge) necessary for the implementation on the ground of restorative practices, when conflicts arise; the social caffés set in Vienna allow people to interact with each other, allowing people to interact with each other, to know one's culture and habits, to create connections, which ultimately fosters positive relations, reduces conflicts and make people more prone to use restorative justice in case of conflicts.
- *Awareness raising activities*: e.g. debates on restorative justice, films, theatre pieces, readings, workshop, flashmob, photovoice, restorative lunch. Awareness raising activities are crucial for disseminating the restorative culture in a social climate characterised by increasing polarization, social fractures and penal populism.
- *Training activities*: basic training on restorative justice and advanced/professional training on restorative justice targeted to citizens, social workers, judicial staff, school (at all levels) staff, politicians, journalists, etc. Training activities are particularly relevant for building skills on restorative justice in all layers of the community and staff involved.

The mapped practices employ a wide **range of methods and tools**, as synthetised below, which points out that there is not one ideal model of how to restoratively prevent and manage conflicts in collective/social housing and neighbourhoods, but rather a **personalized path** based on the **context features and people's needs and resources available**:

- *Mediation* (various types and formats) – in Wohnpartner, Burenbemiddeling, Médiation Nomade, Como Restorative City, Tempio Pausania, Stockholm practices
- *Restorative Conferences* – in the Netherlands, Belgium, Stockholm, Tempio Pausania practices
- Family Group Conferences - Stockholm practice

- *Circles* – in Como and Lecco Intermediary Bodies, Italy (Passaporta), Stockholm, Tempio Pausania Restorative city, Wohnpartner practices
- *Listening sessions and individual meetings* – in Italy (Passaporta), Stockholm, Wohnpartner
- *Photovoice – in* Tempio Pausania Restorative city
- *Community events (including also shared meals) and informal gatherings – in* Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies, Wohnpartner, Tempio Pausania Restorative City practices
- Social Integration Space – in Passaporta.

A detailed description of the practices is provided in the full version of the report.

6. Lessons learnt from the good/promising practices for the Harmony project

This chapter provides several lessons to be considered in the design and delivery of restorative practices in collective/social housing and in neighbourhoods. These are discussed in the paragraphs below.

i. PROACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ALL PHASES OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The community plays a relevant role in restorative justice. As explained previously, one of the core principles of restorative justice is "do with" instead of "do for" or "do to". This means that **community in its broad sense** (e.g. citizens, institutions, social and economic actors, politicians) **must be actively engaged in restorative justice interventions**. This does not mean that its role is limited to actively participation in the restorative practices, but rather that it also needs to take an **active role in shaping, delivering and monitoring restorative interventions**. As pointed out by the analysed practices, this is paramount for an effective delivery of restorative interventions and most of all for their social legitimization. Nevertheless, as revealed by the literature and the analysed practices, restorative interventions are hard to delivery when they are not part recognized and supported at community level (Pali & Pelikan, 2010). While this is crucial for delivering managing conflicts restoratively, several authors (Dighera, Vasilescu and Aertsen, 2021; Weitekamp, 2015) note that engaging the wider community it is not an easy task and specific strategies have to be developed. The good and promising practices analysed within the Harmony project allow to extrapolate several **strategies to be considered for enhancing an active role of community members** in all phases of restorative interventions:

- **Engaging people acknowledged by the community** as **champions of restorative practices** and **promoters** of **restorative interventions**. This is particularly relevant in the case of innovative interventions, as restorative practices, and in contexts where the dominating culture is based on violent confrontation and polarization. The analysis of the above-mentioned practices points out that the reputation and legitimacy of organizations and experts promoting restorative interventions is particularly relevant for making people trust them and actively participate in restorative interventions. This implies on the one hand **looking for resources within the community** and not outside it and, on the other hand, **paying attention to power dynamics and social connections** existing within the respective community.
- **Identifying "antennas" in the community.** Creating "antennas", i.e. community members who are trained to restorative justice and can intercept harm and suffering in the community and actively participate in shaping and delivering restorative practices, represents both a way to actively engage the community and to legitimize restorative interventions within the community, favouring a wider support for them. In starting the process, attention should be paid to involving potential antennas that are well known in the community and/or that are interested in the topic. As pointed out by the Italian experience of Intermediary Bodies it is important to engage the initial "antennas" in further expanding the network of people who may be interested in the topic. This can be achieved, for instance, through asking people to bring another friend/neighbourhood/etc. at the meetings organized.
- **Creating structured interactions within the community, initially in particular among the "antennas".** The Italian Intermediary Bodies experience shows that creating repeated interaction opportunities among people allows them to know each other and to create

social connections, **fostering a sense of belonging and of engagement for the well-being of their community**. This favours their further engagement in restorative practices.

