

About the Restart Project

The Restart Transfer of Innovation Project aims to empower lone parents to overcome their personal barriers and structural disadvantages, through the transfer of the innovative Restart employability programme for lone parents seeking to enter the labour market. This unique programme, first developed by lone parent charity Gingerbread NI during EQUAL, has been successfully transferred to Italy, Poland, Norway and Cyprus. The project included the active involvement of the N.I. Department for Employment and Learning. DEL's role was to promote the value of cross sectoral approaches to supporting the entry of lone parents into the labour market. This input has been key to ensuring the involvement of public bodies in partner countries, regarded as crucial to the sustainability of Restart beyond the life of the project.

Over the past two years we have researched the situation of lone parents in each partner country and produced a report of the findings. The Restart programme has been translated into each partner language and adapted for each country context to make it suitable to pilot with a group of lone parents. Piloting the adapted versions of Restart in each importing country with a group of lone parents has provided valuable, first-hand feedback, ensuring Restart remains relevant to the needs of lone parents.

The future for the Restart Programme?

The Restart programme was developed in consultation with lone parents, it is designed to offer a combination of group work, one to one coaching and work placement. The package is designed to build participants' confidence, social skills and work readiness.

Gingerbread seeks to continue to develop the Restart programme beyond the current Lifelong Learning Project. The Restart programme has the potential for further adaption to help other disadvantaged groups, such as, people who have been unemployed for a long time, or with individuals from migrant populations. The current Restart partners will take forward EVAT (European Value Added Training) Grundtvig Learning Partnership, which will explore ways of adding value to the Restart programme. In addition, Possibilities NI will lead Restart 2, a new Transfer of Innovation Project, which aims to repeat the success of the original Restart project, with new partners in Lithuania, and Germany. The Restart programme, as a result, will be adapted and available in 7 languages: English, Polish, Norwegian, Greek Cypriot, Italian, German and Lithuanian.



About the Partners

Gingerbread Northern Ireland
www.gingerbreadni.org

Is Northern Ireland's only lone parent-led organisation and works to achieve equality and social inclusion for one parent families by representing their views, advocating for their rights and developing services to address their needs. Gingerbread undertook the financial and administrative management of the project.

Possibilities Northern Ireland
www.possibilitiesni.com

Possibilities NI, the social enterprise trading arm of Gingerbread NI, was set up to generate income for the lone parent charity through the provision of training, product services and project management. Possibilities was responsible for the co-ordination of the project and the evaluation work.

ASSOCIAZIONE N.E.T. Italy
www.associazionenet.it

Is a not-for-profit association concerned with European projects design, training and sustainable local development, established in 2001. N.E.T led on the translation activities within the project.

NOVA - Norwegian Social Research, Norway
www.nova.no

Is the leading national research institute on child welfare, youth, ageing and the elderly, and social security in Oslo. NOVA undertook the research within the project.

If you would like to find out more about using the Restart programme, please contact:
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info@possibilitiesni.com
0044 2890 231 417
Or find out more about the partners and our projects by visiting our website:
www.possibilitiesni.com

Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)
www.delni.gov.uk

Promotes economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training, helps people into employment, and promotes good employment practices. DEL encouraged the involvement of public bodies in each partner's country within the project.

INDEX, Cyprus
www.indexcyprus.com

Is a non-partisan, non-profit NGO which conducts quality research and promotes public dialogue. INDEX aims to develop tools needed to tackle a wide range of issues, from development to democracy to equality and social exclusion. INDEX oversaw the adaptation work of the project.

WSINF--Poland
www.wsinf.edu.pl

Educates and trains around 6000 students, and is an active adult and vocational learning centre with a CITY & GUILDS Approved English Language Certification Centre. WSINF oversaw the training pilot within the project.

Anniesland College, Scotland
www.anniesland.ac.uk

Is a government funded college located in Glasgow that supports over 8000 learners, providing vocational training, ESOL and Higher Education courses. Anniesland was responsible for producing dissemination materials and overseeing dissemination activities within the project.



Restart: Return to Work Training and Support for Lone Parents 2010 – 2012



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Lone parent families in Europe

Research reveals that while most lone parents want to work they often face a complex combination of personal and structural barriers. For example; low self-esteem, lack of suitable childcare, a need to update skills, and gain work experience. In some of the Restart Project partner countries societal stigmas and negative attitudes about lone parents add to these difficulties. Lone parents are, therefore, disproportionately excluded from the labour market and this relates directly to the vulnerability of one-parent families to poverty and social exclusion throughout Europe.

- Over 20% of children who live in Europe belong to single-parent households.
- The poverty risk for these children is 50% higher than average.
- The great majority of single parents are women who find it difficult to keep their place in the labour market and remain independent from welfare payments.

