

21-28 November 2021

## INTERNATIONAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK

***During this week, the Ararteko wishes to highlight that restorative justice allows both the offender or aggressor and the injured party or victim of any type of crime or conflict to be reintegrated in society as social assets, while engaging society in the rehabilitation and reintegration.***

Restorative Justice Week is celebrated around the world during the third week of November. The theme of this year's week is *Protect and Empower the Person Harmed*. This international movement was founded in Canada in 1996 and is coordinated in Europe by the [European Forum for Restorative Justice](#), the leading international entity, with whom the Ararteko has been working closely in recent years.

Restorative justice is a new approach of criminal justice, where the parties and society take on the leading role of the dispute. Its proven success has led to its now being used in other conflicts affecting all or part of society, including family (separations and divorces), multicultural, neighbourhood and community disputes.

Restorative justice has made significant headway in Europe and internationally in the last 20 years. The latest milestones have been the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)8 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning restorative justice in criminal matters](#) and the [UN Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes](#).

The Ararteko has been involved in fostering restorative justice in the Basque Country within that international framework and has adopted it as one of the institution's strategic work lines. The Ararteko is promoting this alternative system to handle disputes, which includes techniques such as mediation, restorative circles and conferences. The commitment is such that the Ararteko as an institution has conducted a restorative circle. It was a successful trail-blazing action internationally and the Ararteko will provide feedback in a publication being prepared in that regard.

In this vein, in 2019, the Ararteko submitted [The Practice of Mediation in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country](#) extraordinary report to the Basque Parliament. The report aims to establish a clear map of the state of mediation in the Basque Country and make a series of recommendations that will help it to be implemented in our autonomous community.

In the current context of the prison management transfer to the Basque Government, the Ararteko believes that restorative justice is a fundamental contribution for a prison system that is open to society and aimed at rehabilitation, humane penalties and upholding the rights of the victims. Therefore, the Ararteko has actively taken part in meetings and seminars with the heads of the incipient

Basque prison system in order to drive that restorative approach in accordance with international parameters.

During this week, the Ararteko wishes to stress that restorative justice allows both the offender or aggressor and the injured party or victim of any type of crime or conflict to be reintegrated in society as social assets, while engaging society in their rehabilitation and reintegration in a responsible, inclusive and democratic manner. Restorative justice fosters a series of values that are even more necessary in the time of a pandemic, as are dialogue, participation, justice, truth, solidarity, human dignity and accountability.

Finally, the Ararteko wants to stress that restorative justice should be a further option for the victims who so desire it in societies such as ours that have suffered the scourge of terrorist violence. Involvement in restorative justice schemes means the utter rejection of violence by those who have used it and is, therefore, a lesson in peace for society as a whole. The Ararteko therefore believes that giving it momentum may be for value for the remembrance and coexistence policies that are so necessary in the Basque Country. That is particularly true for the new generations of young people, as building a shared narrative guarantees that such heinous crimes are never again justified or committed.

Vitoria-Gasteiz, 22 November 2021