

RESTORATIVE CITIES CONFERENCE

RCE2026

Book of Abstracts

ENGLISH EDITION

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RCE2026 - Restorative Cities Conference

This Book of Abstracts brings together the summaries of presentations delivered by invited speakers and the Pécs research team at RCE2026.

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Conference opening addresses and presentation abstracts in programme order.

WELCOME

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Welcome Address by the Dean | 3 |
| | Ágoston Mohay, Dean, University of Pécs Faculty of Law | |
| 2 | Welcome from the Organisers | 4 |
| | Csongor Herke and Barbara Katalin Herke-Fábos | |

ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

ONLINE

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Marian Liebmann | 5 |
| | Restorative Bristol - Opportunities and Challenges in Building a Restorative City. | |
| 2 | Federica Maggio | 6 |
| | Tempio Pausania: fostering relational and restorative communities. | |
| 3 | Emma Wheatley | 7 |
| | Dublin's North East Inner City as a Community-Led Restorative City in Practice. | |
| 4 | Ivo Aertsen | 8 |
| | Restorative Cities: Moving towards Transformative Communities. | |

IN-PERSON PRESENTATIONS

IN PERSON

- | | | |
|---|--|----|
| 5 | Cristina Vasilescu - Bruna Dighera | 9 |
| | L'Innominato Lecco Restorative City. | |
| 6 | Vidia Negrea - Katalin Lajos | 10 |
| | Wounds of the Past, Promise of the Future: Systemic Transformation from Classrooms to Community in Miercurea Ciuc. | |
| 7 | Csongor Herke - Barbara Katalin Herke-Fábos | 11 |
| | Comparing European Models of Restorative Cities and the Institutional Preconditions in Pécs | |

Welcome Address by the Dean



Ágoston Mohay

Dean

University of Pécs
Faculty of Law

It is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all participants of the international conference Restorative Cities in Europe, held at the Faculty of Law of the University of Pécs.

The conference addresses questions that concern not only law and the administration of justice, but also the everyday functioning of local communities. One of the starting points of the restorative approach is that, in addressing conflicts, the involvement of those affected, dialogue, and the restoration of existing relationships can all play an important role. Today, it seems particularly valuable to reflect together on the possibilities and practical experiences of this approach, drawing on European examples.

The law establishes rules and sets boundaries; at the same time, a modern, people-centred system of justice should also strive to contribute to strengthening social trust and community relationships. In this respect, the restorative approach offers a new perspective.

I hope that the presentations and professional discussions at the conference will not only provide new knowledge and inspiration, but will also lay the foundations for concrete collaborations and new initiatives. I am pleased that the Faculty of Law of the University of Pécs can serve as one of the organisers of this scholarly gathering.

I wish all participants a stimulating exchange of ideas and fruitful discussions!

“The restorative approach offers a new perspective for strengthening social trust and community relationships.”

Welcome from the Organisers

**Csongor Herke**

Professor, Head of Department,
Head of the Doctoral School

**Barbara Katalin Herke-Fábos**

Assistant Professor

Dear Authors, Speakers and Participants!

It is with great pleasure and warmth that we welcome you to the pages of the Book of Abstracts of the Restorative Cities in Europe - RCE2026 conference.

When the idea of organising this conference first took shape, we wanted to create a meeting point in Pécs where experiences from different countries, cities, professions and institutions could connect. For us, the idea of a restorative city means far more than a new professional concept. It represents an approach built on dialogue, responsibility, the restoration of relationships and, above all, the strength of communities.

In cities across Europe, numerous initiatives in recent years have demonstrated that the restorative approach is not limited to criminal justice or mediation. It can be present in schools, child protection, social care, urban communities, the management of neighbourhood conflicts, reintegration and inter-institutional cooperation. We see one of the greatest strengths of the restorative city precisely in its capacity to create a common language among actors who often work separately for the same communities.