- **Building the trust of community members in restorative professionals.** Besides engaging well-acknowledged people and creating antennas in the community, people's trust in restorative professionals can also be built through their constant presence in the respective community and continuous interaction between restorative practitioners and community members, as pointed out by the Vienna, Lecco, Como practices. This is further facilitated when restorative practitioners come from the territories where restorative interventions are delivered, as this facilitates people's sense of identification with restorative practitioners. Furthermore, trust is also facilitated by impartiality of restorative practitioners.

- **Creating curiosity around the topic of restorative justice**. Besides through the engagement of "antennas" in the dissemination of the restorative culture, this can also be achieved through the adoption of a proactive media strategy based on a pre-emptive approach, as in the Stockholm case. Besides the media, other methods can be used: flashmobs (e.g. Tempio Pausania Restorative City), restorative lunches (e.g. Tempio Pausania Restorative City), photovoice (e.g. Tempio Pausania Restorative City), exhibitions (e.g. Stockholm), informal gatherings (e.g. Vienna), restorative readings (Passaporta – Italy), storytelling of restorative practices, etc.

- Training community members to restorative justice and creating opportunities for their participation in the delivery of restorative practices. Being directly involved in the delivery of restorative practices allow people to directly experiment the benefits of restorative practices. As mentioned in the analysed practices, restorative justice may seem a philosophical concept easy to understand by highly educated people instead of a way of living for all people irrespective of their level of education. Being trained to restorative justice and most of all being directly involved in restorative justice allows people to translate in practice the concepts at its core. Furthermore, it also promotes citizens' ownership and responsibility, creating a sustainable and collaborative environment. reduces dependency on mediators and fosters a culture of self-governance. This strategy ensures long-term sustainability of restorative culture, as residents become equipped to manage disputes independently.

- **Enhancing community leadership in the design and delivery of restorative practices**. As pointed out by the Eigen Kracht Centrale and Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies, practitioners should trust citizens and their capacity to achieve solutions, favour the power transfer from professionals to citizens. This does not mean that **restorative professional practitioners** should disappear, but rather that they should take on **the role of a 'scaffolding' builder** and facilitator of the restorative process, rather than that of its controller.

- **Providing feedback on results achieved**. As pointed out by the experiences of Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies, providing feedback on achievements obtained and steps in the process towards achieving restorative communities favoured the engagement of community members over time.

- **Creating safe, beautiful, neutral and inclusive spaces for favouring participation in restorative practices**. Some of the analysed practices (e.g. Vienna Wohnpartner, Passaporta, Stockholm Bostallet, Restorative conference in Belgium) underline the

relevance of locations for the active participation of people both in preventive and conflict management restorative interventions.

To effectively engage the community, a preliminary step is needed, i.e. **understanding the culture, the social norms, the power dynamics, the social and legal frameworks of the respective community** and the **existence of manifested or latent conflicts in the community and the causes behind them**. Before embarking in the delivery of a restorative method/tool, be it preventive or used for the management of a manifested conflict, a thorough analysis of the respective community and of social conflicts characterising it should be undertaken.

Furthermore, **in engaging community members**, restorative practitioners should pay attention to **not reproduce power imbalances and systemic injustice in the community**, involving all categories of citizens, particularly those at risk of social exclusion. Tools like **restorative lunches**, **social caffè**, **free events** may favour their participation. Furthermore, **engaging stakeholders** representing these categories of citizens (e.g. associations) may prove effective for their engagement. Additionally, **engaging peers** is equally important to favour their participation.

ii. RESTORATIVE PRACTICES RESPONDENT TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE THE INTERVENTION IS DELIVERED

As pointed out by the analysed practices, restorative interventions adopted should be **grounded in the needs of the community** where the intervention is carried out and in the **contribution of community members** to their design and delivery. This implies that **methods and tools** have to be **adapted to the features of the context** where they are delivered, creating personalized paths. Furthermore, **restorative approaches and methods adopted should be flexible** enough to accommodate changes in the needs of the community. Practices like Burenbemiddeling (Ghent), Wohnpartner (Vienna) and Restorative Practices for Homeless People (Sweden) stress the need for flexibility, understanding the specific social dynamics of the community where interventions are delivered and customization in approach, adapting strategies to specific community needs.