More information about the situation of lone parent families in the Restart Partnership countries is available in the report: 'Towards a shared understanding of the status of lone parent families' published at www.restartproject.eu



The Lone Parents' Stories

Liudmila, Italy (NET)

My name is Liudmila and I was born in Belarus, and some years ago I moved to Italy. I have been unemployed since 2008, when I became pregnant with my first daughter. I have had temporary jobs but nothing stable. The obstacles I faced were many and all connected to each other. Being alone with a baby I had difficulties to find a job and keep it because nobody could look after my daughter and I couldn't afford a babysitter. I was evicted, became homeless and had to stay in guest houses and with different friends for short periods as I couldn't even afford a room for rent. I risked losing my child because we didn't have any place to go. We were homeless, ate in the soup kitchens and had to wash in public baths showers.

I saw a brochure of the Restart programme at the Employment Centre of Firenze Novoli and I decided to go on the programme because it was an opportunity and I felt welcomed by Sabrina, our tutor. After the Restart programme I was ready when the opportunities were in front of me, I was more confident in me and my skills so much that I apply for different jobs before the work placement. I now have much more self-confidence, assertiveness, knowledge about job seeking how to search for a job. My next step is to find a job in order to afford a house for rent with heating and hot water so that I can have my daughter living with me.



Aneta, Poland (WSNIF)

My name is Aneta. I am a 38 year old woman from a small city near Lodz, Poland. I have two sons: the elder, Victor, is 13 years old and Maks, he is 7 years old. I have been divorced for 3 years and am currently unemployed. Before that, I worked as a sales manager for a trial period but my contract expired.

I heard information about the Restart programme from my friend and joined in order to get to know my strengths and weaknesses, to determine my plans and short and long term goals and to improve and systemise my skills, abilities and attitudes. Group support from the other participants was a great help, as were the practical lessons, exercises, individual coaching and help with childcare.

All of the women in our group had to cooperate with each other and we had to share each of our life and work experiences. I discovered my skills, abilities, attitudes and experience that I previously wasn't aware of. It improved my faith in myself, in my own abilities and capabilities.

It gave me the courage and I found the motivation to plan, and also to dream. I gained new insights about what I enjoy, what I liked to do, and what kind of job I want. I redesigned my career path and how to practice it.

My sons saw that their mother cope with the situation – not giving up despite the lack of a job. They saw that there are also others in similar situations, that it is not the end of the world. But most important: we are not the same, and I, Mama, I'll be fine with that - I know where and to who to turn to for help.

My plan now is to get employed in a company as an assistant marketing manager or sales manager, to begin with the lower rank and then to be gradually promoted. I discovered that I have to work with people, because people are for me like the air, I could not live without it.

The Trainer's Experience

NOVA, Norway

Toita is 48 years old and has four children, aged 17, 14, 12 and 9. She is originally from Tsjetsjenia and came as a refugee to Norway 13 years ago. She was a qualified nurse in her homeland, and has worked in a hospital and as a volunteer during the war between Russia and Tsjetsjenia. Her first husband died in the war while she was pregnant. She remarried and had three more children, one of them born in Norway. Her eldest daughter had to stay in Tsjetsjenia when she fled.

When she came to Norway she was quite traumatized, felt very insecure and had no confidence. Her husband had left her and this made her feel even worse. After the war she felt she never wanted to work as a nurse again. She had joined some courses and even had some work placements but without any results so she had to take cleaning jobs, as language has been a barrier to her getting a job.

Toita was contacted by NAV (the Norwegian public body which supports people to find work) who urged her to join the Restart Programme but she was, after participating in many courses without results, quite sceptical in the beginning. As her tutor, I felt that the most important issue was to build her confidence and make her aware of the enormous strength that she possessed. Her development has been remarkable.

Toita has now got a full-time job as a carer in a home for mentally and physically disabled (were she had her training period). NAV has helped her to send in her Nurse qualification papers for approval here in Norway, and when she get it she will get a higher salary. She is now very well aware of all her capabilities and feels confident that she knows how to face the challenges in her life.



The Partner's Perspective

INDEX, Cyprus

The group of lone parents that we work with in Cyprus did not necessarily face barriers in the conventional sense, but rather an economic situation than led to a lack of opportunities for employment. In Cyprus, individuals are most of the time expected to rely upon their own networks in order to overcome difficulties and avoid exclusion.

Many of the lone parents that we worked with had been made redundant due to the economic crisis in Cyprus, and were desperate to improve their circumstances by finding work. We mainly recruited for the programme through local authorities or their associated NGOs, and this proved to be a successful method.

The participants told us that Restart programme helped them to understand themselves better – the self-development exercises and skills audits were a very successful element of the programme. Participants also told us they highly valued the workshops that helped them to improve their job hunting skills, to produce a well presented CV, and write accompanying letters.

Lone parents valued the network that they had created with people in similar circumstances, and the opportunity this gave them to exchange information and develop knowledge about their rights and entitlements as single parents. The participants felt that they had been fully supported in the programme and had developed a better understanding of themselves which increased their confidence levels.

Since taking part in the Restart programme one of the lone parents has joined another training programme, another got a job at the end of the programme, and another received a work placement through the ESF programme. One of the lone parents is exploring the possibility of setting up her own business, and the other three have gained interview experience and continue to look for employment.