



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

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study is to compare the operational patterns of European restorative city models with the institutional conditions in Pécs, and to outline an organisational model that can be applied locally.

Methodology: The research applies a functional-dimensional comparison based on the experiences of Leuven, Como, Lecco, Tempio Pausania, and Bristol, drawing on relevant literature, professional study visits, and the minutes of a professional roundtable discussion held in Pécs.

Findings: Pécs possesses significant professional capacities and restorative practices; however, it currently lacks unified coordination, a common methodological framework, a public access point, and inter-institutional case management.

Value: The study proposes a municipally supported, professionally autonomous model for Pécs based on a network structure. This model combines a restorative charter, strategic governance, a paid coordinator, thematic working groups, and multi-channel (in-person, telephone, and digital) access points.

Keywords: restorative city, inter-institutional cooperation, community participation, Pécs

Introduction and Methodology

On 26 June 2026, a roundtable discussion entitled ‘A Restorative City at the Foot of the Mecsek: Possibilities for the Implementation of the Restorative

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City Model’ was held at the Faculty of Law of the University of Pécs within the framework of the research project of the same title (University of Pécs, Faculty of Law, 2026). The meeting was introduced by a presentation on the operation of restorative cities in Europe (Herke-Fábos, 2026).

The aim of the professional dialogue was not to adopt a ready-made model but to explore which existing institutional and community practices in Pécs could be developed in a restorative direction, in the management of which conflicts a dialogue-based approach could be applied, and what conditions are necessary for launching the initiative and establishing a common language.

A restorative city interprets the city not merely as a collection of institutions and services but as a network of relationships, communities, and shared values (Arévalo Vásquez & Gorjón Gómez, 2025). Therefore, the quality of urban life is also determined by how the community responds to harm, loss of trust, and social tensions (Hanley, 2025). At the centre of the restorative approach are the direct participation of those concerned, the identification of their needs, the assumption of responsibility, dialogue, the reparation of harm, and the restoration of relationships (Aertsen, 2023). In a city operating according to restorative principles, a common professional language and a framework for cooperation are developed that connect municipal, judicial, law enforcement, social, child protection, educational, civil, and community actors (horizontal dimension).

The ‘restorative climate’ of Pécs provides a favourable environment for developing its own model based on local characteristics while interpreting European experience as a model. In a previous study, the authors examined the general feasibility of implementing the concept in the city of Pécs (Herke-Fábos & Herke, 2026). Unlike that study, the present analysis focuses on the comparative evaluation of institutional resources. Consequently, the adaptation for Pécs does not mean the simple adoption of a foreign model but the gradual development of a system tailored to local resources and needs.

The study applies a functional-dimensional comparison. The experiences of Leuven, Como, Lecco, Tempio Pausania and Bristol (European Forum for Restorative Justice [EFRJ], 2023) are not presented as separate ‘model examples’, but are compared with the situation in Pécs along six operational dimensions: political and organisational embeddedness, coordination and governance, public accessibility, methodological toolkit, inter-institutional cooperation, and community participation. The analysis begins with European operational patterns, then identifies the strengths and deficiencies of Pécs, and finally formulates institutional conclusions. The empirical basis of the study consists of the exploration of the European examples – based on the conclusions of professional study visits and the comparison of the relevant literature – and the minutes of the Pécs roundtable discussion.

Political and Organisational Embeddedness

Based on the European examples examined, it can be concluded that committed professionals and network actors play a decisive role in the initiation and maintenance of restorative city initiatives. However, in addition to methodological quality, the sustainability of operation also requires social and political support, integration into local public policy, an appropriate organisational framework, and predictable human and financial resources. According to the experience of Leuven, a viable model must establish a balance between the legitimacy provided by the municipality and the professional autonomy of the horizontal dimension (Aertsen & Devriendt, 2024).

