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In need of a cultural shift to promote restorative justice in Southern Europe

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the main results of a European project on restorative justice (RJ) called Freedom Wings (FW) and presents a new model to promote RJ in Southern Europe, which was developed from FW findings. The principal mission of the FW project is to disseminate best practices of RJ within a transnational network and to promote community participation in conflict prevention and resolution, in order to support individual and social well-being. This paper presents the main findings of multiagency and professional focus groups exploring restorative approaches and community justice. Observation of experts' social representation of RJ helped the authors to understand the operation of the justice systems in each country and the attitudes of senior officials towards implementing restorative practices in a way that actively involves the community. The analysis shows the necessity of a cultural change in order to switch from a form of RJ managed by the judicial system to one led by the community. The EU project enabled the research team to theorize a model for promoting a relational and restorative community.

KEYWORDS: Restorative justice; relational and restorative community; promotional community; focus groups; ATLAS.ti

1. Introduction

In recent decades, scholars have proposed a transition from a restorative justice (RJ) approach, which is primarily focused on a reparative dialogue between the victim and the offender, to a community justice approach, based on the prevention of conflict and the promotion of individual and community well-being, starting with the active involvement of community members in the justice process (Bazemore, 1998; Boyes Watson, 2005; Clear & Karp, 1998, 1999; Zehr, 1990, 2002). Clear and Karp (2000) offer a useful definition of community justice as an ethic that transforms the aim of the justice system into enhancing community life or sustaining community. To achieve that aim, the community partners with the justice system to share responsibility for social control. This means some control devolves from the justice system, a powerful mechanism of formal social control, to the community, which through churches, schools, civic organizations, families, and similar institutions, exercises the informal social control that fosters civil behaviour and public safety. (p. 21)

While the circumstance of RJ varies across European countries, interest and understanding of its potential have increased substantially (Johnstone, 2011; Van Ness & Strong, 2013). For the past 30 years, Victim–Offender Mediation (VOM) has been the most widely used approach of RJ in Europe, but recently a variety of additional restorative practices has become popular. In particular, new approaches appear to be more attuned to victims' needs.

This newfound interest in RJ offers an arena for democratic practice through popular participation and greater responsibility on the part of the community. Politicians, but also criminal justice practitioners, prosecutors and judges, have now recognized that crime cannot be handled and controlled by the criminal justice system alone. A community justice approach offers a broader and more inclusive conception of RJ. In fact, communication and promotion of restorative practices limited to the justice system, albeit useful, entails a reductive understanding of RJ. Instead it might prove fruitful to apply a restorative perspective to schools and universities, families, associations/cooperatives and the workplace.

This paper presents the third phase of the international action research project 'Freedom Wings'. The project involved three countries: Cyprus, Greece and Italy and was funded by the European Commission Directorate General Justice. The goals are indicated in its title: 'Freedom Wings: Identification and dissemination of European best practices of RJ and evaluation of the role and application of mediation and alternative measures in the EU member states'. An overarching goal of this international project is to promote greater awareness around the diffusion of restorative practices in the contexts of juvenile and criminal justice.

The study had two specific objectives. Firstly, the authors intended to understand justice professionals' 'social representations' of RJ in the three countries, in order to explore stereotypes and prejudices which can negatively affect a communitarian approach to RJ implementation. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore the social constructions that create a common and shared reality, experienced as objective, factual and yet full of subjective meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). 'Social representations' (Moscovici, 1989; Moscovici & Duveen, 2000) are value systems, ideas and practices that are transmitted through various means (e.g. media, family, school, religion, associations, etc.). Social representations are important because they are perceptual models of the external world that allow individuals to orient themselves and control their own material environment. They also facilitate communication between members of the community, providing them with a 'code' to design and classify the different aspects of their world and their individual and group history. Such codes are needed to understand and explain reality, define individual and group identities and drive behaviour and practice (Abric & Hogg, 1984).

Secondly, the project tried to understand if criminal and juvenile justice experts, as well as practitioners who work routinely with them, are actually willing and able to promote a 'cultural shift' towards community justice in Southern European countries where its diffusion is still limited. To this purpose, the research team organized a series of multiagency and inter-professional focus groups with individuals who are in a privileged position to implement and promote restorative practices, in order to collect social representations regarding the diffusion of restorative practices in the countries under study (Bazemore, 1998; Boyes Watson & Pranis, 2010; Gavrielides, 2012). The analysis of the

social representations of RJ that emerged from the focus groups allowed for a comparative study of theoretical and practical implementation of RJ and helped us identify best practices.

Apart from the utility of our findings for the three countries involved in the project, we believe this research work contributes to the literature on restorative practices as well as diffusing knowledge among EU member states, especially in the south of Europe where RJ implementation is rare and unsystematic. The study intends to raise awareness around the potential benefits of RJ when this includes all the main community stakeholders in a more holistic approach. Therefore, the project's aim was not just to observe and understand the phenomenon under study, but also to activate a shared process among participants in order to produce individual and social change. The project began with the assumption that technical and practical skills and scientific knowledge can interact with each other in a reciprocal process to drive change. To this aim an action research approach (Lewin, 1946, 1951), which stimulates critical and self-reflexive thinking among the participants in the study, was used to identify obstacles and share operational solutions that could positively affect the realization of RJ in the partnering countries. Notably, as far as the authors know, this is the first study examining key leaders' social representations of RJ in Greece, Italy and Cyprus. We argue that these southern European countries need a 'cultural shift' among social and justice experts in order to successfully promote and widely implement restorative practices. We propose a model emerging from the focus groups to summarize the data and highlight the main factors that can drive a cultural swift.

The paper consists of five sections. Section 2 provides a literature review of community RJ. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 presents the main findings and, finally, Section 5, Conclusion, discusses the implications of this study.

2. Literature review on community restorative justice

According to the *United Nation Economic and Social Council, N. 2000/14 of 27th of July 2000*, RJ can be defined as:

> any process in which the victim and the offender and, where appropriate, any other individuals or community members affected by a crime, participate actively together in the resolution of matters arising from the crime, generally with the help of a facilitator.

This definition is important because it focuses on the management of conflict between offender and victim and the potential enhancement of the victim's role in typically offender-centric legal systems. However, it also limits the potential of RJ by identifying it so closely with mediation and, at the same time, it fails to prioritize the reparation of harm resulting from criminal offence.

One of the main differences between the *punitive-retributive penal justice model* and the *restorative* one is that the first one focuses on the penalty and on the offender, while the second focuses on ways to heal the harm (Zehr, 1990) beyond mere financial compensation to the victim. Restoration may be seen as an orientation to the generation/regeneration of social harmony between social partners through the search for consensus, sharing and social peace (Patrizi & Lepri, 2011). In many countries, a new interest has grown around the community justice movement, which highlights the importance of new projects focused on the individual and the community (Ashworth, 2002; Clear & Karp, 1998; Green, Johnstone,

& Lambert, 2013). Recently, through grass-roots involvement and participation, whole communities have embarked on a *cultural shift* to embrace RJ. In England, Leeds and Hull have been recognized as the first 'restorative cities' in Europe (Bussu & Patrizi, 2013; Green et al., 2013). This model of the restorative city, and a broader conceptualization of a restorative society (Wright, 2010), envisions education and justice institutions working together to disseminate and raise awareness about restorative practices and promoting the active and central role of citizens in conflict management and, more generally, in the governance of the community.

The main aim of the restorative city model is to focus on community well-being and to actively involve families and the wider community in the process. Therefore, the community can promote lifestyles and relationships oriented towards peace, individual well-being and social harmony (Lent & Brown, 2008). Restorative practices, such as family group conferencing, circle processes and community boards (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Zernova, 2009) are an important arena for developing skills, particularly in response to youth misbehaviour and delinquency. Above all, restorative practices provide an opportunity to overcome offender-centric legal systems where victims are rarely involved. To create an active role for victims in the management of conflict with the offender through the adoption of restorative practices requires protecting the victims, acknowledging their suffering and limiting the risk of secondary victimization (Umbreit, 1995).

