



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

RESTART TRANSFER OF INNOVATION PROJECT

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

**RESTART TOI IS FUNDED UNDER THE
EU LEONARDO DA VINCI PROGRAMME**



September 2011

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CONTEXT

Background to the Restart Programme

The Government Department, the Department for Employment and Learning, has responsibility for supporting people back to work in Northern Ireland. Steps to Work is a Northern Ireland Government initiative designed to meet the needs of people who want to work. Regulations in Northern Ireland are that lone parents with children over the age of seven years old must be available for work (in October 2011 an impact of policy change is that parents with children over the age of five years must be available for work); they will be asked to attend a compulsory interview, and may be asked to attend a Steps to Work Programme to update their skills and give them an idea of what they would like to do. Other lone parents can participate on the Steps to Work Programme on a voluntary basis.

Gingerbread NI approached the Department for Employment and Learning to discuss the potential of working together and submitting a proposal for funding under the EU EQUAL Programme. Restart started in 2004 as a partnership between Gingerbread NI (a NGO), the Department for Employment and Learning, and the University of Ulster. Forming the partnership was an important first step, bringing together skills from different organisational backgrounds seeking to help lone parents become more economically independent. The process started with research - ascertaining that many lone parents wanted to return to work, but faced major barriers. These barriers included the need for jobs offering flexible hours, childcare, and coming off benefits (this included the fear that if they went to work and lost their job they then would not be entitled to benefits). The Restart Programme was developed, bringing together ideas and expertise from the different partner perspectives.

The Restart Programme comprises:

- Classroom based teaching
- One-to-one life coaching
- Work experience with local employer

The Programme was piloted with lone parents, some with high levels of qualifications, some with no qualifications, some young lone parents and some older. This represented a very mixed group; the commonality was that they all wanted to return to work.

Outcomes for the lone parents from participation in the Restart Programme in Northern Ireland was that all felt they were able to progress, and felt that their own confidence had increased. Some felt they were better equipped and able to look for work, some went into Further or Higher Education, others went directly into employment, and some lone parents went onto other training programmes. Delivered Restart for two years within the Government Programme in Northern Ireland.

The partnership relationship was important. The Stakeholder Forum enabled continued dialogue and contact between the Department for Employment and Learning, lone parents,

education organisations, and Gingerbread; with the additional resource available through the research. Members of staff from Gingerbread were seconded to the Department for Employment and Learning to embed the Restart Programme into the mainstream programmes offered to meet the needs of lone parents.

Additionally partnership with employers is important; not only to find out employment trends and vacancies; but also to identify changes in skills sought by employers. Involving lone parents in the Stakeholder Forum was also good practice.

The Restart Transfer of Innovation Project has built on the model used in Northern Ireland, ie research, establishing Stakeholder Forums, and piloting the Restart Programme in the four Partner countries. In addition the Project allowed for adaptation of the Restart Programme materials to ensure that the Programme meets country specific needs and the cultural context. Active dissemination is also included as a Partner activity, in compliance with the Leonardo da Vinci programme requirements.

Work Packages

The Restart TOI Project is being developed and implemented following seven Work Packages. Partners have been designated lead roles for one of each of the Work Packages; as shown in the table below.

WP	Work Package	Lead Partner	Time Frame
1	Project objectives	Possibilities NI	01.10.10 to 30.09.12
2	Research	NOVA	01.01.11 to 31.05.11
3	Adaptation and accreditation of training pack	INDEX	01.06.11 to 30.09.11
4	Translation	Associazione NET	01.10.11 to 01.01.12
5	Project Pilot	WSINF	01.02.12 to 30.06.12
6	Evaluation and monitoring activities	Possibilities NI	01.10.10 to 30.09.12
7	Dissemination activities	Anniesland College	01.01.11 to 30.09.12

It should be noted that translation, piloting and dissemination fall within Work Packages 4, 5 and 7. Work Package 7 includes each Partner establishing a Stakeholder Forum, producing a film of lone parent case studies, the Restart website, the e-newsletter, and training materials. Work Package 7 also includes dissemination, valorisation, commercial strategies and the final dissemination event (to be held in Brussels).

Initially, as presented in the table above, WSINF was responsible for the Pilot and also the Best Practice Report (Work Package 5). At the meeting in Nicosia (September 2011) it was agreed that NET will take on the development of the Best Practice Report element of WP5 (as the translation Work Package has been undertaken by Partners internally).

CONNECT was initially responsible for the Dissemination (Work Package 7). It became evident in Year One that this task would be more effectively undertaken within the Leonardo da Vinci expenditure regulations if Anniesland College was a full Partner (rather than a sub-contractor). Following discussions with the National Agency in August this change in is being amended and formalised within the Project contract.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Overview of the Restart Transfer of Innovation Project Progress in Year One

- Three Partner Meetings have been held (in Belfast, Oslo and Nicosia), all Partners have been represented at all Partner Meetings
- Three Steering Committee Meetings have been held (on the afternoon of the second day of the Partner Meeting)
- The first reports have been received from all Partners and first payment (40% of the available funding) has been made to all Partners
- The Research Report, undertaken by NOVA with support from Possibilities NI, has been finalised and 500 copies of *Towards a shared understanding of the status of lone parent families* have been printed
- All Partners completed and returned the Adaptation Questionnaire to INDEX. INDEX have drafted the Adaptation Report, which will be finalised in October
- The external evaluation framework has been prepared and agreed. The Baseline Evaluation Report has been delivered (May 2011); and a Mini-Interim Report following the Partner Meeting in Oslo was also circulated (June 2011)
- Possibilities NI attended a dissemination event in Birmingham (June 2011). Possibilities NI was invited and selected as a Project to this show casing event; and made some useful contacts in addition to promoting and disseminating the Restart ToI Project.
- The first Project newsletter has been written (the content was produced by NOVA). This will be sent to all partners to circulate amongst their contacts
- The Restart materials have been translated into Italian, Norwegian and Polish . subject to a few additions (including country specific legislation, and activities and exercises appropriate to the cultural context of the target group. The Cypriot translation is underway (note: this s ahead of schedule)
- Restart banners, bags, and pens have been produced.
- In August the National Agency visited Belfast to undertake a monitoring visit.

WP2 The Research Report

500 copies of the Research, *Towards a shared understanding of the status of lone parent families*, have been printed. The Research Report will also be available as a PDF version, which will be emailed to all Partners. All Partners collected and contributed information pertinent to the situation of lone parents in their country to the Report. The data was analysed and the Research Report was written by NOVA, with support from Possibilities NI.

The Research Report comprises ten chapters:

1. Background to the Restart Project
2. Defining Lone Parents
3. Lone Parent Demographics

4. Overview of the Situation of One Parent Families
5. The Routes to Lone Parenthood
6. Attitudes Towards Lone Parent Families
7. Lone Parent Families and Poverty
8. Obstacles to Lone Parents Employment
9. Support for Lone Parents
10. Conclusion

Highlights from the discussion about the implementation of Work Package 2 during the Partner Meeting in Nicosia included:

- The biggest challenge during the research Work Package was to collate comparable data from the Partner countries. This is a common challenge for EU research initiatives, as it can be difficult to access some data, and very often the information available is presented in different formats.
- The Partners believe that the Research Report presents valuable information.
- It was agreed that 50 copies of the Research Report will be kept for the final dissemination event . the rest will be distributed to Partners.
- It was agreed that 50 copies of the Research Report will be sent from Northern Ireland to each Partner, subject to postage costs; as well as the PDF file. Possibilities NI will check the cost of postage; the minimum number of reports that will be posted to each Partner is 15 copies, with the aim to send more (up to a maximum of 50 copies). If postage is prohibitive additional copies of the Report will be brought to the next meeting.
- Partners will distribute the Research Report to stakeholders, including public authorities and stakeholder forum members.
- The Research Report provides a grounding for the work that will take place promoting and piloting the Restart programme in each country.
- It was agreed that each Partner will produce a summary of the Report in their national language which will be sent out to their contacts with the Report from their organisation. The Report includes an introduction and a conclusion; Partners could use these sections of the Report as the basis of the translated summary. NOVA has already thought about the summary which will include a brief overview of the background to the Project and the key results. The content will reflect the context within each country, and issues they would like to highlight and compare. Each Partner will forward a copy of their summary to Possibilities NI (in their own language, this does not need to be translated into English).

WP3 – Adaptation of Restart Programme in each Partner Country

The Adaptation Work Package involves addressing two dimensions - adapting the training materials developed by Gingerbread NI, and the schedule and delivery approach. The developed Restart Programme (piloted in Northern Ireland) included 20 days of core training, 9 days of supplementary training alongside the work placement (36 days). The original

Restart Programme comprised a total of 65 days participant engagement, delivered over a maximum of 19 weeks.

When looking at adaption Partners needed to take into account accreditation issues to meet country requirements, the relevance of materials in relation to learning styles and the cultural context, and practical issues such as childcare and any benefits available.