According to the findings of the comparative analysis, European restorative cities do not follow a uniform organisational form. Leuven established a formalised nonprofit network with municipal policy and financial support while preserving its professional autonomy. In Como, the looser cooperation between public institutions and civil society organisations became embedded in territorial social planning, and thus the restorative approach became part of the existing social policy, child protection, community development, and justice system. The open, informal, and voluntary network of Lecco demonstrates that sustainable operation may also develop without a separate legal entity if relationships are stable, local commitment and responsibility are strong, and cooperation is regular. In Tempio Pausania, the partnership between the municipality, the prison, and the University of Sassari created the organisational basis. Bristol, by contrast, demonstrates that initial political support and the continuation of individual services are not sufficient: if the common umbrella structure and coordination weaken, the city's restorative identity and coordinated operation may also disintegrate.

Based on the experience of the professional roundtable discussion, restorative or restorative-related practices are already operating in Pécs outside the framework of the criminal justice system, particularly in the fields of child protection and education. Actors of the horizontal dimension already strive for interdisciplinary cooperation. The starting point can therefore be identified as the stage preceding formalisation. The initiative originates from the university environment and, based on the initial experience, enjoys the support of the city's decision-making bodies. If political commitment is secured, defining the organisational framework will require the development of the structural and organisational rules governing operation. In the absence of such arrangements, there is a risk that the initiative will remain merely a collection of research projects, conferences, and individual pilot programmes.

For this reason, a municipally supported, professionally autonomous, and ‘light’ network structure would be appropriate for Pécs. The municipality could provide political legitimacy, integrate the initiative into the local policy framework, ensure the basic resources, and promote the city’s visibility. The methodological minimum standards and the professional content of the individual programmes, however, should be determined by an autonomous network, thereby ensuring its professional independence. The University of Pécs, as a neutral knowledge centre, could provide research, training, methodological support, evaluation, and international networking without assuming the statutory responsibilities of the municipality or sectoral institutions.

The first step towards formalisation does not necessarily require the establishment of a separate legal entity. Similar to the Declaration of Commitment adopted in Leuven (Leuven Restorative City, 2022), it would be advisable in Pécs to adopt a short common restorative charter defining the core values of the network and the framework for membership. The ‘zeroth step’ of the joint work could be a restorative circle involving the participating institutions, during which the partners identify their own needs, available capacities, overlaps, and service gaps. This would simultaneously prepare the charter and establish a genuine participatory basis for the network. The detailed institutional arrangements, however, should be regulated in a separate framework cooperation agreement, while the rules governing data management and case management should be laid down in accompanying professional protocols. This conclusion leads to the questions addressed in the next dimension.

Governance and Coordination

In the concept-based operation of a restorative city, governance refers to the determination of common objectives, priorities, and decision-making mechanisms, whereas coordination refers to day-to-day communication, the flow of information, the appropriate referral of cases, and the alignment of programmes. The two functions are closely related but are not identical.

The Leuven model clearly illustrates the institutional separation of governance and operational coordination. Strategic directions are determined by a governing body composed of representatives from several sectors, whereas the continuous organisation of implementation is entrusted to a separate, remunerated network coordinator. Leuven’s multilevel system connects a general assembly, a strategic board, management, thematic working groups, and a network coordinator (Van Cleynenbreugel, 2019). The coordination infrastructure does not decide

individual cases; rather, it maintains relationships, organises forums, monitors joint programmes, and ensures that problems are referred to the appropriate actor. Como connects inter-municipal, strategic, operational, and community levels, thereby complementing central governance with local contact points that are capable of identifying community needs. The more flexible and informal coordination applied in Lecco is based on strong community participation but may become dependent on particular individuals and therefore vulnerable. In Tempio Pausania, the university provides methodological linkage, whereas Bristol demonstrates that a strategic governing body alone, without permanent and dedicated coordination, is not necessarily capable of maintaining a coherent city-wide system.