In this context, restorative practices become an essential tool of community involvement by empowering young people and their families, reducing the sense of helplessness in the management of relationships among family members, combating abuse and neglect of minors by limiting the phenomena of school dropout and preventing juvenile delinquency (Toews, 2013). A community embracing the cultural model of conflict management by adopting restorative practices will be oriented not only towards repairing the damage of crime and to conflict management, but also towards prevention. Supporters of Community Justice argue that the objectives of mutuality, inclusion, equality and stewardship represent the main values underlying a communitarian justice system (Clear & Karp, 1999; Karp & Breslin, 2001).

In this regard, the analysis of offending behaviour should be defined in terms of relationships, since it does not merely represent breaking the law. Rather, the offence may be considered as a behaviour that generates 'conflict' because it does not fulfil the social expectations of the community, engendering an individual and collective sense of vulnerability and insecurity. As a consequence, the construct of *responsibility* is fundamental to the 'restorative' paradigm. Responsibility should be understood in relation to the offence (responsibility for the action) and as a necessary part of the restorative dialogue that helps offenders learn about their role in the community (De Leo & Patrizi, 1999).

According to Gaetano De Leo's *ecological model* (1996, p. 24), *responsibility* – at individual and collective level – is a 'functional scheme that regulates and organizes the interaction between individual, rules and society'. In this model, responsible action is a crucial element in the system of social expectations, in anticipation of the consequences of one's own actions, especially in the social context in which the action itself is undertaken. Responsibility can be seen as the mutual commitment between social agents and their systems, as a function of the relation between the individual, his or her actions and the

subjective abilities to be responsible for such actions to the formal and informal systems of expectations. In this sense, responsibility indicates the quality of the relations that provide the foundation for community participation.

In the community justice model, the response to crime and delinquency is not merely a function of the justice system but rather a tool of community building through shared commitment to peace and justice. This kind of 'participatory justice' provides an open forum for a dialogue about crime and social conflict with a central vision of repairing harm caused by crime or misconduct and rebuilding trust between offenders, harmed parties and the community. In Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Northern Ireland and Germany, new policies of crime control have been implemented emphasizing RJ with robust community participation and reduced judiciary authority (i.e. diversion and probation boards, youth offender boards, RJ boards etc.). In North America and northern Europe, restorative practices are considered tools for the construction of social capital, whereas the focus on relations is seen as an opportunity to drive positive change within the community (Boyes Watson, 2005; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Wright, 2010).

3. The European project 'Freedom Wings'

Choosing the title of a research project is not a trivial process. In this case, an evocative and metaphorical title such as 'FREEDOM WINGS' (FW) best represented the research team's aspirations. Our aim was to explore the adoption of restorative practices within regulatory frameworks, including alternatives to detention, which allow for a concrete involvement of the community in terms of participation and sharing. The title recalls the image of a bird taking flight. In a similar vein, we support the idea of strengthening and enhancing the person, as part of the community that supports him/her to overcome the challenges and achieve the goals of individual and collective well-being.

The project lasted two years (2010–2012). The project's research leaders were based in Italy and they involved other southern European member states, Cyprus and Greece,[1] with which Italy shares a *Mediterranean culture*. In addition to their geographical location, southern European countries share a scarcity of restorative programmes, involving the community or not (VOM, for example is generally employed with minors but not with adults), unlike northern European countries (especially Great Britain and Finland) or countries in central Europe (France, for example, has a long tradition of criminal mediation dating back to the '70s and '80s). It is worth noting that punitive measures (or measures alternative to penalty) such as community work or the French and Swiss *travaux d'interet general* cannot be considered community measures. While they do have a restorative function benefiting the public, the community does not get involved in them. Eastern European countries that gradually joined the EU had to adopt all the necessary measures to maintain good relations with supranational institutions. Moreover, in some southern European countries, such as Italy, there is no public policy aimed at caring for victims of a crime but only some legal measure which protect specific categories of victims. The Italian state was also recently condemned for having failed to adopt regulations for the protection of violent crimes victims (Bouchard, 2015). The promotion and diffusion of restorative practices can only be effective if it adapts to the cultural and legal contexts of each single country; therefore, a single standard intervention model applying to the whole of Europe is not realistic. The values and priorities of the community restorative paradigm may well be

the same everywhere but the reparative practices and programmes must vary according to the context in which they are applied.

The aims of FW were (1) to study current practice and identify the factors that undermine the diffusion of RJ in this region of the EU and (2) to create a Scientific Technical Board including all three partnering countries in order to establish ongoing comparison and discussion (Bussu & Patrizi, 2013).

In order to achieve the objectives and expected results, the project was divided into three phases corresponding to three lines of research: the first phase focused on the context analysis in terms of each country's legal framework, institutional data, agreements and protocols, projects and research in the field of RJ; during the second phase an analysis of court folders of minor and adult offenders was carried out for the study of restorative practices in the context of court decision-making; the third phase focused on the organization of multiagency and multiprofessional focus groups that included key informants from a variety of professional backgrounds with different roles and representing different institutions. During this last phase, we identified an international network of social and health workers, legal experts, trainers, associations and cooperatives to foster dissemination of restorative practices in the community.

Following a brief section detailing the legal framework in the three countries under study, this paper focuses specifically on the results of the third phase. The authors believe that the social construction of meaning, especially related to RJ, at the operative level of justice system professionals, is crucial to understanding the cultural conditions necessary for community justice. In this regard, one of the most effective ways to promote and disseminate restorative practices is to encourage dialogue among community leaders within local justice systems.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

Overall, 87 professionals in juvenile and adult criminal justice participated in the multiagency and interprofessional focus groups: 48% in Italy (four groups), 31% in Greece (two groups)and 21% in Cyprus (two groups). Below, we report findings from four categories based on the high frequency with which these topics were coded in our content analysis.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Focus groups

The main goal of the action research approach (Lewin, 1946, 1951) was to explore justice and social professionals' social representations of RJ in order to understand why restoratives practices are not very common in southern European justice systems and social/educational institutions.

We used action research to investigate problems and strategies related to RJ while at the same time, generating ideas on effective training and promotion of a restorative community.

We shared our methodology (research goals, focus group's questions guide, characteristics of the participants involved, etc.) with the institutional stakeholders. At the same time, we shared the research report with the participants and we presented the main results at international conferences in order to receive some feedback (Seale, 1999).

The research project is based on planning, implementation and evaluation of eight focus groups in the three partner countries, four of which focused on juvenile justice and four on adult criminal justice. Cyprus and Greece hosted two focus groups each, while Italy hosted four. The analysis focuses on RJ definitions, characteristics of restorative practices, the nature of the multiagency network, levels of training in RJ, critical concern about RJ and a new prospective judicial framework. The number of participants ranged between 10 and 15 for each focus group. Notably, the participants' selection for the focus groups was intentionally non-random (Bazemore, 1998; Krueger & Casey, 2009). Participants in the focus groups were especially selected by the Justice System (juvenile and adults) based on their experience in a judicial context, their professional roles and their theoretical and operational knowledge of justice systems (Flick, 1998; Morse, 1989). It is important to specify that the justice system professionals involved did not necessarily have experience of RJ nor did they always support it. Focus group participants held a wide range of differing views on RJ.

Everyone knew about RJ and in many cases the participants had had the opportunity to employ conciliation practices in their own work contexts, though these were often limited to criminal mediation and did not include other restorative practices involving the community. We involved a variety of professionals, including psychologists, social workers, educators, judicial authorities, lawyers, and representatives from local authorities (health agencies and municipalities), social cooperatives and associations. We chose to include these types of professionals because we were also interested in the perspectives of those who do not work directly with criminals and victims and because we wanted to facilitate the promotion of a peace culture.