It was agreed during the meeting in Oslo (May 2011) that each Partner would:

- Familiarise themselves with the Restart Programme,
- Consider the data they prepared for the Research Report . ie issues pertinent to their country
- Take into account the requirements for the delivery of the Restart Programme . including the relevance and accessibility of the materials for their target group of lone parents
- Look at national training incentives, funding available for those on training, and childcare availability within their own country
- Consider the Programme delivery in terms of timing; linking this to the normal working day, childcare availability and school hours
- Look at opportunities for accreditation; considering whether accreditation is possible, if the programme needs to be accredited before it is delivered, and the extent to which accreditation issues have an impact on the content or delivery of the Restart Programme
- Take into account any relevant policy issues within their country.

Partners were asked to complete the Adaptation Questionnaire and return this to INDEX. INDEX prepared a report from the Adaptation Questionnaires presenting proposals for adaptation of materials and delivery; and make recommendations. These proposals are presented in Appendix Two.

INDEX presented an overview of the Adaptation Report at the Partner Meeting in Nicosia; and each Partner presented their proposals for adaptation to meet the cultural context and the needs of their target group, and also taking into account national legislation and policies relating to lone parents in employment or seeking employment.

Issues around the work placement element of the Programme were discussed; including the fact that participants need to understand about and commit to the work placement in advance of starting the Programme. Other issues discussed in relation to the work placement include that the lone parents may not be paid whilst on placement, whereas they are paid whilst on the training programme, and the number of hours and days that each participant spends on the work placement (ie how many days a week, and over how many weeks).

The Partners discussed what incentives there are for participants . for example recognised accreditation; being paid whilst on the training programme (including the work placement); and the need to sell the skills that will be gained from participating on the Restart

Programme. The potential to promote the Restart Programme through other agencies was discussed as an option (although there were concerns that this approach could be viewed as a threat for example you would not receive unemployment benefit if you do not attend the programme).

The Adaptation Report will be revised taking into account the presentations of the Partners; a request for clarification will be sent to Partners. The final Adaptation Report will be available at the end of October.

Overall, all Partners are in principal following the Restart Programme materials; with cultural adaptations, and in the case of the students in Poland a condensed programme as most participants will already be in third level education. Possibilities NI requested that they receive a final version of course structure, outline and final materials (ie which modules will / will not be used) from all Partners for quality assurance. It was also recognised that Adaptation will be an ongoing process; but it is important that any adaptations made during the delivery should be forwarded to Possibilities NI.

WP5 Piloting the Programme

The Restart Programme will be piloted in Cyprus, Italy, Norway and Poland. Partners will pilot the approved adapted Programme to lone parents. Although the delivery of the pilot programme (Work Package 5) was scheduled to take place between February and June 2012, some of the Partners plan to start delivering the Programme in autumn 2011.

WSINF is the Partner responsible for the Pilot Report; and as noted earlier in the Report, NET will produce the Good Practice Report following the Pilot. During the meeting in Nicosia Partners discussed the information that will be sought to inform the Pilot Report. Each Partner will be asked to complete a pro-forma and return it to WISNF. Feedback on the Pilot Programme development and delivery will include:

- Profile of the target group of lone parents
- Recruitment process
- Best practice examples
- Childcare options
- Training: timetable, methodology, learning styles, delivery approaches, evaluation
- Work placement: types of placement, cooperation with employer, social benefits
- Work and family life
- Accreditation
- Linkages to national frameworks and structures
- Dissemination: film of case studies, newsletter and other dissemination used
- Outputs . number of participants enrolled, progression / destination of individuals, number of those completing the Programme
- Thoughts about mainstreaming the Programme . opportunities and accreditation.

Further discussion about the implementation of Work Package 5 noted that:

- There will be some overlap with the Adaptation Work Package (WP3); but this was felt to be acceptable in order to complete the Work Packages in full (as noted above, any adaptation implemented during the delivery of the Programme will be recorded).
- Deliberately, the process of recruitment used by the Partners has not been prescribed. The restrictions discussed and agreed before are that all cohorts are lone parents; and that the number recruited should be 12 to 13 lone parents, seeking 8 to 10 completers.
- The Partners have needed to bring forward WP5 due to some of the programme delivery starting earlier than anticipated (in order to deliver the programme within differing time constraints).
- It is important that when recording the pilot that Partners give a taste of each Programme; and note best practice within each country.
- The methodology for WP5 is that the Polish Partner will issue the pro-forma to each Partner, with added elements to the matrix presented in Nicosia, ensuring that the matrix covers all WP5 objectives. It will include additional information about the delivery process . ie practical reporting on the experience of the delivery. This information should be available for the meeting in Italy (which will take place in March).
- Partner meeting in Italy will focus on dissemination (including the dissemination event), commercialisation and discussion about the Best Practice Report. It would also be useful to have some feedback from Trainers at this meeting.
- The Partner Meeting in Poland will include a presentation on the Pilot Programme Report and the Best Practice Report.
- Feedback from trainers and beneficiaries should be included in the Pilot Programme Report and the Best Practice Report.
- As a pilot it is important to have peer-evaluation structured into the delivery; if two trainers or an observer can be involved in the delivery this allows for a more objective approach.
- Noted that there will be adaptation as the training goes along . this is good practice, but record as you go along with the rationale
- Polish Partner: Pilot Project Report will present exactly what happened during the Pilot programmes
- Italy: Best Practice Report and include challenges and constraints; plus valorisation and accreditation
- Evaluation questionnaire to Trainers . will need to be translated by the Partners for their trainers
- Allow for different results and different practice in different countries and with different target groups
- Important to include both good practice, and challenges
- Agreed that there will be forms in place from the outset, and peer-evaluation to capture the process and best practice
- Reflection sessions with lone parents is a further example of good practice; as are the links with NGOs.

- What should be included in the case study film? How to present the best practice through the film (filming in itself is an example of best practice).
- Delivery Guidelines . prepared by WSNIF(to include numbers and recruitment). To be circulated on 14th October. This will include policy on data protection and confidentiality, and record keeping. (Noted that when Gingerbread NI delivered the programme lone parents gave a lot of confidential information).
- Award ceremony for beneficiaries, this could involve employers (which can support employer buy-in).
- Focus group with lone parent beneficiaries, the evaluation questionnaire from the external evaluator, and the lone parent involvement in the stakeholder forums.
- Exit planning with all individuals at the end of the Programme.
- Feedback from stakeholders.

External Evaluation

Following meetings with the Project Coordinators, a Baseline Evaluation Questionnaire completed by all Partners, and documentation review the Baseline Evaluation Report was delivered in May 2011. A second Evaluation Report was delivered focusing on the Partner Meeting held in Oslo (June 2011).

The Partner Meeting in Nicosia provided the opportunity for the external evaluator to meet the Partners, as well as hearing about the Project process and progress from all Partners at first-hand. One-to-one sessions between the Partners and the evaluator were scheduled, and the Partners received the list of five questions in advance of the Meeting. Partner organisations also completed a Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire (one from each organisation) during the meeting (which referred back to the data presented in the Baseline Evaluation Report). In addition, everyone present at the Partner Meeting was asked to complete the Evaluation Questionnaire seeking feedback about the Nicosia Partner Meeting.

Prior to the Partner Meeting the external evaluator emailed draft proposals for the Restart beneficiary questionnaires to all Partners. These were discussed at the Meeting and amendments were subsequently made by the external evaluator and emailed to Partners.

It was agreed that

- The four pilot projects in Cyprus, Italy, Norway and Poland will all use the same questionnaires.
- Questionnaires will be translated by Partners into the native language.
- There would be one questionnaire given to participants on the Restart Programme at the beginning of the training; and that all participants completing the programme will be asked to complete an End of Programme Questionnaire.
- Copies of all questionnaires will be scanned or posted to Jane (ideally within a week of them being completed).

- Where open questions are used Partners will need to translate participant responses into English.
- The expectations given at the start of the Programme by each participant on the Baseline Questionnaire will need to be transferred onto the End of Programme Questionnaire (ie so it is person centred).
- Partners can ask participants to complete the End of Programme Questionnaire themselves; or can do this as a one-to-one session with each individual lone parent.

Partners also agreed that a short questionnaire from the external evaluator should be developed for the trainers delivering the Restart Programme and for members of the Stakeholder Forum. A draft will be prepared for discussion at the Partner Meeting in March.

Finance

Update on progress:

- The Project has received 40% of the Project costs from the National Agency; and the first payment has been made to all Partners with the exception of CONECT / Anniesland College.
- The second payment of 40% is due after the National Agency approve the Interim Report.
- Partners need to complete the fourth quarter financial return (and any outstanding third quarter reports). Partners were asked to submit individual financial reports by the 7th October; this data will be incorporated into the Interim Report.
- Partners asked to send reports for 100% of the costs relating to the Project (ie the 75% funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme plus the Partner 25% matched costs).

Gingerbread NI met with each Partner individually to discuss financial issues at the end of the first day of the Partner Meeting in Nicosia (allocated appointments).

The Transfer of Partner status from CONECT to Anniesland College was noted (with the consequence that approval from the National Agency is required in order to hold the Final Dissemination Event in Brussels, as there is not a Partner based in Belgium any longer).