One of the most consistent conclusions of the Pécs roundtable discussion was that the primary deficiency is not the lack of good practices but rather the lack of their organisation into a transparent system. Based on the governance and coordination models presented above, a coordination structure with clear responsibilities but a light organisational framework could be established in Pécs. The authors identify the Leuven model as the primary reference, while noting that certain elements – particularly the public access point and the monitoring of individual cases referred between institutions – may already be regarded as a further development of the Leuven model. A strategic steering committee could determine the city's objectives, adopt the annual action plan, and evaluate pilot programmes. Its members would include representatives of the municipality, the University of Pécs, the justice system, law enforcement, social services, child protection, education, and civil society organisations. A paid network coordinator would ensure the continuity of day-to-day operation, organise consultations, support a public access point available in person, by telephone, or digitally, which would listen to those concerned, provide information, and refer them to the appropriate service provider, and would also monitor the progress of cases referred between institutions. Thematic working groups could address, for example, issues relating to schools, child protection, victim support, neighbourhood conflicts, and reintegration.

The operation of the network requires an inter-institutional case referral protocol. This protocol should define the conditions for referral, the available entry points, the conditions for involving another institution, the provision of information to the parties concerned and their consent, the categories of data that may be transferred, the guarantees of voluntariness and self-determination, and the procedures for follow-up and feedback. The purpose of coordination is not to establish a new administrative authority but to harmonise existing competences and, subject to the city's available resources, to maintain a service centre

(hereinafter: the Centre). Consequently, the key question concerning the operation of the Centre is how simple public access, referral to the appropriate service provider, and the monitoring and follow-up of cases can be ensured for residents.

Public Accessibility and Case Referral

The social value of a restorative service is determined not only by its professional quality but also by its actual accessibility. In many cases, residents do not know where they can turn to have their conflicts addressed if they do not wish to resolve them through traditional formal procedures. The selection of the appropriate conflict resolution method is not the responsibility of residents. It cannot be expected that those concerned have prior knowledge of the institutional system. Therefore, the network should not be organised around professional concepts but around life situations, and should assist clients by identifying the conflict situation (needs), providing appropriate information, and determining the client pathway.

The accessible, life situation-based digital information provided by Leuven, the neighbourhood-, school-, library-, and social service-based access points established in Como, the institutional and community presence in Lecco, and the centralised and decentralised pathways developed in Tempio Pausania represent different but mutually compatible solutions. The experience of Bristol, however, demonstrates that even where several high-quality service providers exist, the system may become difficult to navigate in the absence of a unified entry point, clear information, and active case referral.

Participants in the roundtable discussion highlighted the importance of the professional cooperation between the police and the Pécs Victim Support Centre in reaching victims. Following the transfer of information by the police, the Centre proactively contacts victims and carries out a needs assessment. This reduces the risk that victims fail to access support because of a lack of information, overload, or distrust. In terms of its content, the needs assessment is also closely related to the restorative approach, since it examines not only legal and financial assistance but also the impact of the harm, the needs of the person concerned, and the forms of reparation that are meaningful for that person.

Need-based support may, however, be required not only in connection with the criminal justice system but also in family law and child protection conflicts. Consequently, the needs assessment, information, and case referral functions of the Centre may operate within a comprehensive range of services. Professional consultations, restorative circles, and community dialogues could also

be connected to the Centre. In the longer term, consideration should be given to enabling the Centre to provide conflict resolution services on the basis of referrals. In that case, the Centre would not merely constitute a publicly accessible service but would also function as a designated service location where conflict resolution professionals assist clients following referral. This could be complemented, following the example of Leuven, by a digital pathway-selection website (Leuven Restorative City, n.d.) and telephone access. Educational institutions and civil society organisations should also play an important role in facilitating access to the service centre.

Methodological Toolkit and Professional Capacity

The methodological toolkit of a restorative city is not limited to mediation applicable in criminal and minor offence cases. The European examples include mediation, restorative circles, family group conferences, facilitated dialogue, peer mediation, narrative and artistic methods, community events, restorative meals, and visual participatory techniques. Leuven illustrates the integration of mediation, circles, and dialogue; Como applies storytelling and artistic methods; Lecco demonstrates informal community-based methods; while Tempio Pausania provides examples of creative forms of encounter between the prison and the city. A common characteristic of all these models is that the method is adapted to the particular conflict, the participants involved, and the community context.

