**Twinning Arrangement Report**

Each implementing country will draft a detailed report on their Twinning Arrangement experience to inform a final “Learnings from the field report” to be drafted by the EFRJ. This shall include:

* **Brief summary of your country context**

*Please write a brief summary of your context, resembling that of the executive summary within the rapid needs assessment (RNA). The info within the RNA can be repurposed here, but I would suggest partners to review whether you would like to restructure some content.*

Restorative justice as an approach has been in use for the last few years, with only conciliation used as an alternative to punishment in the past. Today, the approach to restorative justice has been introduced more broadly and with more flexibility, including as a preventative method. It has been in focus since 2018, when discussions on the special treatment of minors began.

Currently, the main service provider as a state agency is the Victim Support Department of the Social Insurance Board. The Restorative Justice Team is comprised of more than 100 trained restorative justice volunteers (in addition to victim support workers) who mediate cases involving minors in criminal proceedings, at the beginning, during but also after the criminal proceedings have concluded.

Additionally, since 1.04.2024 restorative justice services are written in the law.

* **Context of Twinning Arrangement (from your country perspective)**
* *Strengths and weaknesses of your system before starting the twinning process and a reflection on the possible impact of the TA on these.*
* *Regarding the objectives (short, mid, long term) described in the roadmaps of the TA: in which way have the experiences within the TA contributed to address these objectives? To which extent have these objectives been reached?*
* *From the experience in your context, which topics/issues are best to address or work on in a TA?*
* *Which kind of structure and/or communication channels has your TA set up?*
* *Which challenges, if any, have you faced when setting up the TA? How did your team attempted to overcome these challenges? How can these challenged better be addressed in future TA?*
* *Which best practices have you identified during the process of setting up the twinning arrangements?*

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| STRENGHTS   * Estonia's small size. * One specialist is responsible for several different subjects. * Professionals in the field know each other relatively well. * Free restorative justice service. * Large number of volunteers trained all over in Estonia who go to persons. Service is offered close to people. In addition, there are victim support workers. * Restorative justice can be used at different stages of proceedings. * Public organization. * Various restorative justice methods are in use. * Restorative justice has developed rapidly in Estonia (different methods, target groups). * Victim Assistance Act - restorative justice has been written in the law more widely. * RJ projects in communities. * Raising awareness and interest in learning more among professionals working with children and young people. |
| WEAKNESSES   * + Low awareness of child-friendly procedures and restorative justice.   + Low awareness of RJ practices in different areas.   + Lack of practical restorative justice skills among professionals working with children and young people.   + Lack of support for participants in training to ensure consistent implementation of the RJ.   + Lack of involvement and feedback from young people.   + Project-based work.   + The service is concentrated in one place - a national agency.   + Service is offered by volunteers and victim support workers. Volunteers cannot always act fast enough and victim support workers expect people to visit them in their offices. |
| POSSIBLE OUTCOME (THOUGHT WHEN WROTE THE RNA AND PLANNED THE TWINNING)  To increase the access to RJ of the children in contact with law.  To raise the awareness and interest in RJ practices.  To train the professionals from justice, child protection and education systems. |

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| *Short term* | *Mid term* | *Long term* |
| Relevant stakeholders and professionals will acquire knowledge on how to involve children and collect feedback. | Professionals are informed about the RJ (have heard about experiences, cases, good practices). Knowledge in general regarding RJ increases. | Children’s voices are heard and taken into account. |

Relevant professionals have had the possibility to hear more about Romanian colleagues experiences and share their own during the visits. CAB youth have been able to share their thoughts and experiences with the professionals during the visits.

* **Twinning Arrangement activities (intro)**

*(Brief introduction on what did your Twinning arrangement consisted of/which activities did you foresee for your TA and why)*

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| **Type of activity** | **Description of the activity (methodology)** | **Target group** | **Timeline** |
| *Awareness circles* | This activity will be conducted in schools with the participation of students, teachers, parents and other specialists. The concept of restorative justice will be introduced to the participants. During the twinning meetings experiences will be shared.  The learnings from these gatherings will be gathered together into a join ‘Awareness Circle Storybook’ for **all 4 target countries**. | Students, teachers, school management, parents, representatives of victim support organisations, and other specialists. | Estonia had the first circle on 10 March 2023 and Romania had it’s first meeting on 27 February 2023. Other meetings are expted to take place in 2023 and 2024 |
| *Study visit* | One study visit will take place in each twinning country. The professionals who will participate will have the opportunity to visit key stakeholders and services related to RJ and learn about how the legislation is actually implemented in practice. All the participants will be benefited by networking and exchange of good practices | Professionals from justice system: police, prosecutors, judges, mediators, probation counselors, lawyers, professionals from youth detention centers and National Administration of Penitentiaries  Youth from Child Advisory Board | November 2023,  Happened in February and March 2024 |