Monitoring Visit from the UK National Agency

In August the National Agency visited Belfast to undertake a monitoring visit. Gingerbread NI / Possibilities NI received a positive report; and felt that the monitoring visit was ~~very~~ successful.

The National Agency feedback was very positive; feedback from the Monitoring Visit Report noted:

The project has made a positive start in achieving its aim and objectives outlined in the original application form and it is clear the project has the potential to make a sustainable impact in partner countries. Partners are making good progress in all work packages and the partner reporting structure provides appropriate monitoring arrangements for a project of this type.

The Monitoring Visit Report concluded:

The project is performing exceptionally well - it is clearly benefitting from a committed and active consortium which, through clear management and reporting structures, is able to engage stakeholders and target groups effectively. This gives the project a truly transnational feel, providing partners with mutual benefits from participating in the project and the opportunity to make a significant impact in their countries.

Gingerbread/Possibilities NI coordination of activities is a key strength and the project is benefitting from thorough preparation at application and initial project set up stages. Partners appear to be fully aware of their role within the project. Through regular evaluation and communication, both internally and externally, the project ensures it identifies any potential problems early. This open form of communication together with partners' involvement in managing work packages and active involvement in project decisions should ensure the project's final products are relevant to all the identified target groups in partner countries.

The email sent from the ECORYS Senior Project Manager after the Monitoring Visit stated the overall message to you and your partners is to carry on with what you are doing! I found the visit extremely interesting and the work to date of the project is very encouraging.

STAKEHOLDER FORUMS

Context

The Mid-Term Evaluation Report has included a separate section on the Stakeholder Forums as it is felt that this approach is innovative and potentially a model of good practice for future projects (both national and European).

The Stakeholder Forum concept builds on the experience of Gingerbread NI during the EQUAL Project, which developed and implemented the Restart Programme for lone parents in Northern Ireland. It was ascertained that the Stakeholder Forum had a significant positive impact on the development and delivery of the Programme.

One of the expectations of the Project is that each Partner was required to establish a Stakeholder Forum in their own country. During the first year of the Programme each Partner has held at least one meeting with the members of their Stakeholder Forum. In addition members of the Norwegian and Cypriot Stakeholder Forums attended meetings in Oslo (May 2011) and Nicosia (September 2011) respectively.

During the attendance of the members of the Cypriot Stakeholder Forum it was evident again that there are many commonalities with regard to the problems facing lone parents; specifically highlighted were childcare barriers, the need for flexible hours (again related to children), and the need for skills (including IT skills). It was observed that the representative from the Cypriot Employment Services welcomed the report and the approach taken by the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland), again noting similarities between the two countries (for example high numbers of small businesses and the high levels of unemployment presently). Similarities of the issues identified by the Cyprus Lone Parent Organisation were similar to those identified in the Gingerbread research. The representative from the Private School commented that he felt the Restart Research Report would be very useful, particularly in identifying skills and other needs of lone parents

The ECORYS Monitoring Visit Report noted %Another key strength of the project is the formation of Stakeholder Groups in partner countries . this is a valuable resource not only to achieve the objectives of the project but for future work in this area by partners. The support DEL NI has given the project to date, by attending partner meetings and providing advice to partners, further demonstrates the strength of the Steering Groups and what can be achieved through stakeholder involvement+.

Overview of the Partner Stakeholder Forums

The table below provides an overview of the membership of each of the four Stakeholder Forums.

Forum Organisations	INDEX Cyprus	NET Italy	NOVA Norway	WSINF Poland
No. of Forum members	10	49	7	12
Lone Parent Organisations	Pancyprian Association for Lone Parents and Friends	Associazione Solidarietà Caritas (Welcome Centre for lone parents) Consultorio Familiare (Family Centre)	AFFO . Alene Foreldre Foreninga (National Lone parents organisation)	
National Government Agencies	Ministry of Labour: Welfare services Human Resource Development Agency Productivity Centre	Amministrazione Penitenziaria (Prison administration) Caritas	NAV Directorate under the Ministry of Labour	
Regional Public Agencies	Multifunctional Foundation of Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation of Strovolos Municipality	Municipality of Florence Caritas Diocesana di Firenze Municipality of Campi Bisenzio		Municipal Social Care Centre
Training / Education Organisations	Independent trainer	CAT Social Cooperative Various Associations x 6	Qualification Programme Department of NAV	Academy of IT The Spring Association Regional Academy of the Future Various Associations x 6
Lone Parents	1 lone parent			
Community / Voluntary Groups [NGOs]	Pancyprian Movement of Equal rights-Equal opportunities Protoporia Movement . women association Both attended as members of the subcommittee for vulnerable groups of the Observatory for the Equality of Men and Women at the Ministry of Justice	Volunteers from Counselling Centres	Sheltered Employment . Food Store	The Polish Disabled Sailors Association Association for Municipal and Theatrical Activation of Disabled People Lodz Association of People with Motor Disabilities Lodz Social Support Association: I-You-We

Feedback from Partner Stakeholder Forums

All Partners have held at least one Stakeholder Meeting and sent in a written report to the Project Coordinator.

The membership of the Forums varied; members included representatives from statutory agencies, lone parent organisations, lone parents, training or education organisations. The Polish Stakeholder Forum includes a lawyer with experience of the challenges and problems faced by lone parents.

WSINF, Poland

The focus of the first WSINF Stakeholder Forum meeting was to learn as much as possible about the opinions and experiences of the members. The stakeholders were asked about quality of life in the town, social inclusion / exclusion, needs, and personal experiences. They were also asked what support they know to be available to lone parents. Issues around disability were also raised; and it was noted that disability adds to problems in relation to poverty. It is intended to invite someone from a Lone Parents Association to the next meeting. WSINF invited public bodies to the first Stakeholder Forum, but they couldn't come; they are hopeful that they might attend in the future.

INDEX, Cyprus

Originally INDEX invited representatives from a number of government agencies and had a hope that they might be able to enter into partnership for delivery. Some people have been met on an individual basis, rather than accepting the invitation to the Forum. INDEX is not sure whether the same organisations will be present at the next Stakeholder Forum meeting. INDEX doesn't envisage the Stakeholder Forum as having a static membership; but hopes to bring everyone along after the pilot to present outcomes. They are unsure about the commitment representatives are willing to offer. The Ministry of Labour has been the most open and sustained of the Ministries. Several useful ideas came from the Forum meeting that have been followed up (although this has not resulted in all the outcomes initially hoped for).

NOVA, Norway

The aim of the next meeting will be to discuss implementation of the Project and recruitment. The Stakeholder Forum members have a lot of experience to bring to the Project. It is anticipated that at the next meeting the cooperation between members will be beneficial to the Restart Programme delivery. NOVA had links with Stakeholder Forum member

organisations beforehand; and NOVA will be working closely with NAV, as the Restart Project is being delivered within the NAV infrastructure.

NET, Italy

NET invited representatives from the province, the region and municipality to the first Stakeholder Meeting, which was also open to counsellors working in centres with women. The main objective was to make those attending understand the need to support lone parents in employment and presenting the concept of person centred learning and empowerment; there was a lot of interest and support for this approach. The meeting included discussion about the risks and recommendations; and NET stressed that single parents can be a resource. Representatives from the Employment Centre were invited, but did not come. NET is following up the initial meeting with stakeholders with individual meetings; which is more in keeping with the traditional approach for civil servants and politicians in Italy (who are not used to a Forum type approach). NET is hopeful that the lone parents participating in the Restart Programme will form a network and maybe an association (one of them might attend the Stakeholder Forum).

It was raised during the Partner discussion that Government departments with responsibility for welfare services seem to be the hardest to engage; and it can be difficult to get information from them (not just in relation to this Project, but with other initiatives as well). Legislation shows who can benefit financially (or maintain their benefits) from employment training programmes; some changes have taken place and legislation is still developing (for example in Northern Ireland lone parents to be able to keep their benefits and do a training course).

Next meetings of the Stakeholder Forums

Poland: October
Norway: October
Cyprus: Sometime before Christmas
Italy: Two one to one meetings with Municipality and Employment Centre; hope to bring a small group together to form the core Stakeholder Forum membership before Christmas.

The Northern Ireland Stakeholder Forum experiences

During the Partner Meeting the Partners from Northern Ireland talked about the valuable experience gained from the formation of the Stakeholder Forum during the EQUAL Project. This was further explored with the one-to-one interviews with the Partners based in Northern Ireland. The following list provides a model of good practice; which as with all models may need adaptation to meet the needs of the cultural context of each country.