A similarly broad methodological toolkit is available in Pécs. The experience of the professional roundtable discussion, however, demonstrated that the various sectors apply different terminology and operate within different professional frameworks. Even in comparison with other regions of Hungary, the number of criminal cases referred to mediation is outstanding. The favourable proportion of successful mediations in Baranya County is also attributable to the supportive approach of the prosecution service and the professional cooperation established with mediators. This statistical indicator was confirmed by the experience shared during the roundtable discussion by a criminal mediator, who presented a successful restorative circle conducted in response to a community conflict and shared experiences relating to the management of a school conflict.

In family conflicts and child protection, the methods applied include contact mediation, walking mediation, and family group conferences. Walking mediation provides a less formal environment, while the family group conference involves the wider support network and enables solutions to emerge through the participation of the family rather than exclusively through expert decision-making.

In the educational context, the proactive circle serves community-building and prevention, the inclusion circle promotes integration, and the restorative circle facilitates the processing of harm that has already occurred. These methods may be particularly useful in addressing school bullying, social exclusion, and conflicts between parents and schools. The functions of circles applied in educational settings can also be distinguished on the basis of the systematic review conducted by researchers at the University of Sassari. Analysing 34 school-based studies, Lodi et al. (2022) concluded that circles are among the most frequently applied restorative practices and may serve relationship-building, conflict prevention, and the processing of harm that has already occurred. Community-building and dialogue circles promote mutual understanding, the development of trust, the improvement of communication and emotional skills, and create opportunities for the proactive management of conflicts. Their inclusive function is reflected in strengthening students' sense of belonging to the class community, promoting respect for diversity and the participation of marginalised students, and improving relationships among students, teachers, families, and the wider community. By contrast, restorative circles are applied to address specific behavioural problems, conflicts, and harmful incidents, to identify the needs of those concerned, and to restore damaged relationships. Reported outcomes include reductions in bullying and victimisation, lower levels of social exclusion, a more inclusive school climate, and improved cooperation between schools and families. These findings support the conclusion that proactive, inclusion, and restorative circles may be applied in different situations, while complementing one another in addressing bullying, exclusion, and conflicts between schools and families (Lodi et al., 2022).

The practice of the Victim Support Centre in Pécs in conducting needs assessments does not in every case constitute a multi-party restorative procedure; however, it is an important preparatory tool because it starts from the victim's experience, needs, and safety. The reparation work carried out by the correctional institution consists of voluntary, unpaid activities that are beneficial to the community. In itself, however, community work is not necessarily restorative. At the same time, restoration is also present within prison walls in the form of mediation between prisoners and Family Group Conferences organised for persons preparing for release (Mitrovics, 2022).

A similar distinction is required with regard to creative prosecutorial behavioural measures. An apology made before the school community, the exploration of the meaning of a damaged symbol, or a restorative activity related to the harm caused may facilitate the understanding of the consequences. However, they can only be regarded as fully restorative if the safe and voluntary participation

of the victim and other affected persons, together with the consideration of their needs, is also ensured. The same applies to conflict management and aggression management training programmes: in themselves they are developmental or preventive programmes, while their restorative significance is strengthened when they are connected to a specific harm and to a restoration plan.

The child-centred and trauma-informed practice of the Interview and Therapy Centre places primary emphasis on physical and emotional safety, crisis intervention, the appropriate involvement of family members, and restoring the child's sense of control (Herke et al., 2025). Although not every interview is restorative, because of the primacy of dignity, needs, and self-determination, trauma-informed practice should become a safeguard for all processes involving children or other vulnerable persons. The Police Café, the Roma Café, and other facilitated forums may also build relationships and trust between authorities, institutions, and communities in a preventive manner.