The focus groups were moderated by two researchers; two observers were also present to take note of group dynamics. They lasted on average 2.5 h and were conducted for both research and training purposes. Moreover, the participants in our focus groups were mixed in order to represent different subpopulations of theoretical importance (Bazemore, 1998; Bazemore & Mara, 2004).

It is important to highlight that we consider the focus group to be a form of peer education: all the participants were experts and they were able to discuss the issue of RJ, based on the theories they had acquired through their in-field experiences (Knowles, 1975; Schön, 1987). In this context, the role of the moderator was to facilitate learning, giving the experts the chance to exchange views and widen their perspectives on the issue through a sort of 'peer- to peer training'.

First, the participants had the opportunity to discuss, in a monitored environment, their experience with RJ practices, including operational methods, most interesting experiences, critical events and successful strategies. Then, the facilitators encouraged critical and self-reflective thinking by helping participants discuss obstacles to the implementation of RJ and potential solutions (Knowles, 1975; Schön, 1987). Besides moderating the explorative questions based on a guide interview prepared for the purpose of their study (see a methodological appendix), the researchers, in the initial stage of the focus groups, simply

presented the goals of the international research and the main rules of the focused group and, at the end, they presented a final summary of the most significant elements emerged from the groups, thanked the participants and promised them to keep them up to date with the study. Naturally, the moderators never expressed their paradigms and their ideas on RJ, but simply encouraged participants to engage in dialogue with one another, explaining the basis for the differing opinions and experiences, thus generating opportunities for shared ideas and new understandings to emerge within the focus group process itself.

The choice to audio record the focus groups helped in several ways: (1) It allowed for a verbatim report of the participants' interventions in their respective roles and for a rigorous data analysis and (2) It acted as a self-monitoring tool for the researcher/facilitator and the observer, as well as a tool for the study of group dynamics.

3.2.2. Framework approach

We chose an interpretative approach to reconstruct the 'implicit theories' (Ross, 1989) of the participants in social science research, which can emerge through semi-structured focus group interviewing. Thus, we followed the 'Grounded Theory' methodology (Charmaz, 1995; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), in which, according to Charmaz's (2006) *constructivist perspective*, the researcher is a 'co-constructor of meaning' who tries to avoid constraining the participants' answers within predefined categories.

It is important to clarify that in our case there was no incompatibility between the action research process – aimed at exploring the contexts of the countries involved and sharing opinions and strategies to promote RJ in southern Europe – and Grounded Theory – which guided us in the rigorous process of collecting and analysing data. In this respect, there is some interesting literature combining the two models (Baskerville & Pries-Heje, 1999; Simmons & Gregory, 2005; Wastell, 2001).

Under Grounded Theory, the phases of data collection and analysis are not independent but overlapping; new information and ideas are constructed during the process. Following our prior research on social representations, the focus groups were useful to explore the personal understanding of RJ by the participants (Patrizi & Bussu, 2007). The information gathered during the focus groups was analysed according to qualitative content analysis techniques (Denzin & Licoln, 1994). This is a method of inquiry based on an approach to describe, understand, or interpret daily life experiences and structures based on field observations. It attempts to develop new theory and/or verify existing theory by demonstrating plausible support through empirical data.

3.2.3. Analysis of qualitative data

All the focus groups were audio recorded, following written permission of the participants. The recordings were used for content analysis with the qualitative software ATLAS.ti 5.7 (Muhr, 2004), with the goal of adopting a rigorous approach to coding and analysis and avoiding, at the same time, the loss of valuable information. The coding and analysis were carried out by two researchers, but throughout the coding process there was continuous feedback from the whole research team (internal coding). The use of the software ATLAS.ti helps analyse qualitative data, such as interviews, focus groups and video contents (De Gregorio, 2011). In order to examine the main findings, we used ATLAS.ti networks. Every code in each network includes two numbers: the first number represents the frequency of a

given code within the video-recorded focus groups; the second number refers to the number of direct associations. Finally, our interpretation process was iterative and progressive because this was not a linear process but we often 'went back' to reflect on various conceptual issues to unveil new aspects. We also tried to follow the criteria on quality according to 'Grounded theory' and Seale's (1999, 2000) and Licoln and Guba' s requirements (1985) (see a methodological appendix).

4. Results

This section will discuss the main findings of the focus groups, based on the theoretical and methodological objectives of this research, as highlighted above.

4.1. Restorative justice definition

Table 1 summarizes the coding for focus group definitions of RJ. The filters indicate definitions common to all three countries (indicated by***), those common to two countries (indicated by**) and those unique to one country (indicated by *). The most significant codes were associated with a greater number of conceptually similar quotations by participants, especially those that were shared across countries. The table presents, on the left, codes belonging to each of the main areas or family code and, on the right, the distribution of that code in each of the three countries and within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, as indicated by the abbreviations described in the following legend: C_JJ = Cyprus Juvenile Justice: G_ JJ = Greece Juvenile Justice: I_JJ = Italy Juvenile Justice: C_CJ = Cyprus Criminal Justice: G_CJ = Greece Criminal Justice: I_CJ = Italy Criminal Justice.

The most important concept emerged in this focus group is the need for a cultural shift ('*RJ needs a change of culture.'* code; 36 quotations Table 1 and Figure 1). The participants highlighted the lack of a culture of peace, promotion and inclusion, which clearly affects the effectiveness of the restorative practices implemented (generally, conciliation practice

Table 1. Code-filter: code family restorative justice definition.

Codes	C_JJ	G_OJ	I_JJ	C_OJ	G_JJ	I_OJ	Totals
*RJ is an integration and not a split	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
**RJ is centred on relationship	0	0	9	0	2	2	13
**RJ is centred on victim	0	0	7	2	0	4	13
**RJ is different from the retributive justice	0	1	8	0	1	0	10
***RJ needs a change of culture	3	0	10	9	8	6	36
***RJ awareness	3	3	0	1	9	9	25
**RJ lack of resource and structures	2	5	2	1	0	5	15
**RJ: opportunity	0	2	7	1	0	1	11
***RJ: responsibility	2	3	15	0	2	6	28
***Social involvement is a critical point	7	1	3	6	6	10	33
Totals	17	15	63	20	28	43	186

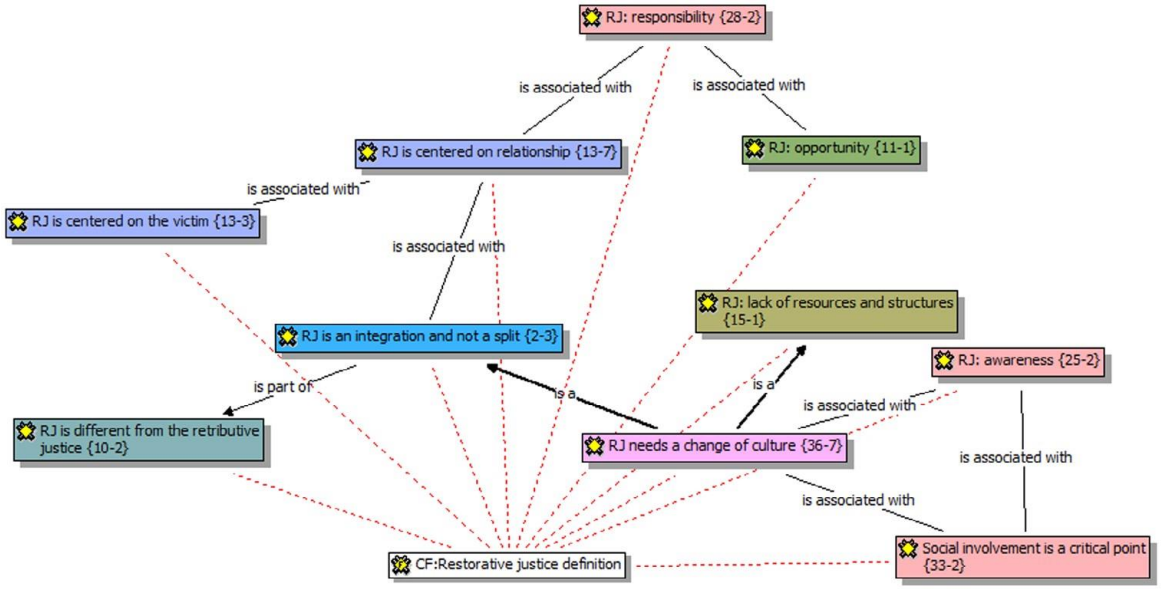


Figure 1. Restorative justice definition.

