RAN Collection practice template

Name of the practice Please note that by practice we mean an activity/method/tool that has been used or is in use by professionals and/or community members.	**RestoCovidCircles**
Description (max. 300 words) Short description of the aim and working method of the practice. Please note that in this description, it must be clear that <u>there is an explicit connection to preventing and/or countering radicalisation and/or violent extremism</u>. This means that in the aims and/or the activities/methods/tools of the practice, there is a link to preventing and countering radicalisation and/or violent extremism. Practices without this link cannot be included in the RAN Collection.	COVID-19 had a relevant impact on society, economy and politics of European societies, including in Italy. The <u>European Council of Foreign Relations</u> report (2021) revealed that European society was profoundly divided by the COVID-19 crisis, identifying three main divisions: an intergenerational division; a division between those experiencing the COVID-19 crisis as a health crisis and those experiencing it as an economic crisis; and a "freedom divide". Europeans were also divided when it came to those to be held responsible for the impact of the COVID crisis: 34 % of the surveyed citizens considered that disobedient individuals were responsible compared to 16 % who considered their national governments to be responsible. The divisions between citizens increased even more with the introduction of mandatory vaccines and the Digital Covid Certificate resulting often in conflicts interrupting work, social or family relations. Citizens' polarised views resulted in conflicts, producing strong social fractures in interpersonal relations within families and in society (at the workplace, schools, hospitals, etc.). When it comes to the specific context of the province of Lecco, citizens' polarised views, especially in the case of unvaccinated people, were grounded in critical views on science, communication sources and freedom of speech as well as in the lack of trust in institutions. Unvaccinated people's critical views regarded, in particular, the limited freedom of speech of all parties, the limited transparency and completeness of official communication sources, and the consideration of scientific findings as absolute truth, while science has always been based on constructive debates between various perspectives. In a context of increased mistrust, resentment and 'blame hunting', Lecco restorative city used a community restorative justice approach and the RestoCovidCircles practice to restore damaged relations and address polarisation following the COVID-19 crisis.

The practice is based on the circle method commonly used in restorative justice. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020, p. 30), circles can be used in various community settings: "… within local neighbourhoods to address residents' concerns over crime or anti-social behaviour, or to resolve complaints against members of law enforcement or correctional agencies. … They have been implemented in schools to deal with minor offences and resolve conflicts. They can be implemented in cases of inter-communal conflict and hate crime. They can also be used to build better relationships and reduce violence within prisons and other detention facilities. They can even support the reintegration of prisoners returning to the community or young people returning to school after a period of detention." Circles are communal dialogues based on inclusiveness and the lack of hierarchy. As pointed out by the UNODC (2020, p. 37), "circles have proven to be a flexible and effective means of building relationships, maintaining peace, dealing with trauma (particularly healing circles) and problem solving."

The dialogue practice was facilitated by facilitators with good knowledge of restorative justice values, principles and methods. The practice was implemented in two phases, each with a different aim:

- Phase 1 (2020) aimed to allow citizens of Lecco who have been impacted by COVID-19 to share the COVID-19 trauma, to listen to each other's truth and to be listened to, giving voice to their memories of a recent traumatic past in order to construct a shared truth of the traumatic period they went through;

Phase 2 (2021-2022) aimed to open a dialogue between parties in order to deconstruct polarisation around the topic of anti-COVID-19 vaccines and in particular the Green certificate and to restore interrupted interpersonal relations.

Key themes Please choose 2 key themes most corresponding with the practice.	Restorative justice Social cohesion and polarisation
Target audience Please choose a minimum of one target audience most corresponding with the practice.	General public Add additional target audience. Add additional target audience.
Geographical scope Please indicate where the practice has been/is implemented (countries, regions, cities).	Lecco, province of Lecco, Italy

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Start of the practice Please indicate when (year) the practice was developed and implemented to indicate the maturity of the practice. In case the practice is no longer active, please indicate when it ended.	Starting year: 2020 **Ending year:** Select ending year of practice in case practice has ended.
Deliverables Please indicate if the practice has led to concrete deliverables, such as (links to) handbooks, training modules, videos.	Several subtitled videos on this topic are available at the following links: RestoCovidCircles - Lecco Restorative City (2021, video 9 min) https://vimeo.com/563345503/aed5477082 A Restorative City in Times of a Pandemic (2021, webinar recordings 1 hr 36 min) https://vimeo.com/561355655/665da7afd1 Lecco was also invited to present the RestoCovidCircles by the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) in May 2021 https://www.euforumrj.org/en/restorative-city-times-pandemic
Evidence and evaluation Short description on <u>performance measures</u> of the practice, including 1. <u>qualitative views and quantitative (statistical) data</u> e.g. measure of the success of your project or intervention. 2. <u>evaluation and feedback</u>, including surveys and/or anecdotal evidence e.g. have you done either an internal or external evaluation, have you encouraged any feedback from your target group? 3. <u>peer review</u> which feedback did the practice receive in the RAN working group and/or study visit where the practice was discussed. Please elaborate on the outcomes of your monitoring and evaluation efforts.	A formal evaluation was not foreseen initially. However, anecdotal evidence on the results of the practice is already available, being collected during a testimony circle of the circles carried out in phase 1, from which the above-mentioned video on RestoCovidCircles was created, and during informal meetings with participants involved in the circles. Furthermore, a focus group with participants involved in phase 2 of the practice is planned for the end of the year to collect feedback on participants' experiences of the practice and effects after its delivery. In phase 1, five restorative circles were implemented. These included two meetings in each circle and involved around 100 people. As shared by participants involved in RestoCovidCircles, these circles allowed people to share traumatic experiences, to listen to each other's truth and to be listened to. They also allowed participants to put together their experiences and their views of that period, creating a collective storytelling of the community's suffering. Furthermore, learning provided by listening to others' stories allowed participants to transform their views, suffering and anger. More details on participants' feedback are available at: https://vimeo.com/563345503/aed5477082 In phase 2, three circles were implemented involving 35 participants. The circles allowed L'Innominato (The Unnamed), the working group on community restorative justice (so-called intermediary body – see details below), to understand topics around which polarising opinions developed: collective risk vs collective safety; social exclusion vs social inclusion; the loss/reduction of personal rights vs public healthcare; the loss/reduction of income and job suspension; the social and media

