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Title: **RESTORE: From Wrongful Conviction to Reintegration**

Acronym: **RESTORE**

Summary

Wrongful convictions are among the most serious failures of criminal justice, yet Europe lacks the infrastructure needed to learn from them systematically. Exonerations, the rare moments when such errors are formally corrected, are documented unevenly, depend on different national review mechanisms and are often followed by limited organised support. Legal, psychological and policy expertise exists but is fragmented across countries and disciplines.

RESTORE will build a pan-European network that follows the pathway from wrongful conviction to exoneration, reintegration and institutional learning, connecting perspectives that are usually studied separately. Four Working Groups will: (1) harmonise how exonerations are defined, coded and compared through a European Exoneration Codebook; (2) coordinate a comparative mapping of safeguards, review mechanisms and redress arrangements that prevent, detect and correct wrongful convictions, forming the basis for a transparent Wrongful Conviction Index; (3) bring together European evidence on life after exoneration and co-create a Reintegration Resource Guide with exonerees; and (4) synthesise evidence on how justice systems respond to error and translate lessons into policy, training and education.

The Action connects academics, innocence organisations, legal and forensic professionals, policymakers, communication professionals and exonerees. Training Schools and Short-Term Scientific Missions will support shared approaches to documenting exonerations, comparing legal safeguards and strengthening reintegration support across Europe. An Exoneree Advisory Group helps shape priorities, outputs and activities through lived experience.

By its end, RESTORE will have established a coordinated European network and infrastructure for exoneration documentation, comparative learning, stakeholder collaboration and capacity building, enabling sustained European cooperation beyond the Action.

Key Expertise needed for evaluation

Law
Criminal law
Psychology
Social psychology
Sociology
Social structure, inequalities, social mobility, social exclusion, income distribution, poverty
Law
International law
Political Science
International studies, strategic studies, human rights, global and transnational governance

Keywords
Wrongful Convictions
Exoneration
Innocence Organisations
Criminal Justice Reform
Reintegration

TECHNICAL ANNEX

1. EXCELLENCE IN S&T AND NETWORKING

A. Main challenge

Wrongful convictions represent a significant but under-recognised challenge for European criminal justice systems. Every wrongful conviction harms an innocent person, affects victims, families and communities, may leave the real perpetrator free to commit further offences, and can undermine public confidence in legal institutions. Exonerations, the formal recognition that a wrongful conviction occurred, are rare. Yet these cases provide a unique opportunity to understand how criminal justice errors arise, are detected and corrected, and what happens to those affected afterwards. The knowledge generated through exonerations, however, sits in separate places: national registries, courts, innocence organisations, research groups and the experience of exonerees themselves, and is rarely brought together. As a result, Europe lacks the capacity to compare experiences systematically, accumulate evidence across countries, and translate lessons from individual cases into broader institutional learning.

Europe does not lack committed experts and initiatives. What is missing is the connecting infrastructure: shared definitions, comparable data, and channels through which legal, forensic, psychological and policy knowledge and lived experience can meet across borders. This matters because European and international standards require compensation in defined circumstances after a wrongful conviction (Article 14(6) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR; and, in states that have ratified it, Article 3 of Protocol No. 7 to the European Convention on Human Rights, ECHR) and require European Union (EU) Member States to safeguard the presumption of innocence (Directive (EU) 2016/343). In practice, however, whether an error is identified, and whether a person is supported afterwards, depends largely on the country in which it occurred.

The timing matters. The launch of a public European Registry in 2024 creates a window of opportunity: Europe now has an empirical starting point for comparison (see 1.C), while its definitions of exoneration, coding practices and documentation networks are still sufficiently young to be shaped into a shared framework rather than becoming fixed in incompatible national approaches. At the same time, growing European attention to review mechanisms, compensation and post-exoneration needs creates an opportunity to connect documentation with institutional and societal learning from the outset. Acting now can therefore prevent methodological fragmentation before it becomes entrenched. Delay has a cost: cases remain undocumented, opportunities for comparison are lost, lessons stay confined to individual jurisdictions, and victims, families and the public continue to wait for answers about crimes whose real perpetrators were never held to account.

The absence of a coordinated European infrastructure creates four interconnected challenges.

Challenge 1: Understanding Exonerations. Europe does not yet have a sufficiently harmonised shared evidence base on exonerations. Registries and documentation initiatives differ in definitions, inclusion criteria and coverage, so cross-national comparison is difficult. Some count only cases in which innocence is formally declared, others also acquittals on retrial for lack of evidence; some include pardons, dismissals without a finding of innocence or partial acquittals, others do not; and national compensation thresholds follow yet another logic. In several countries it is unclear whether few recorded exonerations reflect few wrongful convictions or gaps in documentation. Documented exonerations are a minimum figure, not a measure of how many wrongful convictions occur. Without a common codebook, documented cases cannot be compared, and gaps in documentation remain invisible.