- Stakeholder Forums need to be focused on the Restart Programme.
- A small core group focusing issues can be most effective (ie more effective than a large group of people who cannot fully commit to the concept and Programme delivery).
- Having people in a room together creates synergy between individuals and organisations; and opportunities to make connections.
- Opening up a dialogue with organisations has additional benefits, and valuable contacts with whom there can be two-way information (and inside information).
- Stakeholders should be people whom Partners can telephone to raise ideas, discuss opportunities or problems, or seek information.
- There is a need to create and build a high level of trust between the members; which depends on the relationships between people.
- All members of the Stakeholder Forum should be able to see the advantages and added value from participating in the Forum.
- Be pragmatic . work with those who want to work with your organisation and the Project.
- The Project is a vehicle for progress and development; members of the Stakeholder Forum need to buy into this.
- A lone parent organisation can bring experience and expertise; and an understanding of the target group.
- Involving a lone parent can be very useful for the Forum.
- The Forums are part of the dissemination process of the Project, but also a support structure to support Partners.
- Recognition that forming the Stakeholder Forum can expose you; but the support and connect-ness outweigh this.
- Local dialogue, local inclusion; which leads to local conclusions that work within your context.
- Take into account the roles of the people representing organisations on the Forum.
- The key is the quality of input and getting the right people involved; this is much more significant than numbers.

Expectations and Hoped for Added Value from the Stakeholder Forums

During the one-to-one interviews between the Partners and the external evaluator Partners were asked what benefits or added value they hope to gain from the Stakeholder Forum.

Highlights from the interviews are given below:

- Shared information *2 responses*
- Stakeholders bring good local knowledge and understanding of the area (each region faces different problems) *2 responses*
- Opportunity to engage with statutory agencies, and build relationships
- Promotes social policy within an EU context
- Members know the target group very well
- Bring additional materials to the Programme
- May provide additional support to lone parents involved in the Restart Programme

- Bringing new ideas and suggestions to the Project
- Stakeholders who have worked with lone parents for many years see the need for the Project, and will hopefully help to promote it
- Potential to role the Programme out in other areas through stakeholder interest
- Raising awareness and understanding of the problems lone parents face
- Opportunity to lobby for lone parents being included as a disadvantaged group (which is not the situation at the moment as the belief is that the family will support lone parents, despite statistical data to the contrary)
- There are likely to be some unexpected outcomes from the SF; gets people talking with each other and opens new channels and opportunities.
- Promote the concept that lone parents are a resource, offering specific skills and competencies.

CHALLENGES FOR LONE PARENTS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

Partners requested in the Baseline Evaluation Questionnaire that the external evaluation takes into account the barriers and challenges for lone parents seeking employment. During the one to one interviews between Partners and the external evaluator the Partners were asked to describe what they see as the greatest challenges for lone parents in their country. The table below shows the similarity of the issues raised.

Challenges for lone parents	Cyprus	Italy	Norway	Poland	UK
Childcare	½	½			½
Finding employment		½		½	½
Seen as a high risk group	½	½			
Need for flexible working hours	½				½
Low levels of self-esteem and confidence	½				½
Benefits	½				½
Ineffectiveness of policies and regulations				½	½
Need for re-training and gaining skills					½
Lone parents do not come high on the political agenda				½	
Social isolation					½
Challenges facing marginalised groups of parents, eg migrants			½		
Travel to work					½

Unemployment in the municipality in which NOVA works in Norway stands at 1.7%. Marginalised groups of lone parents find it difficult to enter the employment market (eg immigrants); whereas due to childcare infrastructure and benefits available generally lone parents do not have the same challenges and barriers to employment as in the other Partner countries.

Additional comments about the challenges and barriers for lone parents seeking employment.

Childcare

- Infrastructure is not there for childcare
- Quality childcare is expensive (inferior childcare can also be expensive)

- It seems to be Government policy to push people out to work without the support infrastructure for childcare in place.

Finding Employment

- When the Project was being developed the economic crisis facing Europe was not anticipated. At the present time it is difficult for anyone seeking work; which makes the challenge greater for lone parents
- The jobs offered to lone parents are often not well paid
- Discrimination in job interviews . being a single parent can be an obstacle to finding a job due to employers' perceptions
- Employers do not see that lone parents are a resource offering a set of specific skills and competencies
- Insecurity and temporary nature of the types of jobs that are available

Benefits and finance

- Lone parents are not aware about what they are entitled to
- The task of bringing up children alone is difficult; and research shows the links to financial vulnerability
- Wage gap between benefits and salary
- Fear of coming off benefits
- The benefits paid to lone parents in Cyprus are irrespective of maintenance or other income
- Government training programmes can make it more difficult for them to participate in the European employment programmes
- If go back on the Benefits system because of redundancy or other reasons for leaving a job there can be delays in payment and financial insecurity
- Lone parents need to have an income that is sufficient to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

Partners were asked how they believe the Restart Programme can contribute towards addressing these barriers and challenges.

Addressing the Barriers	Cyprus	Italy	Norway	Poland	UK
Raising issues at policy level	½	½		½	½
Confidence building		½		½	½
Preparation for work readiness		½	½	½	½
Person centred approach		½	½		½
Contact with employers				½	½
Increasing skill levels	½				½
One-to-one support			½	½	½
Basic, relevant approach			½		
Careers advice / guidance					½

Additional comments were given about how Partners hope the Restart Programme can contribute towards addressing some of the barriers focused on raising issues at policy level:

- Through dissemination . including the Dissemination Event
- With statutory agency / public body members on the Stakeholder Forums
- Whilst the Programme per se cannot address childcare; it can bring the attention of the issues and need for quality, affordable and flexible childcare to policy makers.

The challenges and barriers facing lone parents seeking employment seem to be very similar, although there are cultural variations. The Possibilities NI experience of delivering the Restart Programme is that it allows people the space to come together to think about their skills and experience and what they would like to do and what is realistic. The Restart Programme helps them to move in the direction they want to move in. The one-to-one support supports personal development, confidence, and provides the information, advice and guidance lone parents need to achieve their goals.

YEAR ONE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Project Development

The Mid-Term Evaluation Report, completed by all Partner organisations, asked the Partners to rate statements about the development of the Project to date. The table below shows their feedback.

Project issues	Very well developed	Developing satisfactorily	Developed to some extent	Poorly developed
The purpose of the Project is...	6	1	1	-
The strategy has been..	4	4	-	-
Communication between the partners has been..	5	3	-	-
Shared values between partners are..	6	2	-	-
Work Package outlines have been ..	2	4	2	-
Partners understand and respect time deadlines ..	2	5	1	-

Three Partners gave additional comments about the development of the Restart ToI Project:

- At the mid-term point the Project is developing well; it is good that all the Partners seem very active.
- All the Partners are very committed, enthusiastic, and fully involved in delivering the Project objectives
- A very well organised Project.

As the table shows; Partners are positive about the way in which the Restart ToI Project is developing; in particular the purpose of the Project, shared values between Partners and communication between Partners are rated as very well developed. When compared with the responses given by Partners in May this year there is a significant increase in the number of very well developed responses; and a decrease in the developed to some extent responses. Whilst this would be hoped for, it is positive that the Project is developing at these levels.

Achievements of the Restart ToI Project in Year One

During the one-to-one interviews between the Partners and the external evaluator Partners were asked what they believe has gone well during the first year of the Project; ie the main achievements. Their feedback is given below.

Achievements in Year One	No. of responses
Good effective Project management / the Project is well organised	5
The Research Report . a tangible output; and worth the effort. Something that can be referred back to or support future funding.	3
Well organised and productive Meetings attended by all Partners	3
Meeting time schedules and targets	3
Stakeholders Forums established	3
Good communication and working relationships between Partners	3
Successful first meeting very successful, got off to a good start in terms of the Partnership coming together and being more cohesive	2
Received Partner reports, funding returns, and contracts signed	2
Partners signed up, committed and involved	2
Respecting and meeting targets and deadlines	2
Level of work and outputs	1
Resolved the CONECT / Anniesland College issue	1
Partners know what is expected of them	1
All Partners gaining added value	1
Successfully completed the Adaptation exercise . pulled together and cooperated to get the work done	1
Involvement of statutory / public agencies	1
Expert input at meetings	1
Successful and reassuring Monitoring Visit	1
Empowerment methodology	1
Commitment to the evaluation process . dialogue, discussion and flexibility	1
Translations completed well ahead of schedule	1

Project Challenges during Year One

Similarly, during the interviews, Partners were asked what challenges they had encountered during the first year of the Restart Project. Their feedback is presented below.

Challenges	No. of responses
Getting the research report done . a lot of the information was difficult to find; the task evolved and became bigger than perhaps we had expected.	1
Getting the CONECT / Anniesland College position changed; and clarifying the role for Anniesland College	1
The Adaptation exercise was quite challenging; as there were technical issues around training design; also adapting legislation and content to local context	4

Challenges <i>continued</i>	No. of responses
The Project is relatively complex; and not easy . but anticipate high quality outcomes	3
Involving the right local people in the Stakeholder Forums	2
Putting the financial procedures in place	1
The amount of work is quite time-consuming for people; can't coast along; and Partners need to put the work in at each stage.	2
Very full agendas of the meetings	1
From a practical point of view, the countries are quite different from each other; and well spread apart . but this is a strength as gives a very European flavour to the project . cultures and situations so different from each other.	1
Delivering an idea on paper (the application) into practice / Partners understanding what is expected of them	2
Balance between and marrying strategic aims at local and European level and delivering operational goals	1
Accreditation / getting the Restart Programme on the Regional Training list	2

A number of Partners commented that they anticipate that piloting the Restart Programme will be challenging, particularly with regard to recruitment, accreditation and getting employers on board.

