



The Institute for Restorative Justice

“We are the victims and survivors, not just the ‘parties to the procedure’; we are primarily human beings.” Jana Voždová, mother of a son who died in a car crash

Primarily, the criminal proceedings currently focus on punishing the perpetrator – and less on reforming him, while failing at meeting the needs of the victims. The existing system does not reflect the needs of those involved in the criminal proceedings, other people affected by the crime and the society as a whole. It does not address the consequences of the crime or its causes.

That is why in 2019 we founded the Institute for Restorative Justice where we strive to meet the needs of victims, take an active stance on accountability of the offender, to create a safe space for dialogue and to involve all those whose lives had been affected by the crime. The principles of respect, reintegration and dialogue are an essential part of our understanding of justice.

“Asking for forgiveness is to accept responsibility.” perpetrator of a serious offence

“I have accepted the apology. I cannot forgive – but there is no need for me to hate.” father of a murdered son

How we develop restorative justice in the Czech Republic

We build our activities on three pillars:

Systemic change

- While working on our project Restorative Justice: Strategies for Change, we created, based on a two-year dialogue with criminal justice experts, the Strategy of Restorative Justice for the CR and presented it at an online conference *Czechia restoratively 2021*. We are happy that restorative justice has been mentioned in the programme statement of the new government: “We shall start to promote the restorative justice concept more, following the Strategy of Restorative Justice for the CR.”

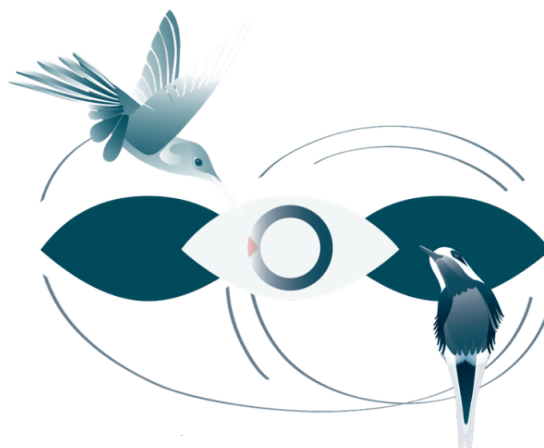
- At the end of September 2021, we launched the activities of the Restorative platform – the bodies involved include, for example, the Supreme Court, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Police Presidium of the CR, the Czech Bar Association, Ministry of Justice, the Prison Service of the CR, Probation and Mediation Service and many non-governmental bodies. The two-year project will result in a Handbook of Restorative Practices for the CR.

Development of restorative programmes

- In cooperation with our partners from Belgium and Finland, we are preparing a pilot programme of mediation for serious criminal offences.
- We are preparing the methodology, training of mediator, study trips abroad and testing for this programme.

Awareness building and education

- We are launching a campaign titled #zOčídoOčí (#EyestoEyes) which will be aimed at general public and will address problem solving through dialogue. Through interviews with people from various fields, we are placing restorative justice into a broader social context.
- We are screening the Finnish documentary Eye to Eye across the Czech Republic and consequently hold discussions with interesting guests.
- We are preparing a book with ten stories of victims, offenders and their families and plan to follow it up with an exhibition.
- We translated the Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes to be used by specialists – an essential UN handbook for the professional public which presents the use of restorative programmes.



European Cooperation

- We support the idea of incorporating restorative justice into the agenda of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU and we cooperate on the preparation of the accompanying activities.
- Petra Masopust Šachová, the Chair of our Institute, is also the member of the Committee of the European Forum for Restorative Justice where she participates in the policy-making activities (incorporating the restorative justice into the EU legislation).
- Within the EFRJ, she also coordinates a working group on Gender-Based Violence.

Sources

Check some videos dealing with restorative justice.

- Who is afraid of Peter Woolf? – At tumultuous times of his life, Peter Woolf spent a few years in prison. Find out in 10 minutes how restorative justice changed the lives of Peter and Will Riley. Listen to the powerful testimonies of the direct actors of violence, find out about their surprising findings and views.



- Restorative Justice in Cases of Sexual Violence – Here, Ailbhe Griffith, a victim of rape for which the offender was sentenced to nine years of prison, shares her restorative justice experience.





Who is behind the project?



Petra Masopust Šachová, Ph.D., the Institute founder, first heard of restorative justice when studying at the Faculty of Law of the Charles University in Prague. The topic fascinated her to a point where she dedicated both her rigorous and doctoral thesis to it. After having learned from Howard Zehr, the founder of restorative justice in the USA, she decided to actively promote it also in the Czech Republic.

In addition to working for the Institute, she currently also works as the Department of Criminal Law of Palackého University in Olomouc where she founded and teaches Restorative Approaches in Crime Solving; she also teaches at the Faculty of Law of Masaryk University in Brno, at the Police Academy and Justice Academy. In 2021, she became an Ashoka Fellow for social innovators who support systemic changes. She is the member of working group on penal policy established by Government Council for Human rights. She coordinates the national group within the European project [Restorative Justice: Strategies for Change](#). She is the member of a [Committee of the European Forum for Restorative Justice](#) and a coordinator of a working group on restorative justice and gender-based violence, as well as a member of the [Salzburg Global Seminar Working Group on Reducing Violence, Crime and Incarceration](#).

Tereza Řeháková holds the office of the Director of Programmes of the Institute for Restorative Justice. She has been working with victims and crime perpetrators for over 15 years. She has cooperated on projects which bring restorative principles into the prison system and with organizations helping crime victims.