Challenge 2: Securing Justice. Access to exoneration is uneven. Jurisdictions differ in safeguards during investigation and trial, review mechanisms, evidentiary requirements, legal assistance, evidence preservation, post-conviction procedures and redress, so access to justice often depends on where a wrongful conviction occurs. Europe lacks a systematic understanding of which institutional arrangements prevent wrongful convictions or facilitate their detection, review and correction, and a transparent way to describe and compare them.

Challenge 3: Restoring Lives. Exoneration ends a wrongful conviction but not its consequences. Knowledge about life after exoneration is fragmented and comes largely from Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Exonerees often face difficulties with housing, employment, healthcare, finances, relationships, and psychological recovery, frequently outside existing support systems. Less visible consequences, such as grief, isolation, identity reconstruction and institutionalisation, remain poorly understood. Support is largely ad hoc, if available at all, and depends on a handful of civil-society organisations; resources for exonerees and their support networks, where they exist, have not been adapted to European systems. Exonerees are rarely partners in research and policy. In line with the principle of *Nothing About Us Without Us*, RESTORE will ensure their meaningful participation.

Challenge 4: Promoting Reform. Exonerations reveal recurring vulnerabilities, including false confessions, investigative bias, disclosure failures and unreliable forensic evidence, yet lessons remain confined to individual cases, organisations or jurisdictions. Similar mistakes may therefore recur elsewhere. Europe lacks a coordinated approach to compare wrongful conviction cases across countries, identify common causes and translate lessons learned into policy, training and education. Knowledge produced by wrongful-conviction cases rarely travels beyond the jurisdiction, profession or organisation in which it originated.

RESTORE addresses each challenge in one coordinated European framework, connecting data, expertise, lived experience and practice across jurisdictions. In this way, it will strengthen Europe's ability to understand exonerations, improve access to justice, support reintegration and promote evidence-informed reform.



Figure 1

B. Objectives

RESTORE pursues four Research Coordination Objectives (RCOs), each responding to one of the four challenges in 1.A, and four Capacity Building Objectives (CBOs). The RCOs are delivered through four Working Groups (WG1-WG4, see 3.A). As a COST Action, RESTORE does not fund primary research. Case identification, data collection and country-level analysis are carried out by participants through their own institutions and other funding. RESTORE coordinates the shared methods, comparative frameworks, mobility, synthesis and knowledge exchange that make these independently resourced activities comparable at European level. Because the RCOs depend on coordination rather than on any single funding stream, they remain achievable even where national funding varies.

Research Coordination Objectives

RCO1: Understanding Exonerations. RESTORE will build a shared basis for documenting exonerations across Europe, starting with a structured, multi-round expert consensus process on how exoneration is defined (including legal and factual innocence) and on inclusion criteria. The Codebook of the European Registry of Exonerations (the Registry) will be the starting point; it will be revised through a Delphi consensus process open to all relevant registries, organisations and experts, and applied in coordinated coding, so that documentation across Europe, including the Registry (about 150 documented cases from 20 countries according to its public figures), can build on a shared method. Because documented cases reflect both underlying cases and documentation effort, progress is measured by coverage, comparability and completeness, not by case numbers. RESTORE will assess how complete documentation is in each participating country, so that effort goes where information is missing.

Targets: consensus definition by month 8; Codebook v1.0 by month 12 and v2.0, including post-exoneration variables from WG3, by month 30; by month 36, cases coded with the Codebook by trained national coders (with double-coding of a reliability sample) in at least 20 COST Member Countries, including at least five countries where documentation is newly started because they are not yet represented in the Registry; a documentation-completeness assessment for every participating country (systematic, partial or unknown); an annual public documentation overview (coverage, comparability, completeness).

RCO2: Securing Justice. RESTORE will coordinate the comparative mapping of the legal and institutional safeguards that prevent wrongful convictions before judgments become final and enable their correction afterwards. These cover criminal investigation, trial, appeal and forensic evidence, as well as reopening, access to evidence and redress. Together, they shape what has been described as the innocence gap (cf. Garrett et al., 2021): the distance between wrongful convictions that occur and those that are corrected. Currently, no shared European framework exists for describing and comparing these safeguards.

RESTORE will bring participants from different legal systems together to agree on a common framework, the Wrongful Conviction Index (the Index). The Index is a set of indicators of the legal safeguards and redress mechanisms that prevent and correct wrongful convictions, and of gaps in them; it is not a measure of how many wrongful convictions occur. Through expert consultation, workshops and Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs), the network will test whether the indicators work across common-law and civil-law traditions, agree on how they are scored, and adapt and translate shared tools for use in each country, including a questionnaire for practitioners.

Participants apply the framework in their own countries with national or other funding; RESTORE provides the shared method, comparison and peer support, so that results become comparable at European level. The framework, the scoring method and the shared tools are RESTORE's own deliverables and do not depend on external funding. Country applications add coverage, and data-completeness flags make any gaps in coverage visible.

Index results will be reported across eight pillars. Before finality: investigation and interrogation; disclosure and evidence preservation; trial and forensic evidence; appeal and legal assistance. After finality: review and reopening; post-conviction access to evidence; compensation; acknowledgement and reintegration support. Results will be shown by pillar and in tiers, with the scoring method fixed and published before any country is scored. An overall country score will be published only if sensitivity analysis supports it, by Management Committee (MC) decision (see D11). The Index will start in Europe and is designed for extension to other regions.