Table 2. Code-filter: code family restorative practices.

Codes	C_JJ	G_OJ	I_JJ	C_OJ	G_JJ	I_OJ	Totals
*RP application: in probation	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
***RP are 'inefficacy'	1	3	1	0	1	0	6
*RP is centred on the author	1	0	12	0	0	4	17
**RP are improvised	0	0	0	1	0	5	6
**RP are not for all	0	0	0	3	0	7	10
**RP as a compensation	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
*RP as pro-active mode	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
**RP in domestic violence	3	0	0	0	3	0	6
**RP: need an agreement	0	1	2	0	0	2	5
**RP: need to be improved	0	0	0	0	7	1	8
*RP: 'work of public utility'	0	0	1	0	0	3	4
Totals	7	5	24	4	11	22	73

between perpetrator and victim) (see extracts 1 and 2). A new culture of justice is needed within which judicial and social practitioners (see extract 3) assume a different role, putting themselves at the service of the community as facilitator of a culture of peace, where the community is the main propagator of restorative practices. It is necessary to cultivate a restorative culture, helping local communities to become aware of the benefits arising from its implementation (Patrizi, Bussu, & Vitale, 2013).

This indicates the need to reflect more on which strategies we can use to promote a cultural renovation, so that the restorative paradigm can be applied more widely. Unfortunately, in southern Europe, restorative practices are rarely used in conflict management or as tools to promote and perfect a peaceful communication that could empower youth and contribute to their well-being while, at the same time, promoting their restorative life skills (tolerance, cooperation, good communication, empathy, emotion management) (Bussu, 2011; Bussu & Boyes Watson, & Veloria, 2016). For this reason, it is more difficult to overcome the stereotype that RJ is mainly employed in the judicial context and that their main representatives are justice practitioners (Table 2).

In the Greek focus groups, in particular, the participants stressed the importance of activating an awareness process which should begin in schools (see extracts 4 and 5). To achieve a cultural shift, and a consequent change in the systems, the focus should be on

promoting a restorative culture in schools and families. This is a challenge that countries in southern Europe must accept if they genuinely want to contribute to the creation of a culture of solidarity and inclusion (see extract 6).

This finding is consistent with the approach taken by the first European restorative cities, Hull and Leeds. Their approach to promoting RJ across the entire community started within schools, with the purpose of socializing and training children in restorative responses to misconduct, and then extending to families and social groups (Green et al., 2013) as the community gained growing familiarity with this approach. Notably, the cultural shift should involve social and justice experts in order to facilitate the implementation of restorative practices to promote well-being, rather than the mere management of discomfort and conflict.

1. Text extract: FG_ Italy

*Because it **is not true that there is a restorative culture,** because I can assure you that we have not so many people outside our offices available for probation or for restorative activities because this entails a burden.*

2.Text extract: FG_Italy

*As a justice practitioner I have helped to create – or rather to spread, because to create is a word that does not concern me – to spread **a new culture of justice**, a culture that takes into account a reality that is very diverse, requiring responses that may be complex but also very articulate; and it is not easy, it was not easy and still isn't, there is resistance with regards to the 'goodness' of a restorative justice, because the most common reactions are also often supported by many automatic thoughts: 'wrongdoer pays', for example, is the most common of them, I believe. So, this is an approach, a culture that still meets opposition.*

3. Text extract: FG_ Cyprus

Letting the culture of re-education circulate among the Police, in my opinion, is very important so that from the information that we draw, both with respect to the subject and the context in which the subject should re-enter, we can see the positive elements and not only the challenges to the achievement of our intended goals, or the flexibility of the sentence as the prisoner moves forward in the process of re-education, so the penalty should be adjusted to this lower level of social danger.

4. Text extract: FG_Greece

Additionally, the Greek community should take a more active role in addressing juvenile delinquency.

5. Text extract: FG_Greece

If applied mainly in cases of juveniles, definitely a campaign in schools would help. Social bodies involved in the issue could have a stronger presence.

6. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

The most important thing that should change is mentality and then everything will be easier. Mentality changes with education, awareness raising, and voluntary worked managed by professionals and organizations. But the state needs to embrace the effort in order to give it more credibility

A cultural shift is linked to the participants' awareness (*awareness* code, associated with 25 quotations) (see extract 7), which indicates a widely supported belief in the necessity of raising awareness and providing information on restorative approaches. The restorative

practices operators and facilitators should reflect on their roles and find ways to involve people, raise awareness among their own institutions as well as others, in order to overcome the stereotype that RJ is the sole responsibility of the justice system and should only involve offenders and victims (Patrizi et al., 2013).

7. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

We need awareness raising campaigns in order to mobilize the public. The public in Cyprus are not fully aware of RJ and how communities can participate. There must be more information channeled to the general public, even free training offered. It would be a large scale and difficult project, but each community could take charge of mobilizing its members

Another important finding is the affirmation of the *responsibility* concept related to the RJ model. Responsibility refers to the relationship between the offender, the victim and the community and the mutual obligations it entails. In addition, the concept refers to the community's responsibility to become engaged in the justice process and the social inclusion of the offender (*responsibility* code associated with 28 quotations; *Social involvement is a critical point* (33); *RJ is centred on the victim* (13); *RJ is centered on relationships* (13)) (see extract 8).

These dimensions are closely linked with each other as the focus on *relationships* underscores RJ as a relational justice model. This further supports two other dimensions that characterize the paradigm: responsibility and social involvement. The latter, emphasized as a relevant aspect by focus group participants, is still a weak point although it should be prioritized and strengthened. This definition of RJ expresses the importance of social involvement in the implementation of RJ.

8. Text extract: FG_Italy

But it should not mean a lack of responsibility of the individual towards the community, both dimensions must be present because I believe that the community should be involved, but it can not even get the message that it is the fault of the society or others, this can be the risk.

4.2. Restorative practices

In Figure 2, we see that the focus groups believe that restorative practices in their countries are currently unsatisfactory and need improvement: they are defined as inefficient and left to the discretion and improvisation of trained professionals. RP are not widespread and the operators believe they are often difficult to adopt (code '*RP are not for all*' is associated with 10 et).

The first cultural limitation stems from the operators themselves and their views on RJ: though they believe it is important to implement them they often perceive them as being centred on the offender rather than on all the parties involved, especially in Greece and Italy ('*RP need to be improved*' code is associated with 8 quotations).

The *restorative practices* described generally refer to VOM, especially in Italy and Greece. In Cyprus, the legal framework does not explicitly allow for this kind of practice. It is interesting to note that both in Greece and Cyprus VOM is widely used in the management of domestic assault.

Professionals from all three countries said they were dissatisfied with the infrequent use of restorative approaches. They described their implementation as sporadic, sometimes left

to local discretion and lacking any coherent legal mechanisms. With respect to local juvenile regulations, which establish spaces of applicability for restorative practices, we know that there are considerable differences among the three countries.