MEETING EXPECTATIONS

The Baseline Evaluation Report presented that the Project Partners identified for the Restart ToI Project. The Mid-Term Evaluation Questionnaire asked Partners to rate the extent to which their expectations are being met at the mid-term stage. Some expectations may not be relevant to all Partners, they were given the opportunity to tick a not relevant to me column; this column has also been used to record comments by some Partners about specific expectations.

Expectations from the Restart TOI Project	Developing well	Some development	Little development	Not relevant to me
To transfer the Restart programme to partner countries with appropriate adaptations and adjustments	7	1	-	-
To learn and understand more about the situation and barriers to employment for lone parents across European countries	7	1	-	-
Successful completion of the pilot training programme with lone parents in each country	2	4	-	Too early to say: 2
Further cooperation and an effective transnational partnership established	8	-	-	-
To help raise awareness of and develop responses to the needs of lone parents in Europe	5	2	-	1
Enhancing and developing our organisations' skills, knowledge and experience (and individuals involved in the Project implementation)	3	3	1	1
Successful dissemination of the Restart programme through the TOI project partnership; to include wide dissemination to include other European Regions	1	5	-	1
To make policy makers understand that lone parents are a target for social support and to raise awareness of policy makers	2	2	2	1
The experience of Gingerbread and the partnership will be conducive to enhance the quality of implementation	8	-	-	-
Innovation in a national context	4	2	-	Too early to say: 1

Expectations from the Restart TOI Project <i>continued</i>	Developing well	Some development	Little development	Not relevant to me
To pilot the Restart Programme with groups which are otherwise difficult to reach with our existing programmes for lone parents (including lone parents from immigrant backgrounds)	4	2	-	2
To learn more about participating in Leonardo projects and to establish collaborative relationships with researchers and NGOs across Europe	4	3	-	1
The training materials developed will provide again a better link to the methodologies of working with this target group.	4	3	-	Too early to say: 1
Further opportunities to develop our organisations activities	3	3	-	1
Successful completion of research into the situation of lone parents in each country	5	1	-	Finished: useful report: 2
Establish cross . sectoral stakeholder forums	6	1	-	1

As the table shows, the Partners believe that many of their expectations are developing well and that the Project is developing and delivering the expectations they were looking for.

ADDED VALUE

In the Baseline evaluation Partners identified the added value they hoped would be forthcoming from the transnational partnership. The Mid Term Evaluation Report asked Partners to rate the extent to which they believe the added value they sought is developing through the Project. Feedback is presented in the table below.

Added Value from the Transnational Partnership	Developing well	Developing a little	No real development yet
Strong working links with partner organisations in Europe / new partnerships	7	1	-
Learning and sharing experiences and good practice with the Partners	7	1	-
Potential for future partnership working and grounding for further EU partnerships and projects	4	3	-
Experience of co-ordination of a major transnational project and learning for staff involved with the Project	7	-	1
Gives the programme added credibility locally . raises the Project profile	4	3	1
Better knowledge and skills about LLP projects and European collaboration	7	-	1
Better knowledge about the situation of lone parents in Europe which may be disseminated within NOVA	6	2	-
Experience of adaptation and commercialisation of products	1	5	2
Discovering new fields of educational training	2	5	1
Being able to use the information we gain from the project and Partners to develop and influence learning and policy within our own region	2	4	1

Any other comments about the added value of working as a transnational partnership?

- Hopefully other organisations and partners we work with will benefit.
- Additional added value has been learning about possibilities and challenges facing lone parents in countries different to ours.

The table shows that the added value that Partners were looking for from the Project is already being realised.

FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTNER MEETING IN NICOSIA

The third Partner Meeting took place in Nicosia, Cyprus on the 22nd and 23rd September, hosted by INDEX. Representatives from all Partner organisations attended; a total of sixteen people attended the Partner Meeting. On the 23rd September three members of the Cypriot Stakeholder Forum attended the Meeting. The content and discussions during the Meeting have contributed to the Mid-Term Evaluation Report.

The structure of the previous two Restart ToI Project Meetings was followed. Additional representatives from Partner organisations could attend the Partner Meeting which lasted a full day on Day One; and until mid-afternoon on Day Two. The Steering Committee met after the Partner Meeting finished. Thirteen Partners completed and returned the End of Meeting Evaluation Questionnaire. Feedback is presented in this section of this Report.

Expectations

Partners were asked about their expectations of the meeting . ie what they hoped the meeting would achieve . and to what extent their expectations were met. Feedback is presented in the table below.

Expectations of the Meeting	Extent to which expectations were met
Progress subsequent work packages / guidance and advice / clear communication and exchange of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully met • Ok • Fulfilled • Met • Achieved
Update on Project progress in all Partner countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations fulfilled in total • Fully met • Ok • Met • Fully achieved
Discussion about the Pilot (WP5) / learn more about the content and Partnersqexpectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well developed • Fully met • Very well developed • Fully achieved
Meet representatives from the Cypriot Stakeholder Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well developed • Fully met • Expectations reached; meeting with the Stakeholder Forum was very useful • Fully met

Expectations of the Meeting <i>continued</i>	Extent to which expectations were met
Informal networking and stronger working relationships with Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully met • Fully met
Partners would all contribute in full and the Meeting will be positive and successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully met • Largely realised
Meeting aims will be achieved / work through the Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully met • A bit too comprehensive
Discussion on the difficulties that may be confronted in piloting the training in a context of economic crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somewhat. It is understandable for a Project to focus on how to implement rather than on what difficulties may be confronted in implementing. However, it would have been useful to discuss a Plan B.
Discussion about the Project evaluation (WP6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well developed
Generate enthusiasm and focus on the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure
Discussion about the Research Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very well developed
Clearer sense of how the specific project represents transfer of innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be important for this to be clarified further as the Project progresses . I am not sure there has been much collective reflection on this
To present our findings to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully met
Receive feedback on the financial report we submitted; and receive further guidelines on financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done within the one-to-one session
Clarification of Partner roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully achieved
Receive information about the case study film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could have made more time to discuss the film . not fully fulfilled
Clarification of Anniesland College / CONECT changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully achieved

As the table shows; the majority of Partner expectations for the Meeting were fully met. Many of the expectations focused on the opportunity to exchange and share information and receive and report on the Project progress.

Discussion

Partners were asked to rate how useful they thought the discussion was for each item on the agenda. The table below presents each agenda item and the Partners feedback.

Agenda Item	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful
WP1: Reminder of project objectives, review of progress and policy updates	11	2	-
WP2: Circulation of research report	12	1	-
WP3: Presentation of adaptation report and individual Presentations by all partners	11	2	-
WP4: Planning for translation activities	6	6	1
WP5: Advance planning for piloting of Restart training	7	6	-
WP6: Project Evaluation	9	4	-
WP1: Project Finances	10	3	-
One to one meetings . Finance and Evaluation	8	1	-
Meeting with Cypriot Stakeholder Forum	13	-	-
Reports from stakeholder forums	9	3	-
WP7: Dissemination	9	4	-
Interim Report	8	3	-

As the table shows; Partners believed that every discussion was seen to be very useful or useful by the Partners. Only one Partner rated one agenda item as not useful and qualified this by saying "Discussion on the translation Work Package wasn't needed since we had translated the whole Restart training materials beforehand; the other issues were useful".

All Partners rated the meeting with the Cypriot Stakeholder Forum as very useful. One Partner made an additional comments about this; "It was very interesting to meet the Cypriot Stakeholder Forum and to find out about issues facing lone parents in Cyprus".

Partners were asked to consider three questions relating to the Partner Meeting; feedback is given in the table below.

A few questions ...	Yes	Not Sure	No
Did you feel able to enter into the discussion whenever you wanted during the Meeting?	13	-	-
Do you think the Meeting addressed all the important items that Partners needed to discuss?	13	-	-
Was it a useful stage in the Project to have a Meeting?	13	-	-

Having used a similar series of questions when evaluating in excess of twenty EU funded projects it is noted that this is the first time that all Partner responses have said "Yes" in answer to these three questions. Restart Tol is to be commended that Partners all feel able to contribute to the discussions, which suggests that Partners feel they are participating on a level playing field; and that the agenda covers all the issues that all Partners believe are relevant to the development and delivery of the Project.