stigmatisation/criminalisation; and fear about a future deviation towards authoritarian politics and social control. Furthermore, it also allowed deepened understanding on who the vaccinated and unvaccinated people are: they are not homogenous groups. They also showed that polarisation did not develop around the legitimacy of the anti-COVID-19 vaccine protests, but rather around measures for convincing people to vaccinate themselves. As to the participants, the circles allowed people involved to discuss about these topics and favoured opening the heart and understanding the others and their reasons for not vaccinating.

Sustainability and transferability (maximum of 200 words) Short description on the sustainability and transferability of the practice, including e.g. information on the costs of the practice. <u>Please elaborate on which elements are transferrable and how.</u>	RestoCovidCircles is part of L'Innominato (The Unnamed), and the sustainability of the practice is guaranteed by the existence of this informal intermediary body with restorative lenses, that is, a community-based body within the community. L'Innominato is made up of citizens, NGOs, social workers, the municipality and local institutions and the method they used for RestoCovidCircles is also used in other situations. L'Innominato aims to disseminate and implement restorative values, principles and practices and offers citizens a space for dialogue on criminal justice and social conflicts. Furthermore, it is the lead actor in the process of constructing Lecco restorative circles. L'Innominato proposes to use the practice of restorative circles also in other conflicts (e.g. neighbourhood conflicts, school conflicts). The existence of L'Innominato has allowed, and will continue to allow, the dissemination of restorative values and principles and the delivery of restorative-oriented practices even when no public funding is available. This is possible due to the time and resources made available by the members of the intermediary body. They contributed with knowledge on restorative justice and the community of Lecco and its suffering and conflicts. They contributed time, spaces, and social and institutional networks that support the delivery of the foreseen restorative-oriented activities. The existence of the intermediary body represents a social enrichment that can nurture the restorative city of Lecco. As to transferability, attention should be paid to the following aspects: • Legitimacy of the promoter. In the case of Lecco, the practice was promoted by the members of L'Innominato, who are recognised in their own community and have strong relations with it. • Participants' engagement starting from proximity relationships. • Balanced composition of the circle (age, gender, status, cultural and linguistic levels, personal fragilities, social roles, power, ethnic or religious affiliations, etc.). • Preliminary active and empathic listening of interested people by facilitators.

	• Clear and accurate explanation of the purpose, principles and values of the circle, management of expectations.
	• Engagement of facilitators with good knowledge of restorative justice values, principles and methods.
	• Facilitation style based on restorative justice values and principles.
	Timing and logistics organisation.

Presented and discussed in RAN meeting Please note that to be included in the Collection, the practice is preferably nominated through one of the RAN meetings. Add name of the RAN Working Group/event, date, place and subject of meeting.	Name: Radicalisation Awareness Network, Families Communities and Social Care Date: 05/10/2022 Place: Stockholm, Sweden Subject: Preventing Polarisation on a Local Level: Bringing Communities Together
Linked to other EU initiatives or EU funding (maximum of 100 words) Please indicate how your project was funded, if your practice is linked to other EU initiatives or projects, AND explicitly note if it is (co-) funded by the EU, and if so, by which funds? Such as Erasmus +, Internal Security Funds (ISF), European Social Fund (ESF), Horizon 2020, etc.	The RestoCovidCircles are one of the practices implemented in the context of the construction of Lecco Restorative City, a process that is led by L'Innominato (see details below). Lecco Restorative City is one of the cities of the Working Group of the EFRJ. When it comes to funding, being one of the activities of L'Innominato implemented in the framework of Lecco Restorative City, RestoCovidCircles were partially funded by the projects funded by Lombardia Region with national/regional resources, activated by the organisations' part of the Steering Group of L'Innominato, and partially by these organisations themselves. Furthermore, the delivery of the practice relies on voluntary contribution of the members of L'Innominato.
Organisation (enter maximum of 100 words and select organisation type) Please briefly describe the organisation behind the practice including the legal status e.g. NGO, governmental, limited company, charity etc.	The practice was developed with L'Innominato (an informal intermediary body). During the COVID-19 crisis, it intercepted the suffering of its community (in phase 1) and increasing polarisation among its community members (phase 2) and started asking itself what it could do with that suffering/polarising community. In this context, RestoCovidCircles were created. Circles were preceded by a careful engagement and preliminary active and empathic listening to the interested people by facilitators. They used a facilitation style based on restorative justice values and principles. Type of Organisation: Other

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Country of origin Country in which the practice is based.	EU or EEA country: Italy or: Non-EU country: Enter name if non EU country
Contact details Please provide contact details of who can be contacted within the organisation, with name and email address.	Address: Click or tap here to enter text. Contact person: Bruna Dighera Email: bruna.dighera@outlook.it Telephone: Click or tap here to enter text. Website: https://www.leccorestorativecity.it/
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