Therefore, not every dialogue, training programme, community work activity, or alternative measure is restorative. A process may be regarded as restorative where the following criteria are fulfilled simultaneously: the method applied focuses on the harm and its consequences; participation is voluntary; participants are informed about the process; the safety of those involved is guaranteed; there is an opportunity to express needs; space is provided for taking responsibility; those concerned are involved in the process of developing the solution; the process seeks to restore relationships and community safety; it is facilitated by a properly trained and impartial facilitator who is able to manage power imbalances; safeguards aimed at avoiding traumatisation and retraumatisation are applied; and respect for human dignity prevails throughout the entire process. In the absence of these requirements, a given intervention – even if it contains community-based, dialogical, or reparative elements – cannot necessarily be regarded as a restorative process (Patrizi, 2020).

The principal shortcoming in Pécs is not the lack of available methods, but rather their fragmentation and the differences in their interpretation. There is a need for a common methodological minimum standard that clearly distinguishes restorative, alternative, and merely reparative measures; regulates the conditions for their application, voluntariness, the qualifications of facilitators, the protection of vulnerable participants, risk assessment, data management, the follow-up of agreements, and quality assurance. Regular joint training, intervention, and case discussions may create methodological interoperability and establish a common professional language.

Inter-institutional Cooperation and a Common Language

A significant proportion of urban conflicts involve more than one sector. For example, school bullying may constitute an educational, child protection, family, and even criminal law issue; neighbourhood conflicts may involve law enforcement, local government, and victim support services; while the reintegration of prisoners may simultaneously represent a judicial, social, family, employment, and community issue. The functioning of a restorative city therefore depends on whether institutions are familiar with each other's instruments, whether they are able to establish contact in a timely manner, actively refer cases, and develop joint solutions.

The European models apply different forms of cooperation. Leuven is based on formalised membership, joint decision-making forums, and working groups. Como integrates relationships into the existing territorial social and civil system with strong support from the justice system. Lecco operates an open network consisting of the municipality, service providers, active residents, and community actors. In Tempio Pausania, the university, the correctional institution, the municipality, and schools are connected through joint research, training, and community programmes. Bristol demonstrates that bilateral and project-based cooperation, in the absence of a common identity and coordination, does not necessarily constitute an integrated city-wide system.

Pécs' strength lies in recognising the potential inherent in interprofessional relationships. The cooperation between the police and the Victim Support Centre ensures proactive outreach and needs assessment. The professional relationship between the prosecution service and criminal mediators facilitates the identification of cases suitable for mediation and the provision of information to the parties concerned. The Regional Child Protection Specialist Service (hereinafter: TEGYESZ) applies mediation in contact arrangements, while the cooperation of TEGYESZ with the police and psychiatric services prepares the management of complex situations involving trauma or mental health problems. The Crime Prevention Council, the police, and local government forums connect public safety with urban planning and community-related issues. Cooperation between the University of Pécs, educational stakeholders, and schools provides a basis for training programmes and school pilot projects.

The problem is not the absence of relationships, but rather their sectoral nature and the fact that they are predominantly bilateral or trilateral. Individual good practices may operate in isolation; several organisations may respond in parallel to the same problem, while other cases may become stalled between the boundaries of institutional competences, and residents are unable to gain an overview

of the assistance available to them. The functioning of the system frequently depends on personal professional relationships, without uniform data collection or organisational feedback. Consequently, Pécs is currently characterised more by a dense network of relationships than by a unified city-wide network. Naturally, the professional network of relationships constitutes the foundation of the city-wide network; however, its operation should be governed by a document establishing the integrated cooperation of institutions (a common charter) and by the rules of the case referral protocol.

The next step should therefore be the institutional and methodological mapping of the existing forms of cooperation. It is necessary to identify which organisations encounter which types of conflicts, which methods they apply, with whom they cooperate, which cases they refer, where overlaps and gaps exist, and what their training and resource needs are. The common charter and the case referral protocol may then be developed on this basis.