Highlights of the Partner Meeting

Partners were asked to state their three highlights of the Meeting; their responses are shown below:

- Stakeholders Forum meeting and exchange with the Cypriot Stakeholders *7 responses*
- Circulation of the research report (WP2) *5 responses*
- Partner presentations of the adaptation process and finalising the process (WP3) *4 responses*
- Overall Project progress to date from Partners *2 responses*
- Partnership working and bonding / meeting again *2 responses*
- Discussion and advance planning about the pilot (WP5) *2 responses*
- Better understanding of the goals and content of the Restart Project *2 responses*
- Dissemination Presentation *2 responses*
- Hearing the experiences of other Partners *2 responses*
- Attention to detail
- Continuing cooperation between Partners
- INDEX presentation on Adaptation Report (WP3)
- Case study film
- Knowledge on how Partners solve problems
- The situation of lone parents
- Opportunity to have some free time for autoreflexion
- DEL Presentation
- Dissemination and Stakeholder Forum development to a national organisation
- Informal meetings with Partners (eg over dinner)
- The trip to the North of Cyprus
- Sharing positive National Agency monitoring visit with Partners
- Open discussions
- Friendly atmosphere, facilitating fruitful cooperation and smooth progress

Learning Gains

Partners were asked what they learnt from the meeting; their responses, given below, fell within one of four categories:

1. Project Management and Communication
2. Information Gained about Project Development and Delivery
3. Challenges and Differences in Partner Countries
4. Information Gained about Lone Parents in Partner Countries

Project Management and Communication

- Financial requirements regarding the Interim Report *2 responses*
- Good project management practices

- The need for clear communication given the potential for misunderstanding due to language barriers
- Further information about the working and reporting of the Restart Project
- Full commitment from Partners is essential for success
- Flexibility is needed to ensure all objectives can be met

Information Gained about Project Development and Delivery

- Update on Adaptation and how Partners will adapt the training programme *3 responses*
- More information about the pilot and the Restart training package *3 responses*
- Better understanding of organising the Stakeholder Forum *2 responses*
- The full reach of the Restart Tol Project / goals and content *2 responses*
- More information about dissemination
- Progress of the Project performance of each Partner

Challenges and Differences in Partner Countries

- Variations between countries with regards to benefits systems *2 responses*
- There are various organisational structures that may influence the implementation of the same programme (ie Restart) and therefore different strategies may be needed in each country
- Current different approaches to the Project aims across the partnership
- State of play with regards to lone parents and training available in each country
- One approach does not fit all contexts even if the main objective is the same
- Different approaches to the Stakeholder events
- Variations between countries with regards to accreditation
- Individual circumstances and the difficulty of realisation in some countries

Information Gained about Lone Parents in Partner Countries

- More about lone parents in Cyprus *3 responses*
- Exchange with Cypriot Stakeholders Forum *2 responses*
- Cultural aspect of Cyprus

Format of the Meeting

Partners were asked what approaches and Meeting methods worked well; their responses are shown below, categorised as content or process.

Content

- Presentations by Partners on the Work Package they lead on *7 responses*
- Discussion with members of the Stakeholders Forum *5 responses*
- Discussion and communication between Partners *6 responses*
- The DEL Presentation with questions and answers

- Attendance by Gingerbread NI and external evaluator proved successful in highlighting areas of work required for finance and evaluation
- Flipchart schemes
- Project update

Process

- Good atmosphere *3 responses*
- One-to-one sessions for evaluation and finance *2 responses*
- Good facilitation [except for time-keeping]
- The structured agenda
- The two day meeting format works well
- Overall management control by Possibilities NI is very effective
- Interactive approach to the meetings
- Good venue
- Having a round table
- Division of responsibilities of Work Packages between Partners
- Good relationships

Partners suggested ways in which Partner Meetings could be improved in the future:

- Keep to the agenda time scales [eat lunch on time / stick to times scheduled for breaks / time discipline to be kept to next time] *8 responses*
- The agenda is too long (possibly move more to the Steering Committee agenda] *3 responses*
- Activity scheduled *2 responses*
- Sending out some information in advance, for example the Newsletter, Project reports, and Stakeholder Forum reports [would cut down on discussion needed] *2 responses*
- Further discussion about the context for implementation of each partner and opportunities and challenges faced by each
- Further discussion of training material and its significance for the given context
- Q&A sessions could be quite productive . there is always a danger of not listening enough of what different partners are saying. Q&A sessions could do away with the temptation of one partner telling another what to do and how to do something without being in possession of all relevant information
- Less intense
- Project Coordinators to arrive a day before in time to prepare for the meeting with the host Partner
- Shorter working day

One Partner made an additional comment about how future Partner Meetings might be revised %the agenda was overloaded. The information shared was too much to make the best use of it at the meeting. Compounded with the evaluation forms it all became a little overwhelming. In the future it may be useful to consider handing out in advance a list of bullet points for each session so that the participants may have a clearer view of what to

expect from each session. It would then be easier for the participants to add any issues of their concern on that list to make sure that they are addressed in the course of the meeting+.

Seven Partners had additional comments to make about the Partner Meeting:

- A very positive and productive Meeting; enjoyed it very much
- Very well organised Meeting; a lot of communication and information about the Project and logistics; the accommodation worked well
- Very good meeting with a great deal to get through, which was challenging for all of us but we accomplished everything we set out to do
- Comfortable facilities, friendly atmosphere; congratulations and appreciation for the hosts
- Very well organised, good accommodation
- Very nice venue and nice hotel; we were well taken care of with dinners, sightseeing etc
- Well organised by the host Partner.

Follow up activity

Partners were asked what follow-up activity they will carry out after the Meeting. This is presented in the section later in the Evaluation Report on priorities.

Observation of the Partner Meeting

Observation by the external evaluator during the Partner Meeting highlights:

- Engagement of all Partners
- Affirmation of the good model of different Partners being responsible for one Work Package (with the Project Coordinator having responsibility for two Work Packages)
- Good use of Power Point accompanying presentations, as this enables those who do not have English as a first language to have a visual aid as well as the oral presentation.
- Well organised
- All Partners seemed to be willing and able to ask questions
- The benefits of inviting members of the host country's Stakeholder Forum to the meetings adds credibility and a European dimension to the Restart Programme in each Partner country; and provides the opportunity to exchange information, gaining a greater understanding of the challenges facing lone parents seeking employment
- Good venue, with the meeting and lunch taking place in the same hotel that Partners stayed in (especially beneficial as most Partners arrived the night before . and some in the early hours of the morning . Partners are to be commended on their stamina)

As noted by the Partners, the Agenda was very ambitious, and therefore very full. This Meeting probably had more detailed feedback (WP2, and WP3) and forward planning (WP5 and WP7) than others; with the added input from Gingerbread NI on finance, and the

external evaluator. Improved time keeping would help; in part this relies on Partners returning on time from the breaks and lunch. However, timekeeping is a considerable challenge for Coordinators, as it is important that every Partner feels that they have contributed when they wanted to; and some parts of the discussion need to be revisited in order to ensure actions and decisions have been understood by all. The Partners could be asked to more strictly observe the time agreed to return after lunch and breaks.

PRIORITIES

The clear Work Package schedule largely identifies the priorities for the Project over the next six months of the Project, before the next Partner Meeting:

- Finalise the Adaptation Report
- Circulation of the Research Report
- Preparation and submission of the Interim Report to the National Agency (which requires full reports from Partners)
- Prepare a summary of the Research Report in Partners' own language
- Completion of Work Package 4 . Translating the Restart Programme materials
- Development and delivery of Work Package 5 . Piloting the Restart Programme (including promotion and finding employers who will host work placements)
- Ongoing delivery of Work Package 7 . Dissemination; including circulating the first Newsletter, preparing the second Newsletter, and planning for the Dissemination Event
- Dedicated Restart website
- Hosting the second Meeting of the Stakeholders Forums in each country.

Partners were asked what follow up activity they would do as a result of the Partner Meeting. Their feedback is given below.

Developing the Pilot Programme

- Training Programme implementation *2 responses*
- Explore how to approach employers in the context of social responsibility
- Review the implementation plan for WP5 in light of possible future partnerships for delivering this kind of training

Case Studies

- Take pictures for the case study film
- Record footage
- Liaise with other Partners about the case study film
- Film production

Dissemination

- Chase up evidence of dissemination activities
- Check availability of venues for Dissemination Event
- Distribute Newsletter One to Partners
- Collect information for Newsletter Two
- Consider presentation to own organisation management team on the current position of the Project
- Send photographs of the Partner Meeting in Nicosia to Anniesland College for inclusion in the Newsletter or other dissemination material
- Send information for inclusion in Newsletter Two
- Planning for the Dissemination Event

- Continue with dissemination activity
- Develop dedicated website for the Project

Stakeholder Forums

- Identify different ways of bringing together stakeholders (rather than in one main formal meeting)
- Stakeholder Forum development

Project Management

- Submit information for the Interim Report for the National Agency *5 responses*
- Submit financial claims *5 responses*
- Amend Work Packages as discussed and agree with Partners
- Ensure all action points from the Partner Meeting in Nicosia are circulated and actioned

Translation

- Translation of the Research summary

General

- Project implementation in accordance with the time frame agreed
- Use received material as a basis for the next steps
- Preparation for the next work packages
- Send information agreed to Partners
- Organisation for the next Partner Meeting

COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mid-Term Evaluation Report provides an overview of the Restart Transfer of Innovation progress; presenting the Project process and activities. The Restart Project Work Packages are all on schedule; with some areas of work being completed ahead of schedule (for example the translation of the training materials) and other Work Packages being well planned for in advance of the timeframe. The Project Coordinators and Partners are to be commended for this; which demonstrates the expressed commitment and enthusiasm of the Project by the Partners.