We therefore intend RCE2026 to be more than a presentation of existing good practices. We would like Pécs to learn from these experiences and for this encounter to become a starting point for new collaborations, new questions and new initiatives. We are convinced that a city cannot become restorative through a single decision or programme. It is a long-term process requiring institutions, professionals and methods, as well as trust, personal relationships and a genuine willingness to listen to one another.

The Book of Abstracts reflects this richness and diversity. Authors from different countries and professional backgrounds present their experiences, research and ideas on how our communities can become more inclusive, more cooperative and more restorative in the way they address conflict.

We owe special thanks to all speakers and authors who have contributed their knowledge and experience to the conference, as well as to everyone joining this shared reflection in person or online.

We hope that this volume will be more than a record of the conference and will continue to inspire those who believe that the quality of a city is determined not only by its buildings, institutions and infrastructure, but also by how people live together, how they deal with conflicts and how they restore relationships when those relationships are damaged.

We hope that our meeting in Pécs will mark the beginning of new connections, shared ideas and future collaborations.

We warmly welcome you to Pécs!

Csongor Herke**Barbara Katalin Herke-Fábos**

Organisers of the Restorative Cities in Europe - RCE2026
conference

ABSTRACT 01

ONLINE

Marian Liebmann

RJ Practitioner and Trainer, Resolve West

Restorative Bristol - Opportunities and Challenges in Building a Restorative City.**ABSTRACT**

This presentation follows the history of efforts to establish Bristol, UK as a Restorative City. From 2007 many initiatives took place, leading to a decision to form a Restorative Bristol Board, with backing from the City Council. This in turn led to more workshops and conferences bringing people and projects together. A project officer was appointed for two years, and a website developed. However, this promising start was undermined by Covid-19, when meetings ceased, and many Council staff were made redundant or redeployed. After Covid the City Council acknowledged the positive steps taken, but withdrew from any further involvement. Many restorative projects still exist in the city, but without a coordinating philosophy. The presentation will chart this journey and outline the factors leading to its rise and decline - and which will be needed to restart a Restorative City.

ABSTRACT 02

ONLINE

Federica Maggio

PhD student, Università degli Studi di Sassari

Tempio Pausania: fostering relational and restorative communities.**ABSTRACT**

This presentation traces the long-lasting history of Tempio Pausania as a pioneer restorative city in Sardinia, Italy. Led by the Restorative Justice Practices Team at the University of Sassari, this journey started from a social conflict in Nuchis and evolved into a permanent cultural shift. Particular attention will be devoted to the use of circles as the core methodological tool for fostering dialogue, strengthening relationships, and promoting social cohesion within the local community.

ABSTRACT 03

ONLINE

Emma Wheatley

Restorative Practice Coordinator, Early Learning Initiative, National College of Ireland

Dublin's North East Inner City as a Community-Led Restorative City in Practice.**ABSTRACT**

Dublin's North East Inner City offers a compelling example of how a city can begin to become restorative not through designation alone, but through sustained relationship-building across education, community, youth work, family support, statutory services and local leadership. The area has long held significant community strengths, but has also experienced complex urban challenges including intergenerational disadvantage, educational inequality, drug-related harm, organised crime, community trauma, intimidation, social fragmentation and mistrust between residents and institutions. The presentation will explore the origins, aims and evolution of the North East Inner City restorative practice project, including its early focus on developing a local restorative practitioners and its later growth into a more integrated system of training, mentoring, organisational development and community learning. Evidence gathered through community action research suggests that restorative practice has improved participants' confidence in building relationships and managing conflict, while also indicating stronger outcomes where implementation is embedded across whole organisations rather than limited to individual training.

ABSTRACT 04

ONLINE

Ivo Aertsen

KU Leuven Institute of Criminology

Restorative Cities: Moving towards Transformative Communities.**ABSTRACT**

This presentation will start from some of the achievements and challenges of restorative justice and will argue how the construction of a restorative city can offer the final link for an effective implementation. Leuven Restorative City will be discussed as a case where a broad network was created involving citizens and organisations in concrete activities. Whereas in a first phase spaces were provided for non-judgmental dialogue on sensitive topics, a second phase aims at developing citizens' capacities to participate in democratic decision making processes.