Restorative practices that actively involve the community could be enriching not only for the parties involved but also for the operators themselves, as it would help them consolidate their relationship with their communities, which is essential for the rehabilitation and the inclusion of the offender as well as for supporting the victim, with the ultimate goal of sharing the social responsibility for harm reparation.

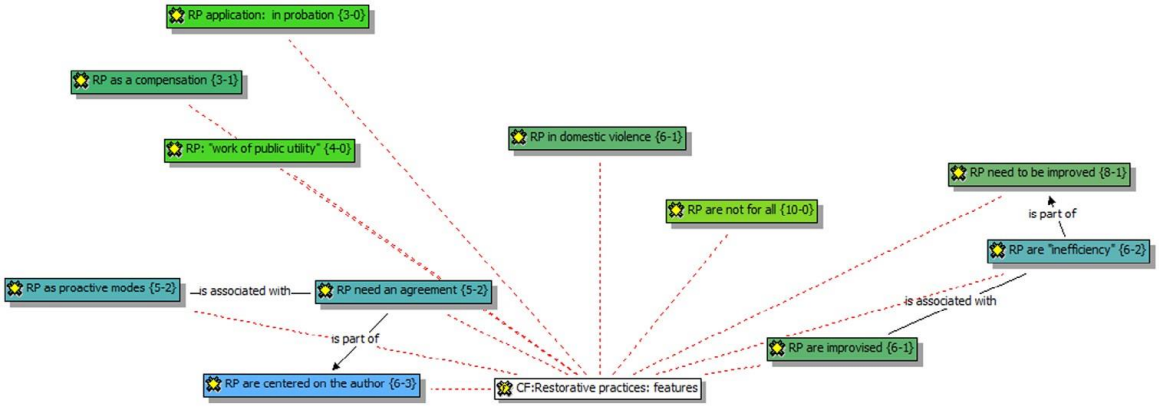


Figure 2. Restorative practices.

In any case, the participants' views on RJ and the use of restorative practices are very varied: for example according to some, restorative practices should be mostly oriented towards people who commit crimes ('*RP are centered on the offender? author*' code, associated with17 quotations), instead of the victim or both parties (Patrizi et al., 2013).

In addition, both in Cyprus and in Italy, it is believed that restorative practices are not suitable for all situations, but should be used in specific types of crime only ('*RP are not for all*' code is associated with 10 quotations), to the exclusion, for example, of sexual offences and homicide i.e. those very crimes which require a greater involvement of the community. Especially in Cyprus, the participants agreed that restorative interventions should preferably be oriented towards minor offenses or serious ones that are centred on relationships, such as domestic violence. In any case, the reluctance to resort to restorative practices in certain crimes or in relation to certain parties could be due to the fact that not all participants had implemented restorative practices at work and, therefore had not experienced directly their positive effects (see extract 9).

9. Text extract: FG_Italy

Definitely on the one hand, the person who commits a crime has somehow caused a wound in society and so we must try to make this person see that somehow he/she has to repair the damage caused. The process cannot be automatic, it must begin with a realization and a reflection on the fact. ***In my work experience I have never implemented restorative practices as part of treatment programs or intramural or as alternative measures****, I mean, actions aimed at these objectives have not been considered.*

4.3. The legal system

Regarding the regulations of the three countries, they exhibit some differences in relation to the protection of the child and the opportunity to adopt RJ practices.[2] The Act was incorporated in the Greek Criminal Code. This was a milestone for the development of a new approach to juvenile delinquency, particularly regarding youth participation in restorative measures (Article 45 bis of the Penal Procedure Code 3183/2003 and 3860/2010). Finally *in Italy,* young offenders can benefit from the 'suspension of the trial and probation' (Art. 28 – D.P.R 448/88) that consists of a trial institute (pre-conviction). This is the most common restorative approach in the country, mostly having the same aims as forms of non-custodial justice. The suspension of the trial and probation sees the minor offender as a protagonist as he is directly involved from the beginning in choosing and developing the actions and content of the whole process. The activities more specifically related to a restorative approach are the VOM and the conciliation with the victim. Table 3 and Figure 3 present findings on the focus group participants' views of the regulatory system. Although with obvious differences in terms of legal and cultural contexts among partner countries, the focus groups highlighted the need to carry out legal reforms that will allow a greater dissemination and

Table 3. Code-filter: code family the legal system.

Codes	C_JJ	G_OJ	I_JJ	C_OJ	G_JJ	I_OJ	Totals
***Legal system needs reform	10	5	4	20	10	5	54
***Legal system: gap between law and practices	2	1	1	8	0	10	22
***Legal system: retributive justice	0	5	0	0	1	10	16
**Policy system is a critical point	2	0	1	5	0	0	8
Totals	14	11	4	33	11	25	100

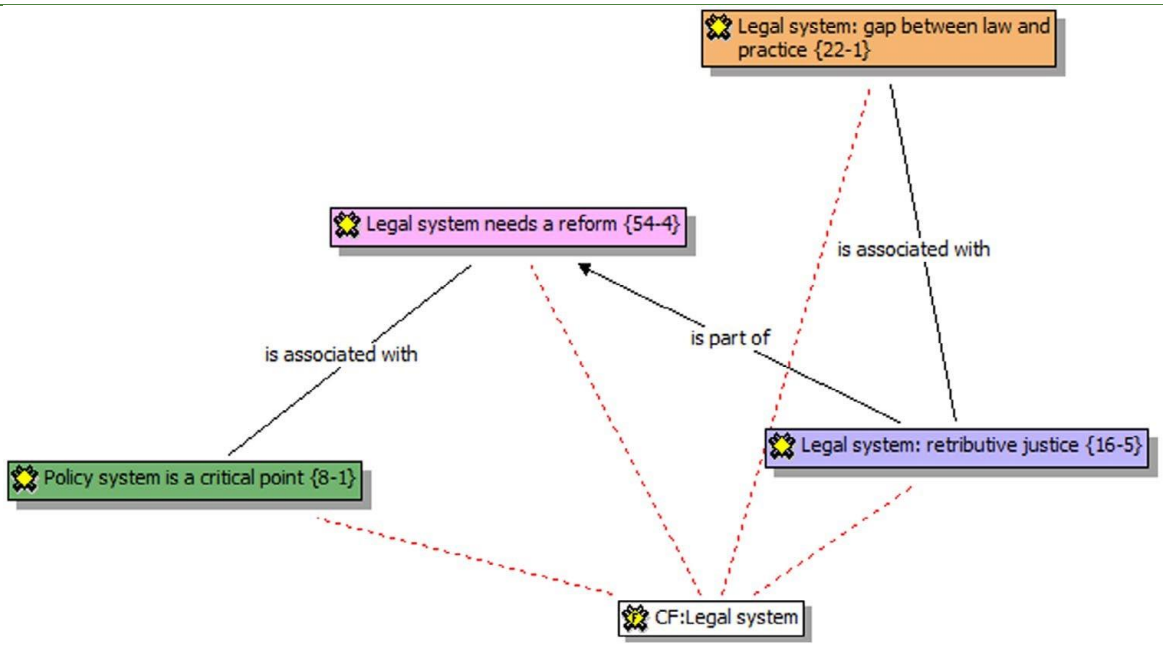


Figure 3. Legal system.

application of restorative approaches, particularly in adult criminal justice (code '*Legal system needs reform'* is associated with 54 quotations, extract 10). Even when there is

normative support for the restorative paradigm, there is a significant gap between the laws and their implementation (code '*Legal system: gap between laws and practices'* is associated with 22 quotations). In particular, the legislation does not effectively promote the implementation and the diffusion of restorative practices (Patrizi et al., 2013).