iii. CULTURALLY SENSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

As underlined by the analysed practices, to be effective, **restorative practices should pay attention to aspects such interculturality and inclusivity**, especially when restorative interventions are delivered in multicultural settings and cultural aspects are behind social fractures and tensions. Attention should be paid to understanding how cultural and religious aspects shape behaviour of community members and interpersonal communication and relationships. In addition, attention should be given to language barriers and their role in hindering mutual understanding and social connections. The analysed practices provide various ways of dealing with these aspects:

- Wohnpartner (Vienna, Austria) underlines the significance of ensuring mediators reflect the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the community fosters trust and community's participation in restorative justice. Intercultural training enhances the mediators' competence in handling conflicts across diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, the Viennese practice also points out that ensuring all cultural groups within the community are represented and feel included in restorative practices is essential for their inclusivity.
- Burenbemiddeling (Ghent, Belgium) emphasizes the importance of using interpreters for mediations **involving individuals from different cultural backgrounds** to overcome cultural and language barriers.

- Restorative practices for homeless people (Sweden) points out the relevance of adopting a **non-judgemental attitude** towards **all participants in restorative practices**, whatever their role of the facts committed (in the case of offenders). Non-judgement communication lies at the heart of restorative processes and should be enhanced throughout all stages of restorative practices for both restorative practitioners and participants in restorative interventions. All practitioners involved in the design and delivery of restorative practices should be trained to non-judgemental and empathic communication and relation with all members of the community.

- Restorative practices for homeless people (Sweden) underlines the importance of paying attention to **recognizing the different needs of the various categories of people and tailoring restorative practices to their needs**. For instance, the practice shows that **restorative practices targeted to women** should pay attention to the **gender dimension**, as women often struggle with guilt and complex relationships in a different way compared to men. Additionally, the practice shows that **people with mental challenges** can be and **should be part of restorative practices**, which need to consider these challenges in their design and delivery. In the Stockholm case, people with mental challenges that breach the social norms of the halfway house are held accountable for their actions and involved in restorative practices.

iv. RESTORATIVE PRACTICES INTEGRATED WITHIN WIDER SOCIAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The analysed practices (e.g. Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies, Passaporta, Wohnpartner) pinpoint that **the integration of restorative practices within the wider social policy framework** of municipalities is particularly relevant for **ensuring both its effectiveness and sustainability**. Analysed practices reveal that conflicts often originate from systemic injustice and poor living conditions and that as long as these underlying issues behind conflicts are not addressed, the long-term effects of restorative practices in managing specific conflicts may be at risk. The experience of the Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies highlights that **engaging the community in restorative practices is valuable** not only for enhancing participation and awareness in these practices but also for **increasing understanding of the social issues underlying conflicts** and **finding solutions collaboratively**. Equally important is adopting a **transformative restorative approach**, which not only emphasizes encounters and restoration of relationships between parties involved in a conflict but also seeks to identify and address the underlying causes of the harm to prevent future issues.

v. PROXIMITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND CONTINUITY OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Analysed good and promising practices show that restorative practices have to be accessible and continuous throughout time. In the analysed practices, accessibility refers to physical, economic and linguistic accessibility (as explained previously). When it comes to economic accessibility, in all mapped practices participation in restorative practices is free of charge. As to physical accessibility, analysed practices point out the relevance of decentralizing structures where restorative practices are delivered. **Decentralized structures**, such as local offices within communities (e.g., Wohnpartner in Vienna, Passaporta in Rovellasca, Italy, Médiation nomade in France), **make services more accessible**. This proximity allows for **quick intervention**, which has proven to be an **essential factor for effectiveness** in the Vienna and Stockholm practices, and it **fosters trust** as restorative facilitators become familiar and approachable figures in the community. Furthermore, it also allows restorative practitioners to uncover manifested or

potential social tensions, through interacting with community members, without waiting for conflict parties to approach a specific community/restorative centre. Additionally, as pointed out by the "Passaporta" case, it is important that structures are **spread throughout the intervention area** to **fight stigmatization of vulnerable neighbourhoods and citizens**. For instance, in the "Passaporta" case it was necessary to locate the "Passaporta" outside the social housing complex street, to point out that conflicts do not occur only in vulnerable settings, but in all settings where social interaction occurs. At the same time, it was important to select a location not too far from the social housing building so as to favour inhabitants' participation.

Proximity and accessibility are also favoured by **embedding restorative practices in all people's living and working contexts**. Integration of the restorative approach and practices within existing real connection places in a community avoids excessive overlapping of commitments by participants, which may impact negatively on their commitment and participation in them.

Moreover, in order to ensure accessibility, **restorative practices delivery should take into consideration community members' time needs**. For instance, in Lecco and Como all meetings of intermediary bodies are held during evenings to favour citizens' participation.