The plan was to have way more activities but due to lack of time (and those not being deliverables), they did not happen. We were too optimistic during the planning process. Some of the activities might have had a good outcome but since the specialists and youth as well are rather busy, it takes a lot of motivating to have them at online events for example.

Activities above are what actually took place, regarding TA especially study visits.

* **Following technical info on each activity you consider is part of your TA (ex: field trip)**

*\* You can agree to fill in the following info for the activity that* ***your country was responsible for*** *organizing. For example, you can fill in the technical info and description of the field trip you organized in your country.* ***If you are the visiting country****, please still include an assessment of the event from your perspective as participants.*

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| **Technical info on TA activity** | | |
| **Date: 19-22 February 2024**  **Location: Tallinn, Estonia** | **Participants:** | Ms. Cristiana Elena BULGARIU, Project Manager, Terre des hommes Romania;  Ms Lucia Octavia PETRESCU, Specialist Officer, National Administration of Penitentiaries, Social Reintegration Directorate, Vulnerable Persons Department;  Mr Alexandru Georgian BIRAU, Specialist Officer, General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, Criminal Investigation Department;  Ms Andreea EPURE, Probation Counsellor, Bucharest Probation Service;  Ms Ruxandra DOROBAN.U, representative of the Child Advisory Board (CAB |
| **Facilitators:** | From Social Insurance Board of Estonia - Ms Kelli Ilisson, Ms Sigrid Laan  Specialists from each of the organization visited |
| **Main objective** | To introduce organizations that use RJ in Estonia | |
| **Key messages for the participants** |  | |
| **Materials used / Methodology** |  | |
| **Additional support materials**  *(please, specify which additional materials you have from the event. Ex: pictures, drawings, videos, audio, etc.)* ***Please send this material by email together with the report.*** |  | |

* **Detailed report of the activity:**
* **Schedule and progress of the event**

*(ex: agenda; detailed description of each activity; what was discussed; highlights)*

***Day 1 – 20 feb 2024:***

From 10.30-14.30, the project visited the Saku Gümnaasium and Saku High School, 17 km away from Tallinn, where project activities are carried out with beneficiaries from the community. The school enrols about. 1500 pupils are enrolled in the school, living up to 20 km from Saku. Classes are organized for primary, middle and high school, with funding for education provided by the municipality.

The Romanian delegation was welcomed by Mr Keit Fomotškin, the director of the educational institution, together with Ms Marttina Kallaste and Ms Marju-riina Laugen, social pedagogues responsible for mediating relations between pupils, teachers and parents, using restorative justice approaches.

Restorative practices were introduced in the school in the last term of 2020, when Ms Marju-riina Laugen started her work as a volunteer conflict mediator. Later, in 2022, she was joined by Ms Marttina Kallaste. The school's concern for this topic has been integrated into the overall priorities pursued at the community level, since autumn 2022 the Saku Town Hall has become a "restorative justice community".

From 15.30-17.00 the Romanian delegation visited the Ida-Harju Police Station in Tallinn to discuss their work in the field of restorative justice.

In the first part of the meeting, the hosts presented some general information on the structure and work of the Police Station, with a focus on the use of volunteers from the community who act as police assistants. The visited unit serves the largest area in the whole country, namely: the city centre - Lasnamäe, Pirita (one of the eight administrative districts of Tallinn) and eight other local authorities in Harju County.

More than 200 police officers and approx. 150 police assistants. Over the years, the unit has been involved in numerous pilot projects, such as the management of the Covid-19 pandemic, the crisis caused by the armed conflict in Ukraine, and the development of service design in the field of public order and safety.

***Day 2 – 21 feb 2024:***

A seminar was held at the Ministry of Justice from 9.30-12.00. The meeting was attended by:

- Representatives of the delegation from Romania;

- Representatives of the Estonian Ministry of Justice - involved in the activities of the i-RESTORE 2.0 Project and other projects on restorative justice;

- Representatives of the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs;

- Representatives of the Estonian Social Insurance Board - governmental authority operating under the Ministry of Social Affairs and responsible for social protection, children's rights, as well as assistance to victims and dealing with legal issues, carrying out state and administrative supervision;

- Volunteer mediators;

- Representatives of the Child Advisory Board (CAB Estonia).