Furthermore, especially in Greece and Italy, the participants believed a retributive justice model is still dominant in the criminal justice system (code '*Legal system: retributive justice'* is associated with 16 quotations). This explains why the need for cultural renewal, which should start from justice practitioners' paradigms, was repeatedly emphasized during the focus groups, highlighting the many challenges ahead within retributive contexts. Finally, especially in Cyprus, the participants underlined the need for greater support from those with political power in order to adopt restorative practices.

Overall, despite all the differences, the results of the focus groups in all three countries indicate the need to reform the *legal system,* making it more flexible and more oriented towards restorative approaches. This reform is necessary in order to close the gap between policies and practices, and increase human, structural and financial resources in support of restorative policy implementation (extract 10).

10. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

'Also we should talk about the gaps in the law. Cyprus' legal system does not allow mediation in criminal cases although it is used for civil law. It would be a great step forward if there was an amendment to the law in that direction'

4.4. The role of the network in the promotion of RJ

Our study on the quality and efficiency of the *network* has produced two main findings: on the one hand, networking was defined by the three countries as critical, but underdeveloped for the implementation of restorative approaches; on the other hand, many professionals, particularly in Cyprus, have found that cross-sectoral networking represents an important resource for experts ensuring the relationship between social welfare providers, police and court is functional. The Greek participants stressed the central role of probation officers in a multiagency network. In Italy, the networking aspect was presented as a weak point, especially in terms of the relationship between the juvenile justice services and judicial authorities.

Then, the comparative analysis shows that *Institutional Network* on behalf of RJ is critical and needs to be improved in order to effectively implement restorative practices that have a real social impact.

This is common to all three countries, even if the nature of networking varies as does the conflict or dysfunction within or between particular agencies (ONG, associations, mediation service, school etc.) in each country.

Nevertheless, operators highlighted the importance of the network that they and their institutions managed to build and the effectiveness of online activities (code '*Network is good*' is associated with 13 quotations). The participants stated that the conception of *network work* focused on a single goal still has not spread properly among experts from different institutions (code '*Network is a critical point*' is associated with 29 quotations) (Patrizi et al., 2013) (Table 4, Figure 4; extracts 11–14).

Although, in general, it is not a well-structured network, the collaboration, on a case-bycase basis, among the various institutions involved in criminal episodes proved very significant in their resolution.

Table 4. Code-filter: code family network.

Codes	C_JJ	G_OJ	I_JJ	C_OJ	G_JJ	I_OJ	Totals
***Network is a critical point	4	2	5	7	10	1	29
**Network is dysfunctional	2	0	4	0	0	0	6
***Network is good	5	0	0	1	5	2	13
***Network must be improved	1	0	10	7	0	9	27
Totals	12	2	19	15	15	12	75

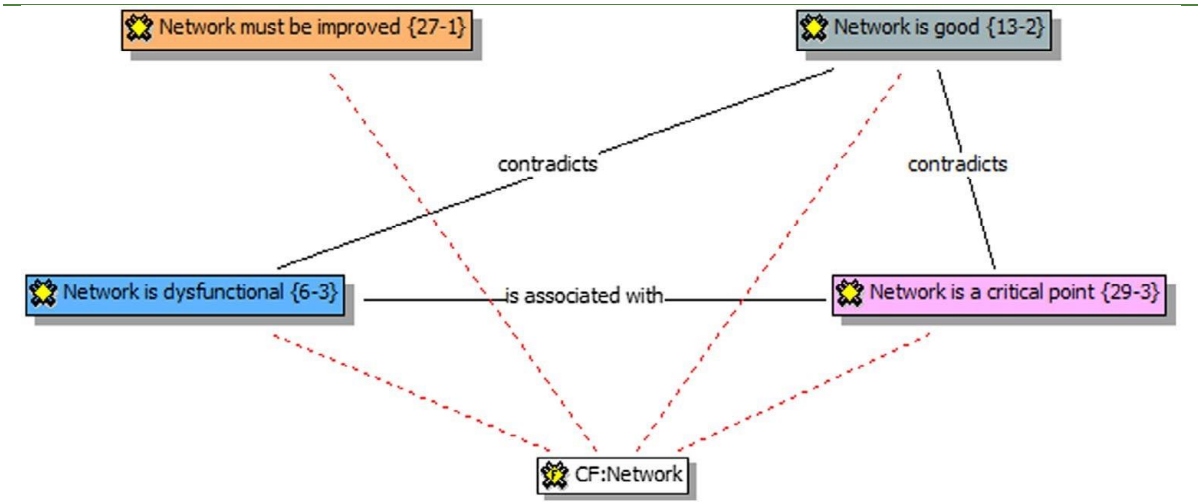


Figure 4. Code family – network.

In particular, the Cypriots emphasized positive collaboration among social welfare officers, police and judges, while the Greeks stressed the positive relations in probation offices, which are responsible for the implementation of restorative measures. The Italians were less positive but nevertheless mentioned some collaboration among justice services (UEPE) in relation to specific cases – sometimes complex and frustrating ones – to share expertise and offer support.

11. Text extract: FG_Greece

(Judge): There is no primary prevention. No networking in Greece. Prevention should start from school.

12. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

In general I think I have a relationship of positive cooperation with such agencies. Police officers who handle probation, as well as Social Welfare officers try to do a good job. Of course there are always exceptions.

13. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

Social welfare services routinely cooperate with the Courts and with the Police and processing a case would be impossible without that cooperation. Of course there is room for improvement but things are not as black and white as some people may claim.

14. Text extract: FG_Greece

On the other hand, a lack of cooperation between relevant agencies, lack of public awareness and lack of a legislative framework exists

4.5. Restorative training

Finally, *restorative training* was seen as an element that needed to be strengthened through the establishment of specific courses providing appropriate legal knowledge as well as awareness of the relational aspects considered essential in RJ as defined above. The role of RJ facilitator does not exist in any of these countries.

Overall, restorative training was defined as 'non-specific' in that none of the three countries has training programmes that are accredited or recognized at ministerial level. No country requires training for professionals who use restorative practices. Besides not being specific (code '*Restorative training is not specific*' is associated with 47 quotations), training is considered inadequate (code '*Restorative training: inadequate*' is associated with 13 quotations) (Table 5, Figure 5). The focus groups emphasized the need for legal knowledge and regulatory concepts on RJ (the code '*Restorative training needs: about laws*' is associated with 5 quotations), as well as awareness of emotional and relational aspects (code '*Restorative training: relational ability*' is associated with 4 quotations) that should be part of the skill set of those who work with restorative approaches (Patrizi et al., 2013) (Network n. 2).

Table 5. Code-filter: code family – restorative training.

Codes	C_JJ	G_OJ	I_JJ	C_OJ	G_JJ	I_OJ	Totals
***Restorative training is not specific	15	0	5	8	12	7	47
*Restorative training relational ability	0	0	3	0	0	1	4
**Restorative training needs: about laws	0	1	0	4	0	0	5
**Restorative training: inadequate	0	0	0	7	6	0	13
**Restorative training: interdisciplinary	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
Totals	15	2	11	19	18	8	73

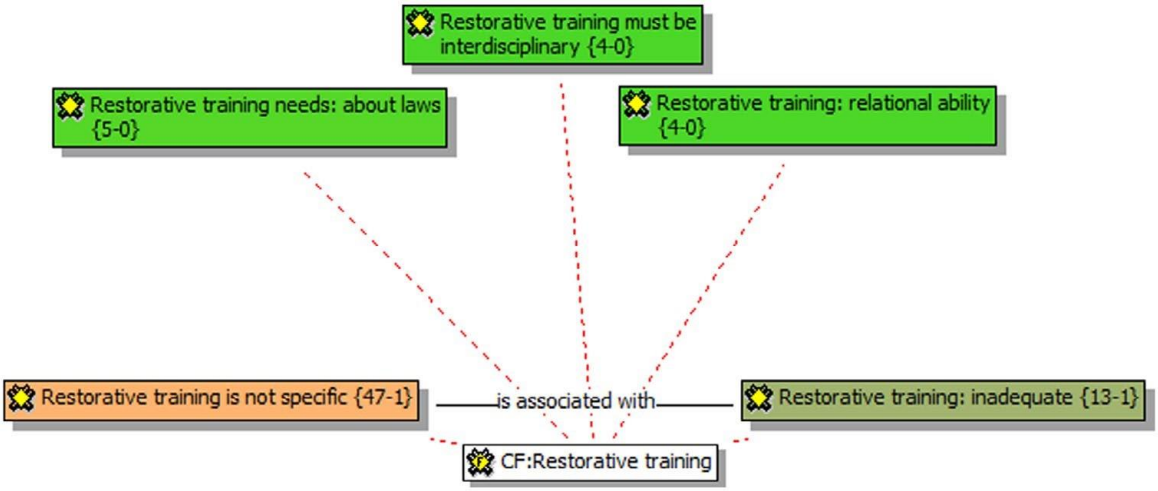


Figure 5. The restorative training.