The final section of the Mid-Term Evaluation briefly addresses the Restart Transfer of Innovation Project Work Packages; and offers some recommendations.

Work Package 1 – Project Management

From observation during the Partner Meeting in Nicosia, documentation review and Partner feedback it is evident that the Restart ToI Project is being efficiently and effectively managed. The structured approach is in evidence from the first Partner Meeting in Belfast, when the Project Coordinators produced a series of short documents . for example the Restart ToI Organisational Chard, the Communication Plan and the Commercialisation Strategy.

Providing scheduled one-to-one meetings with each Partner to discuss the National Agency financial requirements for the Interim Report (in line with Leonardo da Vinci financial regulations), and to provide clarification and guidance on any financial queries that the Partners have is an excellent example of good practice and a very pragmatic approach. Over the years it has been observed that EU funded projects may deliver excellent outcomes and outputs, but that partners have struggled with financial reporting; and as the Information required can change year upon year it is not necessarily something that can be learned from past experience. Partner feedback showed that they placed value on this opportunity.

It has been noted from Partner feedback that the Agendas tend to be very full for each Partner Meeting. Conversely, Partners report that all the items discussed during the Meetings are important and relevant at the particular stage in the Project. In addition, time is made at each Meeting for the Partners to meet with members of the host country Stakeholder Forum . which was rated very highly at both the Oslo and Nicosia Meetings. The attendance of stakeholders at the Partner meetings also adds credibility and raises the profile of the Restart Project for those present; as well as allowing them the opportunity to participate in a transnational exchange of ideas and experiences.

There are attempts to keep to the time schedules, but the Meetings do tend to slightly over-run. Some Partners have suggested that written reports providing an update from each

country are prepared beforehand; however this places an additional workload on Partners, especially as such reports would need to be prepared in English; and some Partners may not have the opportunity to read through all the documentation in advance. It may be that the Project Coordinators can issue a pro-forma or matrix to collect basic information in advance of the Meeting; which provides a starting point for discussion.

The use of presentations during the Meeting was very effective. Partners commented particularly on the value of presentations that included a question and answer format. It may be beneficial if copies of PowerPoint slides or other materials used during presentations are given to Partners at the start of each presentation.

The use of PowerPoint is particularly beneficial during transnational meetings, as this provides both a visual aid as well as the spoken presentation, which is often beneficial to those for whom English is not their first language. It is recommended that actions to be done and decisions made during each agenda item are written on the flipchart; which provides a summary of the discussion that is clear for everyone present. This should be done by Possibilities NI.

The Project Coordinators are to be commended for their regular communication with Partners in between the Partner Meetings (which helps to maintain the profile of the Project for Partners), and for their support provided to the Partners responsible for the different Work Packages. They have also been successful in achieving the balance of taking a formalised and structured approach to the management of the Project; whilst at the same time facilitating a relaxed environment during the Partner Meetings, such that all Partners feel able to contribute and participate.

Work Package 2 - Research

The Research Report, *Towards a shared understanding of the status of lone parents*, is a professional and high quality output from the Restart Project. Not only does it provide a useful basis from which to develop and promote the pilot of the Restart Programme in each country; but will also be a valuable source of reference for the Partners and others in the medium term future. It may also provide evidence to support future funding applications and initiatives for the future. Furthermore, Partners spoke of their hopes that the Restart Tol Project will have some impact at a policy and decision making level; the Research Report provides valuable data to support lobbying at a regional and national level.

Work Package 3 - Adaptation

The discussions about Adaptation highlighted that

- Italian and Cypriot approaches are similar . working outside the state, but making connections with the state systems.
- Norwegian and Polish approaches are both working within established structures.
- In Norway the state gives participants funding, which is a big incentive to engage.
- In Poland there is a ready made target group to promote the programme to; plus those recruited through the stakeholders external to the university.

The different backgrounds groups of lone parents that are being targeted for the pilot Restart Programme provide an added dimension to the Restart Project, as well as reflecting the different contexts within each country. It is essential that the full process of delivering the pilot is recorded (for example including formal and informal partnerships, promotion, course delivery, the work placements and the one-to-one sessions); and that the Project records not only good practice (what went well), but also the challenges and constraints encountered. Further future adaptation may be possible following on from these results (a different project or projects); for example targeting lone parents in further and higher education or targeting lone parents from migrant families.

Work Package 4 – Translation

Little has been included in the Mid-Term Evaluation Report about Work Package 4. This is largely because three of the Partners (NET, NOVA and WSINF) have already largely translated the Restart training materials; and the translation is in the planning stage at INDEX. The Project Partners are to be commended for working ahead of schedule. This not only demonstrates commitment to the Project; but also has ensured that those elements of the training materials that need additional research and adaptation (for example legislation relevant to the country and adapting some of the exercises to the cultural context of the country and target group) have been identified and can be completed before the pilot Programme starts.

Work Package 5 – Piloting the Adapted Restart Programme

WSINF presented the draft matrix for feedback and reporting on the development and delivery of the pilot Programme (Work Package 5). It was proposed that this matrix will be finalised for the Partner Meeting in Italy, due to take place in March. Some of the information that will be recorded includes the promotion of the Restart Programme, and the majority of the group based training will have been completed by March. Thus recording information will be taking place sometimes several months after the delivery of particular elements of the pilot programme.

It is recommended that the WSINF Feedback Pro-forma is made available (at least in draft format) to Partners from the start of the pilot Programme, which will enable Partners to

record information whilst it is fresh in their minds. Data provided for the Good Practice Report, to be collated, analysed and produced by NET, will allow Partners the opportunity to reflect on the pilot Programme; and consider what worked well, and where they came across challenges and constraints.

It is an important element of Work Package 5 that the Project captures the different processes and methods used by the Partners to deliver the Restart Programme.

Work Package 6 – Evaluation and Monitoring

Restart ToI appointed the external evaluator in April, allowing for a formative evaluation process. The Partners have been positive with regard to providing information and feedback for the external evaluator. It was very beneficial to the external evaluation that the evaluator attended the Partner Meeting in Nicosia.

The Baseline Evaluation Report, delivered in May 2011, allows for expectations and hopes for added value from the transnational partnership to be reviewed in both the Mid-Term Evaluation and End of Project Evaluation Reports. These Evaluation Reports will both present an overview of the Project process and activities. The ~~Mini-Evaluation Reports~~ delivered after the Partner Meetings in Oslo (delivered in June 2011), Italy and Poland will provide a brief update on activity, continuous monitoring of the Partner Meetings, and highlight any concerns expressed by Partners. They will show what worked well in each meeting, and improvements Partners think may be considered. However; it also needs to be remembered that each Partner Meeting will be different and evolve according to the stage at which the Project has reached.

It was agreed at the Nicosia Partner Meeting that all Partners delivering the Pilot Programmes will make use of the same evaluation questionnaires (translated into their national language) to be used with lone parents (at the start and end of the pilot Programme), trainers and members of the Stakeholder Forums. These will be collated by the external evaluator; and a short Report presenting the data will be delivered once all questionnaires have been received, collated and analysed (ie prior to the End of Project Report).

Internal monitoring is also ongoing; both in terms of financial reporting, and Partner activity reports. Prior to the National Agency visit to Belfast, the Project Coordinators sent out and received feedback to the monitoring visit questionnaire from all Partners. It is noted from the National Agency Monitoring Visit Report that the comments from the Partners were taken into account when monitoring the progress of the Restart ToI Project.

Work Package 7 – Dissemination

As noted in the Evaluation Report, Anniesland College has now become a Restart Partner, and CONECT is a sub-contractor. This has not caused any problems with regard to Project continuity as the CONECT representative at the Partner Meetings is also the representative from Anniesland College (a member of the CONECT Consortium).

The first Restart Newsletter has been compiled; the information was collated by NOVA following the Partner Meeting in Oslo and forwarded to Anniesland College. The fact that the Newsletter has not yet been circulated to Partners may be due in part to the changes in Project status of CONECT and Anniesland College; however it is essential that the Newsletter is sent to the Partners, and then sent onto their own contacts; before the information becomes outdated.

It was agreed at the Partner Meeting in Nicosia that all Newsletter information would now be sent directly to Anniesland College (rather than one of the Partners being an intermediary). The Partners also discussed the audience for the Newsletters; and agreed it would be representatives of organisations who have a stakehold in the needs of lone parents, political representatives and decision makers. The Newsletter is not aimed at lone parents.

Anniesland College is working on the preparations for the Dissemination Event to be held in November. The Project Coordinators are going to ascertain that the National Agency will agree to the Dissemination Event being held in Brussels (as there is no longer a Belgian Partner it is necessary to seek agreement to this).

When planning the Dissemination Event it is important that the Restart Project Partners give careful consideration to the aims and objectives. There are many EU funded projects, and a high proportion seek to hold dissemination events. However; experience has shown that an event that is simply disseminating the findings and results of a European Project does not necessarily attract a high number of people or a high calibre audience.