The first part of the seminar presented the activities and progress made in the context of the implementation of the i-RESTORE 2.0 Project.

Concerning the situation of children in Estonia, the authorities stated that no minors are currently in detention. During 2023, 97 children were placed in specialised care units, 131 cases received multidimensional family therapy (MDFT), 161 cases were referred to restorative justice, 332 children received rehabilitative social services and 750 were placed in foster care.

From 1.00 to 2.30 pm, the Romanian delegation was received at the Prosecutor's Office by one of the two prosecutors responsible at national level for prosecuting cases involving minors.

In Estonia, 2018 was the year that enabled the reform of juvenile justice. According to amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, in criminal cases the prosecutor can order extrajudicial measures such as:

- 10-60 hours of community service;

- Compensation or reparation for the damage caused;

- Participation in a social programme;

- Withdrawal or other treatment;

- Reconciliation service;

- Any other relevant obligations.

From 15.00-16.30 the last planned activity took place, namely a visit to an institution working with the Barnahus Model.

"Children's house operates under the Estonian Social Insurance Board and is a free, multi-disciplinary, child-friendly government service, which cooperates with other responsible institutions to provide assistance to minors - victims of sexual abuse and their families.

Criminal investigation bodies can carry out all procedural measures on the premises. Thus, different specialists - police, child protection workers, doctor, psychologist - work on the same premises, ensuring the well-being and support of minors. Rooms are available in the institution for: play, therapy, group meetings, interviews and medical investigations.

There are currently four such centres across the country, each serving a geographical region.

The main objectives of the institution are:

- Contributing to the detection of child sexual abuse cases;

- Conducting court proceedings in a child-friendly manner;

- Providing specialised assistance to child victims of sexual abuse or children with sexual behaviour problems.

If abuse is suspected, child protection workers are required to contact the Children's house specialists and apply for services. Assistance may also be provided following requests from anyone else in the community concerned about a minor's sexual behaviour. Parents or the affected child themselves can also contact the facility for help. Assessments at the home determine the type of support provided to minors (including the family) and, if necessary, the case may be referred for assistance and resolution to other specialists

* **Assessment of the event from the perspective of the facilitators**

*(in* ***as much detail as possible****, make an overall assessment of the activity/field trip/exchange. This can include reflecting on initial objectives and if these were met, reflecting on the organization of the field trip itself, reflecting on the course of the activities, how was the engagement with participants, what was achieved, challenges, etc.)*

Since I was not able to join the meetings myself, I only have the little feedback I recieved. Everyone said that the meetings went well, that the visits were interesting for both sides – to share and hear others experiences.

* **Assessment of the event from the side of the participants** *(if no survey has been sent to participants, reflect on what do you think the experience was like for the professionals you engaged, what was their reaction during the activities, which level of awareness on the topic did they present during the event, were there relevant comments/reactions/feedback, etc.)*
* **Suggestions/ recommendations regarding the specific activity**

*(Ex: regarding field trips, content, target audience, materials or methodology to include, proposals for activities, practical suggestions, etc.)*

It is good to know beforehand who is coming, by profession, to know what kind of visits to organize. Are there children involved? For example in our case CAB members. It is also important to have time for planning to make sure that it’s possible to meet everyone. About technical side, there might be different aspects (for example financial questions etc) that one has to follow in different countries and state organzations and ngo’s, which can be challenging and time consuming.

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| **Technical info on TA activity** | | |
| **Date: 11-13 March 2024**  **Location: Bucharest, Romania** | **Participants:** | Ms Kristel Põhjala – Police Officer  Ms Sandra Sutting - Coordinator for closed institutions for children, Social Insurance Board  Ms Terli Linnas – Coordinator for closed institutions for children, Social Insurance Board  Ms Ede Eliisabet Kiisk – Member of Child Advisory Board  Ms Kelian Järv – Member of Child Advisory Board |
| **Facilitators:** | Ms. Cristiana Elena BULGARIU, Project Manager, Terre des hommes Romania; |
| **Main objective** |  | |
| **Key messages for the participants** |  | |
| **Materials used / Methodology** |  | |
| **Additional support materials**  *(please, specify which additional materials you have from the event. Ex: pictures, drawings, videos, audio, etc.)* ***Please send this material by email together with the report.*** |  | |

* **Detailed report of the activity:**
* **Schedule and progress of the event**

*(ex: agenda; detailed description of each activity; what was discussed; highlights)*

**Day 1 - 12. March 2024**

10.00-11.30 AM: meet with Romanian judge Raul Alexandru Nestor (Terre des Hommes

office).