15. Text extract: FG_Cyprus

(Police Officer) Yes, but still we don't have a specific training program for Restorative Justice professionals. (Lawyer) It is up to each professional to follow further training courses when he thinks it is necessary, through seminars and so on. But nothing is compulsory.

When a professional wants to develop his skills further and continue to be informed on the latest trends then he can find additional training. For example, lawyers may be members of different societies that organize training seminars. However, once a lawyer passes the bar examination and receives a license to practice law, he is under no obligation to receive additional training at any later stage.

4.6. Participants suggestions

Operators have highlighted that, in order to bring about a cultural renovation and facilitate the use of restorative practices in a community perspective a number of actions on several sociocultural, legal and infrastructural fronts are necessary, such as: raising social awareness through information; educating teachers in RJ to prevent at risk behaviour (student's absence for long periods; dropout; bullying, etc.); strengthening the role of the juveniles officers; ensuring the existence of infrastructures to facilitate the work of juveniles officers, such as links to social services; supporting and training of trainers; establishing forums for the implementation of RJ; supervising the offender during the performance of community service; recruiting professionals to support the juvenile's officers; establishing new support units and network. It is important for the participants to know that the best practice is to adopt systems from other EU member states and amend them according to the Cypriot, Greek and Italian contexts. At the same time it is necessary to cooperate with criminal justice institutions and evaluate the effectiveness of RJ, in a legal and non-legal context. In particular, it is vital to establish a training programme for criminal mediators and RJ facilitators.

4.7. The promotional community model

The *promotional community* model is based on the empirical results emerging from the focus groups. The model constructs the focal aspects identified in the focus groups, i.e. the

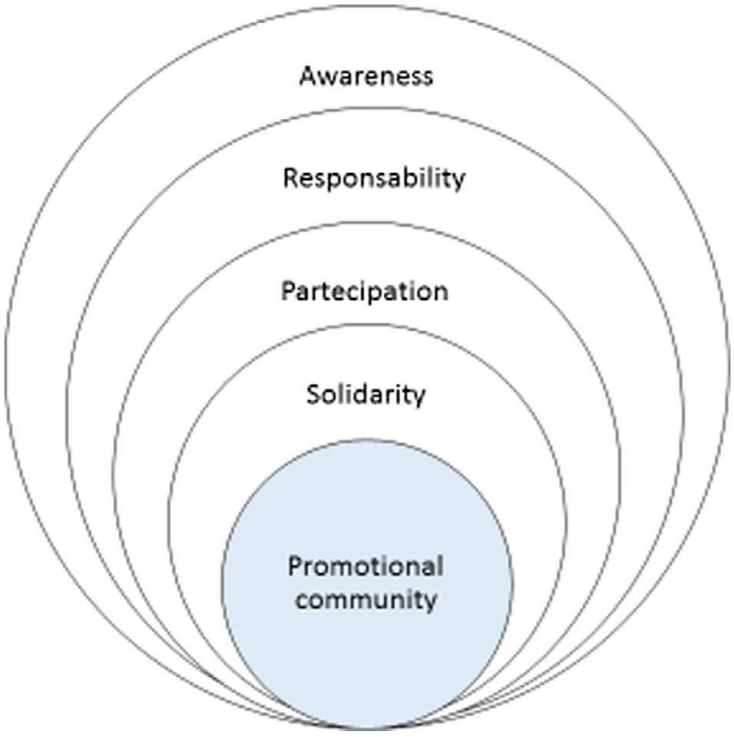


Figure 6. The promotional community model.

keywords, to build a Promotional Community based on: Awareness; Responsibility; Participation and Solidarity.

The most important goal of the *promotional community model* is the individual (and collective) well-being, which refers to a person's psychological and relational needs, such as work and family satisfaction and interpersonal relationships (Figure 6). We must consider that, in transition phases people may face strong difficulties which can affect their general level of effectiveness and satisfaction, especially when they are minors (King, 2000). Working on the well-being of an individual has effects on the well-being of the whole community.

RJ needs to be seen as an open approach that incorporates flexibility into its practices (Lokanan, 2009).

In order to create and consolidate a promotional community, we must find ways of encouraging role *awareness*, i.e. make people aware of their social roles and the impact that these have on community well-being. For example, it is vital that social practitioners are made aware of their role as facilitators of restorative practices not only in a legal context but in a community perspective; likewise, teachers must recognize their roles as facilitators of a peace culture.

The model considers the community responsible for the management of social conflict and the promotion of individual and community well-being. Conflict and justice management, dispute resolution, education, intervention on delinquency and provision of care all happen under a restorative view. Therefore, not only is a RJ community oriented to promote change in the social reaction to crime, but, in a broader view, it is generative, as it promotes better understanding among people and a new way for people to relate to each other (Sullivan & Tifft, 2001).

Awareness must go hand in hand with individual and social ***responsibility***. The responsible action is the nodal element within a system of expectations, anticipation over the consequences of choices (i.e. related to school or professional careers) and the achievable proposals for training and work provided by the context (De Leo, 1996) It is in this sense that we can refer to '*the promotion of responsibility',* assigning an active role to the individual, as part of a community, in the development/management of his/her own capacity to deal with individual and social risk, and his/her awareness of his/her role in the development of conditions of the personal and relational well-being. Mainly, the concept of *individual and collective responsibility* is to be intended precisely as *reciprocity* and *commitment* between the social actors and their systems, where commitment means activation and perseverance.

The effectiveness of the intervention cannot be separated from the comparing and sharing of a network of operators which engages the community by promoting initiatives and by spreading the model. The *internal communication* within the network (each participating person must be informed about the work undertaken by others in order to feel involved in the process) and the *external communication*, aimed at the community, play a key role; in fact, the community should not only be informed, but also actively involved. Therefore, it is very important to promote the active ***participation*** of ordinary people within the community (Bussu & Patrizi, 2013).

In the analysis of the welfare of a society, the *capability approach* of Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) is of great interest; it refers to the levels of satisfaction, participation and activation of citizens in their own contexts; to the quality of activities that can be achieved in a constructive and satisfactory manner and to the construct of social empowerment. As stated by Sen, becoming skilled in something is a process that does not involve just a person, but, inevitably, the whole social system of which this person is part; social structures, in this respect, can or cannot facilitate individual action paths as the latter will only be chosen if the conditions allow it.

The last key word in the model is ***solidarity,*** i.e. social support among citizens. To promote solidarity, we must strengthen the levels of cooperation and mutual accountability in everyday situations, i.e. the *social capital* (Putnam, 1993, 2000), which is based on trust, responsibility of people and their involvement in interpersonal relationships. All these elements contribute to the creation of a sense of generalized reciprocity, which also take part in the definition of a *more cohesive society*, where *fairness* is a common goal to be pursued in order to contribute to a process of *social cohesion* (Bussu & Patrizi, 2013).