Alongside the network as a whole, thematic working groups may be organised around school conflicts, child protection and family matters, neighbourhood disputes, victim support and criminal justice, correctional reparation and reintegration, abuse against older persons, and the use of urban space. Within this system, the University of Pécs may function as a neutral network facilitator: it may prepare the methodological map, organise training programmes and inter-institutional circles, evaluate pilot projects, develop indicators, maintain international partnerships, and involve students and researchers.

Community Participation and Urban Identity

A restorative city cannot be derived solely from inter-institutional cooperation. The model becomes genuinely urban when residents, communities, and civil society organisations are not merely recipients of services, but also participants in identifying needs, developing solutions, and evaluating the functioning of the system. Providing information is necessary, but it is not in itself equivalent to participation. Genuine participation exists where those concerned have a meaningful opportunity to express their views, make proposals, contribute to decision-making or work processes, and receive feedback.

A good illustration of the absence of genuine participation was the public forum organised in Balokány Park in Pécs in July 2026 concerning a planned development project, to which local residents were invited (Pécsi Köz, 2026). During the public forum, participants were informed, through a moderated discussion, about the idea and possibilities for the renewal of the public space and

were given an opportunity to make comments. In a community planning process based on restorative principles, however, residents would not merely become acquainted with and comment on an already developed plan; instead, they would be given a genuine opportunity to develop alternatives, make proposals, participate in planning and decision-making processes, and receive feedback on which of their observations had been incorporated into the final decision, in what manner, and for what reasons. Two dimensions of participation should be distinguished. The first concerns the processing of an individual conflict (micro level), in which the persons affected by the harm and, where appropriate, the wider community participate. The second concerns the social shaping of the urban model (meso level), namely the involvement of residents in determining priorities, programmes, and evaluation criteria. In both cases, participation requires voluntariness, appropriate information, a safe framework, and the conscious management of power imbalances. Leuven provides a recognisable urban framework through its common charter, network membership, volunteering, and public programmes. Como embeds participation in the everyday local environment through neighbourhood dialogues and community bodies. In Lecco, citizens participate as co-designers of several programmes, thereby strengthening the sense of belonging to the community. In Tempio Pausania, prison-city circles create encounters between groups that rarely come into direct contact in everyday life. By contrast, Bristol demonstrates that, when the common umbrella weakens, a coherent urban identity may disappear even if individual services continue to operate. Sustainable participation therefore requires recurring forums, clearly defined values, participatory decision-making points, and visible feedback. Several antecedents mentioned during the professional dialogue may provide a sound basis for strengthening community participation. The Police Café (Police.hu, 2022), the Roma Café, and district consultation forums make it possible for the police, the local government, professionals, and local communities to meet not exclusively within the framework of official procedures but also to identify problems jointly. With appropriate facilitation, broader public involvement, and regular feedback, these forums may become permanent elements of urban dialogue.

Through its practice based on local issues, local resources, and philanthropy, the Pécs Community Foundation is well suited to act as an intermediary between institutions and informal communities. By means of community grant schemes, local network-building, and support for residents' own initiatives, it may contribute to ensuring that the model does not become exclusively a top-down institutional project (Pécsi Közösségi Alapítvány, n.d.). The peacemaking circle presented by the criminal mediator likewise illustrates that, in cases

involving harm to community identity, representatives of the local community may make a meaningful contribution to interpreting the harm and determining the content of reparation. At the same time, the involvement of the wider community must always be adapted to the nature of the case, while avoiding shaming and disproportionate social pressure.

Schools constitute particularly important settings for participation. Restorative values conveyed to children may also appear within family dynamics. The joint development of rules, practices related to the Peaceful Schools Programme, and the formulation of children's rights guidelines become fully restorative only if, alongside teachers, children and – depending on the nature of the issue – parents are also given a meaningful role appropriate to the particular conflict. The involvement of children cannot be merely formal: they must be provided with age-appropriate information, preparation, a safe opportunity to express their views, and feedback.