The first meeting between the Estonian delegation and the Romanian host organization

Terre des Hommes took place with the involvement of Romanian judge Raul Alexandru

Nestor. The judge provided an overview of how juvenile court proceedings are conducted in

Romania and whether and how the restorative justice approach is currently enshrined in

Romanian law. We learned that there is currently no specific law for implementing restorative

justice in Romania, and Romania is only taking its first steps towards implementing

restorative justice. Mediation proceedings are not associated with criminal proceedings nor

juvenile court processes but rather with commercial law and are used primarily in banking.

As a result, the mediators, numbering around a hundred in total, operate in the private

sector. Listening to the judge, it quickly became clear that the concept of mediation is used in

a completely different sense and differs fundamentally from what we understand in terms of

restorative justice. Nevertheless, it was very encouraging to hear how open the judge who

met with us was regarding restorative justice, and how genuinely interested he was in

understanding how justice is administered concerning juveniles in Estonia and what

alternative influence measures are currently used in juvenile-related proceedings.

13.30-15.00: visit the National Prison Administration

We also had a meeting with the National Prison Administration, located in Bucharest. A

presentation was given on how juveniles are placed in prisons and what the current situation

is regarding juveniles in custody. We learned that prisons fall under the jurisdiction of the

Ministry of Justice. There are 33 prisons in Romania altogether. Similar to Estonia, the

capacity for guilt among juveniles begins at the age of 14. The average duration of juvenile

imprisonment is 6-8 months. Children (aged 14-18 years) may be subjected to two types of

educational measures: non-custodial measures (such as civic training courses, supervision,

weekend stays, daily assistance) and custodial measures (placement in an educational

center; placement in a detention center).

During our visit, there were a total of 214 juveniles in custody (30 of whom were aged 14-16,

and 184 were aged 16-18). We learned that within the first 21 days of a child's entry into

prison, an assessment is conducted, taking into account the child's psychological, social,

and educational background. Based on this assessment, an individual plan is devised. Each

child is also assigned a social worker, whose role includes maintaining contact not only with

the child but also with their relatives and family. Each social worker (who works at the prison)

has an average caseload of 50 children. Home visits occur based on the child's progress

and are used as a reward. Typically, home visits last from 1 to 10 days. The child's progress

is evaluated every month.

Three months before release, children are transferred to another department, the so-called

"open prison," where the regime is more lenient - children have more freedom, can cook for

themselves, etc. When we inquired about the percentage of children/youngsters returning to

prison after a period of time, the answer was approximately 30%.

A notable advancement is the implementation of the restorative justice approach within four

prison institutions, facilitated by the I-REstore 2.0 project. Psychologists, detention system

staff, and social workers have undergone training in this approach. Additionally,

professionals from diverse fields such as lawyers, judges, mediators, police officers, and

teachers have participated in the program to incorporate restorative justice principles and

practices into their work with children and youth.

Estonia shared its experience in implementing restorative justice both at the preventive level

and in cases that have already reached the prosecution and courts. We also provided an

overview of how Estonia has implemented the methodology and mindset of restorative

justice in organizing the services of closed children's institutions by training employees who

have direct contact with children (for example social pedagogies) in applying restorative

justice. Additionally, we shared that Estonia has developed a model to support young people

returning to the community after being away from home for various reasons, such as being

placed in a closed children's institution, a shelter, a foster home, a hospital for an extended

period, etc. Restorative justice enables support for the child's return to their community.

15.30-17.00: presentation of Terre des Hommes office, instruments we use,

safeguarding policies

In addition to the aforementioned, we had a meeting and visited the Terre des Homme office,

also located in the heart of Bucharest. We had the opportunity to get a closer look and hear

about the projects Terre des Homme is currently involved in, in addition to I-Restore 2.0, and

learn about the history of Terre des Homme. While social systems in Estonia are largely

organized and implemented at the state level, Romania, in contrast, sees significant

initiatives in the social sector and assistance to people led by the third sector and NGOs. We

learned that Terre des Hommes activities and projects are largely funded by international

partners and organizations. Terre des Hommes presented ongoing projects aimed at

supporting minorities, migrants and provided an overview of access to justice projects and

child protection projects.