ABSTRACT 05

IN PERSON

Cristina Vasilescu - Bruna Dighera

Cristina Vasilescu: Policy&evaluator/Consultant, Associazione Comunità il Gabbiano/freelance

Bruna Dighera: psychologist and restorative mediator, L'Innominato Lecco Restorative City

L'Innominato Lecco Restorative City.**ABSTRACT**

Drawing on the experiences of two Italian restorative cities, Lecco and Como, the presentation reflects on the practices and conditions through which restorative cities can enhance democracy on the ground. Both Lecco and Como emerged bottom-up from civil-society actors and are coordinated through informal intermediary bodies rather than formalised municipal structures, extending restorative justice beyond the criminal courts into schools, neighbourhoods, associative life and creating the skills for exercising democracy in practice. The presentation will explore some of the practices (e.g. creation of intermediary bodies in Lecco and Como, RestoCovidCircles & Restoreading circles in Lecco) that can contribute to enhancing democratic values and principles.

ABSTRACT 06

IN PERSON

Vidia Negrea - Katalin Lajos

Vidia Negrea: senior restorative trainer and facilitator, independent professional

Katalin Lajos: Assistant Lecturer, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Department of Human Sciences

Wounds of the Past, Promise of the Future: Systemic Transformation from Classrooms to Community in Miercurea Ciuc.**ABSTRACT**

The Ceaușescu dictatorship left an enduring legacy of systemic mistrust and authoritarianism in Romania. Decades later, this historical burden persists as transgenerational trauma, frequently manifesting in today's classrooms through student isolation, conflict, and mental health challenges. Driven by a collective desire for healing and community well-being, this presentation explores the ongoing transformation of Miercurea Ciuc (Csíkszereda) into a future restorative city. The session focuses on how the shared commitment of dedicated university staff, school counsellors, engaged schools, and the local municipality serves as a pivotal agent of change. By replacing punitive discipline with trauma-informed restorative practices, these stakeholders dismantle rigid educational hierarchies, enhance conflict resolution skills, and model a supportive community culture that gradually extends into the wider city. The university dimension of this process is explored through the emerging restorative approach and practices at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania. Trained and committed professionals, existing professional networks, and previous restorative experiences can be seen as the "seeds" of an emerging restorative community, although these initiatives have not yet developed into a coordinated institutional or city-level system. By linking school-based frameworks, university engagement, and city-level administrative support, the presentation explores how individual restorative practices and existing partnerships can gradually develop into a more sustainable institutional and community culture. The experience of Miercurea Ciuc thus offers a scalable model for breaking the cycle of historical pain and mistrust, while highlighting the potential role of a small university in connecting individuals, institutions, and community initiatives and, ultimately, cultivating a resilient, democratic, and restorative urban environment.

ABSTRACT 07

IN PERSON

Csongor Herke - Barbara Katalin Herke-Fábos

PTE ÁJK - PTE ÁJK

Comparing European Models of Restorative Cities and the Institutional Preconditions in Pécs**ABSTRACT**

Restorative cities across Europe have developed through different organisational pathways shaped by local institutional, social and political conditions. This presentation compares the experiences of Leuven, Como, Lecco, Tempio Pausania and Bristol with the institutional conditions in Pécs in order to identify locally adaptable solutions. The findings show that Pécs already has considerable professional expertise, restorative practices and inter-institutional cooperation, but these remain fragmented and lack a common organisational and methodological framework. The presentation therefore proposes a municipality-supported but professionally autonomous network model built on a common restorative charter, strategic coordination, a paid network coordinator, thematic working groups and accessible referral points. Rather than adopting a foreign model, Pécs should gradually develop its own restorative city framework by integrating existing local capacities into a shared professional and value-based system.