The participatory value of reparation and community work programmes may also be enhanced. The beneficiary community may be involved in determining the needs and the objectives of reparation, in preparing participants, and in the joint evaluation of the outcomes. In this way, the process becomes not merely a work activity but also a community event that supports the understanding of the harm, the assumption of responsibility, and the restoration of relationships.

A regularly operating facilitated urban dialogue programme may also be incorporated into the Pécs model. Neighbourhood conflicts, night-time noise, the use of urban space, school safety, abuse against older persons, homelessness, reintegration, or the social impacts of urban development decisions may all be addressed within such forums. Dialogue does not replace official or municipal decision-making; however, it enables the identification of needs and consequences, as well as the joint preparation of implementable solutions.

The sense of attachment to the city and of shared responsibility is strengthened when residents perceive the actual consequences of their participation. This does not mean transferring public responsibilities to the community: the legal responsibilities of public authorities and institutions remain unchanged. The essence of a restorative urban identity is that conflicts are understood as urban issues that can be addressed collectively within an appropriate framework.

The development of urban identity forms part of a broader process in which planning may also play a role. A good example is provided by Tempio Pausania, where, alongside the prison–city dialogue circles, a 'restorative lunch' was organised in 2014. Bringing together prisoners, local residents, students, representatives of the university and the justice system, and municipal leaders around the same table simultaneously transcended the physical, social, and

symbolic boundaries between the prison and the city. The event enabled participants to meet not as members of separate institutional or social groups but as members of the same local community. In this way, the restorative lunch was not merely a relationship-building event; it also broadened the concept of the urban community, thereby transforming the reintegration of prisoners from an internal task of the correctional system into a shared urban responsibility. This example demonstrates that a restorative urban identity is built not only on shared values but also on encounters and shared experiences that break down the boundaries between institutions and social groups, strengthen the sense of belonging, and create shared responsibility for all members of the community (Maggio et al., 2025).

The Institutional and Operational Model for Pécs and Conclusions

Based on the examination of European restorative cities, the institutional and methodological conditions in Pécs provide an appropriate foundation for the development of such a model. The necessary professional capacities and a restorative climate conducive to further development are already present in the city. Rather than adopting any foreign model in its entirety, what is required is the combination of proven solutions adapted to local conditions. From Leuven, the municipality-supported yet professionally autonomous network and professional coordination may be adopted; from Como, the integration of the social, community, and justice systems; from Lecco, the lightweight, open, and voluntary mode of operation; from Tempio Pausania, the university's methodological bridging role and the prison-city dialogue; and from Bristol, the city-wide umbrella model based on broad institutional and community partnerships.

On the basis of these experiences, a municipality-supported, professionally autonomous, and gradually developing network may be established in Pécs. Its principal elements would include a common city charter and action plan, a strategic steering committee connecting multiple sectors, a paid network coordinator, thematic working groups, and personal and digital entry points for residents. The operation of the network could be supported by case referral and methodological protocols, joint training programmes, case discussions, urban forums, and the research, educational, and evaluation capacities of the University of Pécs.

Implementation should begin with the joint identification of institutional needs, capacities, and competence boundaries. This may be followed by the preparation of an institutional and methodological map, the adoption of the charter, the

governance structure, and the responsibilities of the coordinator, and subsequently by the launch of several well-defined pilot programmes in the fields of school conflict management, victim support, neighbourhood disputes, or correctional reparation. Public access points and community forums may then be developed gradually on the basis of the experience gained from these programmes. In addition to the number of cases, evaluation should also encompass accessibility, safety, satisfaction, inter-institutional cooperation, and community trust.

Pécs is not yet an institutionalised restorative city; however, it has a realistic opportunity to develop its own model based on European experience. The key to achieving this is not the creation of a large new organisation, but rather the integration of existing capacities into a common professional and value-based framework, the simplification of access to assistance, and the long-term involvement of residents in shaping urban conflicts and their solutions.

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Statements

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest have been declared.

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Ethics statement

The data will be made available upon request.

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