**Day 2 - 13.march 2024**

09.00-11.00: meet with the School Safety Directorate, a new institution in Romania

administrated by the Police.

A very memorable meeting took place with two police officers who showed great interest in

the application of non-punitive measures for juveniles, including the implementation of

restorative justice. They shared insights into their preventive efforts in Romania. It became

apparent that a significant issue across the entire country is violence—both psychological,

often deeply hidden, and physical. Since 2020, a program called "Safety at School" has

been implemented in collaboration with schools and police officers. In 42 Romanian

counties, police officers closely cooperate with schools, intervening in incidents of violence

among students and between teachers and students. However, a considerable part of their

work revolves around prevention.

From their current practices, it became clear that they utilize a somewhat similar approach to

restorative justice, initially interacting with victims and perpetrators separately before

attempting to facilitate joint agreements. Hence, it was particularly encouraging to learn

about their intention to systematically integrate a restorative justice approach into their work.

However, it emerged that some colleagues have received training in the implementation of

restorative justice (although not comprehensive mediator training), but everyone still works in

their own way. Networking, delivering preventive lectures in schools, collaborating with

school boards, NGOs, etc., also constitute a significant part of their work.

12.00-13.00: meet with specialists in child participation

We also visited a center established for refugees in Romania, which was part of a project by

Terre des Hommes aimed at creating safe and enjoyable spaces for children in Bucharest,

while providing support to Ukrainian families affected by conflict. The Resilience and

Innovation Centre in Bucharest was opened in 2023?. This center offers child-friendly areas

where their mobile teams prioritize emotional well-being, inclusion and participation through

play and specific methodologies. Additionally, they provide social assistance, individualized

kits, and psychological support to families.

The center primarily serves refugee children, mainly Ukrainian, providing them with

opportunities to learn, be creative, and develop skills through 3D technology workshops and

interactive learning spaces. Furthermore, they organize various community events for

families and children and offer the support of psychologists and social assistants to integrate

them better into the community.

* **~~Assessment of the event from the perspective of the facilitators~~**

*~~(in~~* ***~~as much detail as possible~~****~~, make an overall assessment of the activity/field trip/exchange. This can include reflecting on initial objectives and if these were met, reflecting on the organization of the field trip itself, reflecting on the course of the activities, how was the engagement with participants, what was achieved, challenges, etc.)~~*

* **Assessment of the event from the side of the participants** *(if no survey has been sent to participants, reflect on what do you think the experience was like for the professionals you engaged, what was their reaction during the activities, which level of awareness on the topic did they present during the event, were there relevant comments/reactions/feedback, etc.)*

Part from the raport written by Estonians visiting Romania:

In conclusion, the trip was enriching, and both the CAB members who were part of the study

visit and the partners are grateful for this opportunity. Estonia's impression is that Romania is

at a similar stage in implementing restorative justice as Estonia was in around 2018 when

we took our first steps in its implementation. However, it was very encouraging to hear how,

in conversations with specialists from various agencies, there is genuine interest and

willingness to better understand and apply restorative justice. We believe that implementing

the mindset and methodology of restorative justice in the visited institutions would certainly

benefit children and young people. We also take with us the knowledge to engage in greater

collaboration in assisting children and young people with NGOs and non-profit organizations

in Estonia.

* **Suggestions/ recommendations regarding the specific activity**

*(Ex: regarding field trips, content, target audience, materials or methodology to include, proposals for activities, practical suggestions, etc.)*

* **Conclusions/Recommendations on the TA**

*Final reflection on what was achieved during your TA and any recommendations for improvement/maintenance of TA or a specific activity.*

For Estonia it has been challenging because during the project and TA people have changed in Estonia from project side (and also the SIB internal team) as well as in Romania. I personally have not been part of the visits and we have not had the chance to reflect with the participants. It would be better if the people would not change and people who are taking part of the activities, organise the meetings. Currently I am writing this report but I have not had the chance to participate in the activities due to my personal life and load at work and this makes it hard to reflect. Also, it would have been good to hear about other project partners experiences as was said in our last meeting.

We are happy that we were able to share our story and experiences as well as give the possibility to CAB youngsters and RJ practitioners to hear more, but to gain more as an organization, we should do something different next time.