Sustainability over time of restorative practices is **crucial**. As detailed in the analysis of good and promising practices, restorative interventions take time to produce effects, and their effectiveness depends on the possibility to ensure continuity over time. Ensuring continuity over time of restorative practices can be achieved on the one hand through securing continuous funding and social support for restorative practices. Continuous funding and social support can be guaranteed through **embedding restorative justice** on the one hand within the **wider policy framework at local/regional/national level** and on the other hand in **all social settings**. The higher citizens' and stakeholders' participation in restorative justice, the higher the pressure on politicians and institutions to ensure continuous financial support; an increased participation of community members in restorative interventions also triggers a bandwagon mechanism, which fosters further participation in it.

vi. PREPARING THE COMMUNITY FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES, PARTICULARLY IN VULNERABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS COLLECTIVE/SOCIAL HOUSING

Both the literature (Vanfraechem & Aertsen, 2018) and the analysed practices (e.g. Vienna Wohnpartner and Passaporta) show that **a preparatory stage is often necessary to gradually build support for restorative practices within local communities**. As pointed out previously, constructing social legitimacy of restorative practices at community level is essential for favouring people's willingness to participate in them. Moreover, in communities characterised by cultural clashes and polarization, this preparatory phase has also the purpose to allow people to connect with each other. This preparatory phase is characterised by the design and delivery of community building initiatives (e.g. social events like the Viennese Hof-Cafés, social programmes like the Viennese Welcome Neighbour Programme, restorative lunches like in the Tempio Pausania case). Additionally, community building programmes have also a **preventive role**. For instance, community events and the organization of informal gatherings (e.g., Hof-Cafés - Vienna) create spaces for positive social interactions before conflicts arise, building community bonds and mutual respect; programmes that introduce new residents to community norms and spaces (e.g., Welcome Neighbour Initiatives - Vienna) help integrate diverse groups, preventing conflicts related to unfamiliarity or misunderstandings.

vii. CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES FOR THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES COHERENT WITH RESTORATIVE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Analysed practices reveal that setting a **transparent, but flexible, structure of restorative practices** supports **building trust and ensuring consistent application** of restorative practices. In setting the structure of restorative practices, it is particularly relevant to design a timeline of the **implementation process of restorative practices** pinpointing their expected evolution over a specific period. This supports involved actors in understanding that restorative practices need adequate time resources in order to produce effects. Furthermore, according to the experiences analysed (e.g. Intermediary bodies of Lecco and Como), co-creating the structure of restorative practices jointly with community members is particularly relevant for enhancing their ownership and participation in them. The co-design process of restorative practices should be coherent with the restorative principles and values.

viii.   PRACTITIONERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TRAINED TO RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

All analysed practices reveal that a **solid understanding of restorative justice, practical skills, and competencies in applying these practices effectively on the ground are essential for restorative approaches to be successful.** In all the practices assessed, restorative practitioners—whether professional mediators/facilitators or community members—undergo specific training in restorative justice and practices to ensure high quality and effectiveness. According to these analyses, a **high degree of professionalism** among restorative facilitators, whether professionals or volunteers, is also **crucial for legitimizing restorative practices and gaining the trust of community members**. Additionally, **training community members** in **restorative conflict management** promotes the **widespread adoption of a restorative culture** across all community levels, contributing to its long-term sustainability. Several practices emphasize that **restorative facilitators**, whether professional or volunteer, should not only possess a strong knowledge of restorative practices but also exhibit a **high level of relational skills**, the **ability to maintain neutrality** throughout the entire process, and the skill **to act as a "scaffold"** for the individuals involved. This includes delegating power to participants while maintaining a facilitator's role and the ability to separate the person from their actions. Furthermore, analysed practices underscore the importance of restorative facilitators—whether professionals or volunteers—receiving **training in interculturality** and maintaining a non-**judgmental and inclusive approach**. Several practices, such as the Lecco and Como Intermediary Bodies and the Neighbourhood Conferences developed by Kracht Centrale, highlight the **value of training volunteer citizens and involving them in delivering restorative practices**.

ix.   LEADERSHIP AND MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Analysed practices reveal that **the implementation of restorative practices** at community level, including also in collective/social housing, largely relies on a **leader who can inspire interest in restorative justice among various stakeholders** and **build a network of local supporters** dedicated to promoting restorative justice principles, values beyond the criminal justice system.

x.   ADEQUATE RESOURCES

Analysed practices point out that the **allocation of adequate time, financial and knowledge resources is essential** for ensuring an effective delivery of restorative practices and their sustainability over time.

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