Conversely, those events that are held where information is given and further feedback sought from the event participants that will then be presented to policy and decision makers can work very effectively. The views and opinions of the participants can effectively be gained through small workshops where the same questions are discussed (requiring facilitators and rapporteurs, usually Project Partners). Another good practice approach used by Projects planning to commercialise the output (in this case the Restart Programme) is to provide evidence of need (the Research Report), evidence of the impact for beneficiaries (through the evaluation), and present small elements of the Programme, particularly if you want to sell the Programme to others.

It was agreed at the Partner Meeting in Nicosia that a dedicated Restart Project website will be developed. To gain maximum benefit for the Partners the website should include links to the Partner organisations; and Partner websites should promote a link to the Restart website.

The Project Partners are to be commended in addressing dissemination from the outset. The Stakeholder Forums offer a new approach to dissemination, which is very pro-actively engaging stakeholders.

APPENDIX ONE

PARTNERS ATTENDING THE RESTART PARTNER MEETING IN NICOSIA

Please can you supply the list of names (previously requested by email . but I imagine it has been a very busy week!).

APPENDIX TWO

OVERVIEW OF PARTNER PROPOSALS FOR ADAPTATION TO THE RESTART PROGRAMME

Italy

- The training programme will be delivered in Florence. The content of the Restart Handbook is relevant and appropriate and will be followed.
- The difference lies in that lone parents do not receive support or allowance from the government; and have an incentive to work. Changes proposed: frequency of evaluation forms to complete . propose to use them every 4 sessions rather than every session, as will be seen to be more valuable. See evaluation as a fundamental element.
- In play activities there are ~~æ~~culture boundqactivities and examples that will need to be changed to meet Italian culture.
- Programme schedule . 4 hours for each session, delivered two or three times a week. NET could start the training in November (as would need longer to deliver the programme) and can work within the financial payment. Would like to cover all content as relevant. (If there was additional funding then could deliver six to eight hours a day, but not possible economically without additional resources).
- Important to introduce the participants to the work placement gradually; in contact with employment centres to identify further barriers to work for the target group
- Challenge of the economic climate in Italy at the moment; which may impact on work placements
- Accreditation will be awarded by the Centre delivering the training course (recognised by the Government). NET are seeking accreditation for the Restart Programme by the Centre and included in the list of courses accredited by the region, showing skills acquired through the programme. The Centre has been approached and expressed interest, especially in the ~~æ~~empowerment methodologyq Participants completing the course receive a qualification (providing they meet the criteria).
- Intend to finalise programme by the end of October. The Restart Programme will start in mid-November: 10 weeks training, and then 9 weeks work placement. Intend to involve the participants in contacting the employer for their work placement.
- Intend that the work placement will comprise eight hours per day, per week (Monday to Thursday) and one session in the classroom on Friday. There are opportunities to seek funding for work placement / apprenticeships from the state for both the employer and the person on work placement; ie the employer is paid the salary that they pay to the person on work placement (six months maximum).
- Childcare . those approached so far do not have children under three years old if the programme is held in the morning (as the children are in pre-school from age 3 to 6 years, which they do not have to pay for). If there are parents of children under three they will seek a volunteer to provide childcare.
- Would like to use the money allocated in the budget to childcare to be able to reimburse the participants attending the programme (for example for travel tickets).

- There is funding in the budget to cover costs for participants to experience a work situation prior to the work placement (eg to cover childcare, travel or insurance costs), which may give participants greater confidence and an experience of working and what to expect prior to starting the formal work placement.
- Noted that it is important to include information about employers rights and difficulties and situations they might face (but the rules change frequently in Italy).

Norway

- Translated the learning material (except the case studies, Norwegian legislation); a few issues require clarification
- Starting to identify participants; there is a state agency who has responsibility for employment within municipalities. Focus on immigrants who are single parents (eg from Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka), who may already be on the NAV programme. It is expected that there will be participants from different cultures, with different levels of literacy etc
- Stakeholder meeting planned for early October
- Discussing learning materials with NAV
- Need to identify the programme coordinator
- Contacted some employers
- Will follow the Restart delivery schedule, structure and content . with the exception of taking into account the cultural sensitivities within the case studies and activities
- Childcare is a statutory right to all; so no issues regarding childcare
- Those attending the programme receive additional benefits
- One of the issues is the need for sensitivity to the cultural differences (for example within the activities, especially as it is anticipated that the majority of participants will be Muslim)
- Plan to adapt the exercises and activities to the types of jobs that the participants hope to move onto
- Other revisions to meet Norwegian context, for example different styles in writing a cv or completing an application form to the UK
- The Restart Programme will be included for accreditation within the NAV programme; with accreditation written and issued by NAV (the Partners will explore the precise nature of the qualification and its currency further with NAV)
- Following the pilot and evaluation the possibility for mainstreaming will be pursued; NAV is currently very interested
- Intend to start delivery of the nine week programme at the start of January; which is agreed with NAV
- State pays employers to take people into employment for a maximum of six months . similar issue as identified by Italian Partner, that many employers only keep people on whilst in receipt of the state subsidy
- Do not expect major language barriers as immigrants have to learn Norwegian (training provided through a special school)

- Work placements through kindergartens and retail; with opportunities for alternative work placements (through linkages with NAV).

Poland

- Academy of IT in Poland . ABC (the Academic Career Bureau, which has an internal and external body) links to the education and labour market sectors. New training programmes can be proposed and implemented, and receive qualification.
- Target group is students from different departments in the university. All students have graduated from secondary schools. The university awards third level / higher level education qualifications.
- Translated the Restart learning material. Trying to keep the general structure of the modules and include all core modules with the exception of include computer skills because all students receive this. Similarly all students receive ten plus hours about labour market, cv applications, interview skills etc. ABC also offer students additional help for students who have personal problems and issues. This is reflected in the adaptation of the materials. Some modules have been reduced in length because the students are ~~v~~ery quick and do not need such detail.
- Implementation . 13 days rather than 20 days, each day 5.5 hours or 6.5 hours (subject to content); 2 days for evaluation and organising the work placement period. Total 90 hours.
- Instead of work placement, propose an apprenticeship; which links into the student programme of 40 hours apprenticeship as part of their studies (40 hours at end of the first year, 60 hours at the end of second and third years). The university has ongoing contract with employers (some employers are paid, but students do not receive payment for that period). Ideally they will meet with the trainer at the end of the work placement to review and include any additional topics.
- Two days training per week, over 6 to 7 weeks; 1 to 2 weeks work placement; and one-to-one coaching for every participant approximately one hour a month for five months (total of six hours one-to-one coaching for each participant)
- Start recruitment in October; currently not aware of childcare requirements
- ABC will undertake the recruitment, and provide the work placement (one of ABC's roles within the university). The majority of participants will be students studying for third level qualifications, but some will come externally (referred through the stakeholder forum). After recruitment stage there will be an awareness of the level of all participants; and additional support can be provided if necessary.
- Would like to start the delivery of the Restart Programme in autumn.
- The work placement is significantly less than 36 days; and the programme delivery is also reduced in length. Noted that the students are at a higher level than other target groups, and homework assignments will be set between sessions. Delivery of the whole course, condensed to meet the target group, with the exception of IT skills and employability skills.

- Would like to propose the option to deliver an additional module in response to the question posed to students during the first session to meet need.

Cyprus

- Less contact time than in initial package . can start at 8 am, but finish at 12.30 to link in with the end of the school day; estimate this to be 45 minutes a day less than when piloted in Northern Ireland. This will be achieved by excluding some of the exercises. This allows each of the days to be self-contained.
- Adaptation more country specific and will respond to learning styles and needs of the participants (not exactly sure of the target group). The training needs analysis will be done at the start of the course; and adaptation will continue once there is a better understanding of need.
- Recruitment will happen with the two main municipalities in Nicosia, through NGOs, and through the media (eg feature in the Sunday Mail about lone parents, which will include details about the Restart meeting and the Restart programme; with a further article the following week about needs of single parents and the Restart programme). Participants will be interviewed by the Employment Service to see if they are eligible to be paid 100% and travel expenses (Possibilities NI used a similar approach).
- Representatives from different departments of the Labour Ministry are on the stakeholder forums.
- Employers can receive either 65% or 100% (if vulnerable target group) of salary for people on work placement for up to one year. Cannot say whether some or all participants will meet the 100% criteria.
- Plan to deliver as a full-time continuous programme in the mornings.
- INDEX will contact certain employers about work placement possibilities, especially those that INDEX aware have employed people from vulnerable target groups (including NGOs). There is the potential to explore links with Marks and Spencers in Cyprus (who have a positive programme for vulnerable target groups and social responsibility in Northern Ireland). Tying in with a large employer extends opportunities for employment for participants at the end of the work placement; potential to link to recruitment programme.
- Need to be aware that work placement may be difficult to achieve in the current economic climate. Corporate social responsibility in Cyprus is almost non-existent; and there may be a reluctance by employers to engage in the programme. Looking to secure placements.
- Potential to bring in speakers to speak with participants, with a focus on what they look for in employees.
- There is not a system in Cyprus to accredit training courses . intentions to start accrediting training centres in 2013. Possibilities NI is exploring whether accreditation through OCN or OCR could be extended to the Cyprus Restart Programme.