It is a happy coincidence that the development of our model happens at the same time as the debate about the new European policy agenda, Europe 2020,[3] a new programme funded by the European Commission to promote strategies for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The European Agenda points to several goals. The first one consists in *the employment and skills acquisition in order to increase the number of jobs* by modernizing labour markets, facilitating mobility and acquiring skills throughout the lifecycle; the second one is the *eradication of poverty* through the activation of a 'European platform against poverty' that ensures social and territorial cohesion, so that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion can take an active part in the community as they improve their living conditions. There cannot be reparation and conflict management without community involvement; there cannot be advancement of the individual without community; and we cannot achieve the general objective of social cohesion if the wider community does not feel (thinks or acts) responsibly to promote the well-being of each of its members. These objectives are consistent with our model of active community, aimed at the 'inclusive growth' of Europe.

5. Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, this article has presented the principal results of the action research project 'Freedom Wings'. Notably, as far as the authors know, this is the first study examining key institutional and community leaders' social representations of RJ in Greece, Italy, and Cyprus and our findings can stimulate further debate in southern Europe. The comparative analysis of the results, collected through cross-sectorial focus groups in the countries under study, focuses on four main areas, investigated through generative questions developed during the discussion: RJ definition, restorative practices, networking and restorative training. The reflections have focused on basic aspects in terms of agreed definitions, feasible practices, and the current state of professional networks and professional competencies. This study contributes to the overall understanding of RJ practices in Europe.

As we have seen, professionals across countries tend to share the same representation of the *contents* of RJ. There was widespread agreement that RJ emphasizes the involvement of the *victim* and the rebuilding of *relationships.* Participants agreed that RJ can be applied not only to criminal matters, but to other contexts such as schools, and that

the concept of *responsibility* is central to the restorative approach. Concerning what is desirable and possible, professionals in the three countries agreed that RJ needs much more diffusion, which would require a *cultural shift*, aimed at increasing involvement and raising awareness on the part of the community about restorative approaches (Bussu, Boyes Watson, & Veloira, 2016; Toews, 2013).

One of the most promising developments of the '*Freedom Wings*' project has been the dialogue among countries about the applicability of RJ. The result is a debate on the conceptual differences between restorative sanctions given by the courts (as in Greece) and the potential for restorative practices implemented outside the courts (as in Italy from art. 28 D.P.R 448/88). In the first case the legal provisions, whereby sanctions are purely restorative rather than retributive, appear to be interesting. With regard to the second case, the shared construction of a restorative project as part of measures aiming at promoting the development of the adolescent personality is promising.

The insights and best practices shared by the three partner countries highlight the importance of thinking in terms of prevention and consider the opportunity to implement the restorative approach at the very beginning at the report of a crime before the criminal proceedings. We can say that it is important to develop and promote restorative practices within the current systems, while stimulating the interagency network to test a new model of restorative community and reflect on the regulatory adjustments necessary to accommodate this new approach. The picture of the justice system as it emerged from this research continues to heavily focus on the offender and on the obligations and constraints derived from an understanding of the justice system based on punitive sanctions. This vision does not include the community and it rarely includes the victim.

From these first reflections and the empirical results of the research project, we developed the *Promotional Community Model*, which considers the community as responsible for the management of social conflict and the promotion of individual and community well-being.

The promotional community model constructs the focal aspects identified in the focus groups, i.e. the keywords, to build a Promotional Community based on: *Awareness*; *Responsibility*; *Participation* and *Solidarity*.

The model proposes an intervention that starts from a pro-active, inclusive and participatory view that focus on personal and social responsibility. The discomfort that occurs within a community, even if expressed by an individual, by a single family or a particular context, involves the whole community. The measures have to involve the network of families, schools, social welfare and public safety with the aim of promoting a more functional integration of people and groups in their community. Under this model, conflict and justice management, dispute resolution, deviance intervention, preventive and educational actions are all implemented with a restorative vision: *the community does not delegate its responsibilities but owns them, in an empowering process* (Bussu & Patrizi, 2013).

There is still a long way to go to ensure the diffusion of the RJ model in the examined regions. However, exchanging of best practices, together with the knowledge and impact of models tested in Europe, lays the basis for the development of new partnerships around the development of policies aimed at improving the institutional and social network and

which can facilitate, through focused and agreed initiatives and actions, the construction of effective approaches that are ecologically responsible.

Notes

1. The European partners are Cyprus (Lemba Communal Board), Greece (ERFC – European Regional Framework for Co-Operation) and Italy (UNISS – Università degli Studi di Sassari, project coordinator and Associazione ISES). The partners worked together to elaborate and implement the research project.
2. In Cyprus, RJ legislation has benefited from the positive influence of the European Union, particularly where it concerns the compensation of victims of violent crimes. For example, Cyprus created Law 51 (I), amended in 2006. Even though mediation is not yet an alternative to penal litigation, its value is recognized in family law (*family mediation*) for the prevention of mistreatment and the protection of victims (Law 119 (1) 2000 as amended by Law 212 (1) 2004). In *Greece,* diversion provisions regarding minors are included in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Mediation between the victim and the offender is one of the measures indicated. A stronger emphasis was placed on results rather than process: prevention of social exclusion of the child and the containment of deviant behaviour is a goal of VOM. Law 3500/2006 entered into force on 24 January 2007 introducing 'criminal mediation' in cases of domestic violence (arts. 11–14). In 2003, the Greek Parliament adopted Act 3189 on the 'reform of the legislation concerning minors'.
3. http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_it.htm

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Methodological appendix

Framework approach and analysis of qualitative data

We used a Grounded Theory. It is a general research method which guides you on matters of data collection (where you can use quantitative data or qualitative data of any type e.g. video, images, text, observations, spoken word etc.) and details strict procedures for data analysis.

The audio of the six focus groups were codified at different times. Using ATLAS.ti we carried out the codification on three levels of the primary documents uploaded in the Hermeneutic Unit (HU) (open code; axial coding; selective coding to reach a definition of main code (core category). Finally, a research report shared with the law enforcement authorities was draughted and discusses when presenting the results of the research.

Focus group

In the initial stage, after the moderator and the participants had presented the research, a brainstorming session took place on the definition of Restorative Justice (What comes to mind when you think about 'restorative justice'? What comes to mind when you think about 'restorative practices'?)

The focus group was moderated in such a way as to cover the following four discussion topics: 1. Contents 2. Experience 3. The network or the Multiagency 4. Training.

The following are some examples of generative questions asked by the moderator: (1) Based on your work experience, how would you define restorative justice? Did you exchange views with your

colleagues about the different meanings? (contents area). (2) Could you, please, briefly tell us about a restorative experience you have had in your professional life that you consider particularly significant? (experience area). (3) Concerning the community in general: how would you prepare and activate a social context that promotes and supports paths of restorative justice? (network area). (4) How would you improve training programmes for those providing interventions oriented to restorative justice? (training area).

Seale's qualitative criteria (1999):

1. ***Credibility*** (*internal validity*)**,** member validation or validating findings where the participants assess how much they can relate to the researcher's construct of the phenomenon.
2. ***Transferability*** (external validity): A description of the method was provided along with detailed information on all the research process.
3. ***Dependability:*** All the research stages and methods were documented in order to allow an assessment on the propriety of the whole procedure. A description of the methods was provided.
4. ***Authenticity:*** The participants could develop greater understanding of the phenomenon and through the focus group could compare different perspectives. The research also encouraged cooperation among Institutions, for example, the Justice Systems and Universities in Cyprus, Greece and Italy.
5. ***Confirmability:*** The research team shared the methodology, coded and interpreted the information (internal confirmability). The research is replicable (external confirmability): The interpretation of data was shared by the team.