Targets: country profiles on the law as written for at least 10 countries by month 12 and at least 15 by month 24, plus international comparators; indicators and shared scoring method agreed by at least 10 experts from at least six countries by month 24; practitioner questionnaire adapted and translated for at least three countries by month 30; Index applied by participants in at least eight countries (law as written) and at least three (practice) by month 36; a documented set of promising practices from different legal systems; findings prepared for United Nations (UN) or European human-rights processes by month 48, where suitable opportunities arise.

RCO3: Restoring Lives. RESTORE will strengthen European understanding of the consequences of wrongful conviction and the conditions for recovery and reintegration. It connects academics, exonerees, support organisations and professionals to compare experiences, needs and support arrangements across legal and welfare systems, covering psychological wellbeing, housing, employment, healthcare, finances, relationships and less visible consequences such as grief, isolation and institutionalisation. As many exonerees wish to move on, participation will be voluntary and flexible, with low-burden options (advisory role, review of outputs, anonymous input). In line with *Nothing About Us Without Us*, exonerees will help set priorities, interpret findings and co-create a European Reintegration Resource Guide (the Guide). Where relevant, the comparative work will also consider the consequences of wrongful conviction for original victims of the underlying offence, including renewed uncertainty, loss of resolution and the implications of learning that the wrong person was convicted.

Targets: an Exoneree Advisory Group with at least five members by month 6 and at least eight by month 12 (aiming for 10; recruited through innocence and support organisations) from at least five countries; a comparative overview of needs and support arrangements across at least 10 countries; a Guide reviewed by exonerees and used in the training of at least 15 support organisations or professionals in at least five countries.

RCO4: Promoting Reform. RESTORE will strengthen the exchange between academics, legal professionals, policymakers and other stakeholders so that lessons from exonerations can improve criminal justice systems. The network will bring together evidence on how countries respond to wrongful convictions, whether this leads to changes in investigative practice, legal procedure, training or policy, and what prevents change. From Year 1, it will map actors, barriers and entry points for reform, in particular who decides on training and guidance in judicial, police and professional bodies. It will translate findings from the other objectives into practical resources, including a white paper for decision-makers and a podcast series recorded at a participating university, bringing together researchers, practitioners and exonerees. Journalists, educators and documentary makers can build on these resources; where documentaries are made, production is externally funded, while the Action provides content, exoneree review and distribution.

Targets: one white paper; four policy briefs; at least six podcast episodes recorded using existing university facilities or in collaboration with established podcasts; an open teaching package of at least four modules (see 3.B, T4.3 and D13), piloted at no fewer than five universities in at least four countries; at least four public engagement events with stakeholder discussion, in at least four countries including at least one Inclusiveness Target Country (ITC; at least two documentary screenings and at least two events with artists and exonerees, such as an exhibition or performance); at least five policy or professional institutions (e.g. judicial training bodies, professional associations, review bodies) taking part in policy roundtables; at least two structured exchanges with European institutions (e.g. the Council of Europe, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Judicial Training Network) by month 36; and a comparative inventory of institutional learning and reform in at least 10 countries.

Capacity Building Objectives

CBO1: Build a European Community on Wrongful Convictions and Exoneration. RESTORE will grow from its initial network (1.E) into a focused, active community, prioritising active contribution over size.

Targets: an active network of at least 70 participants by month 24 and approximately 100 by month 48, including participants from at least 28 COST Member Countries by month 24, with growth guided by identified geographical, disciplinary and stakeholder gaps rather than participant numbers alone; at least two follow-up funding applications (e.g. to Horizon Europe, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme or the Justice Programme) by month 48.

CBO2: Strengthen Emerging National Infrastructures. RESTORE will link local academics and organisations with expertise from across the network through shared methods, peer learning and mobility, so that emerging innocence and documentation efforts can build on tested methods from the start and contribute their own contexts.

Targets: at least 16 STSMs, prioritising exchanges between established and emerging contexts; in at least five countries where documentation is newly started, selected on the basis of current under-representation in the Registry (RCO1) and network capacity to support new documentation efforts, a national contact group by month 24, and, by month 30, a country profile and a short roadmap for starting documentation.

CBO3: Develop the Next Generation of Academics and Practitioners. RESTORE will support Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs) and practitioners through two Training Schools, mentoring, STSMs and a dedicated forum, and give them real responsibility in comparative research, case documentation and outputs.

Targets: two Training Schools of about 25–30 participants each; at least eight YRI-led outputs; a YRI involved in each WG task; YRIs holding at least two of the eight WG Leader and Co-Leader positions.

CBO4: Embed Lived Experience and Stakeholder Participation. RESTORE will embed lived experience and stakeholder expertise in governance, research coordination, capacity building and dissemination.

Targets: an Exoneree Advisory Group reporting to the Core Group (the Action's leadership team, see 3.A); a participation protocol by month 6 covering informed consent, voluntary and flexible participation, the right to withdraw, access to support, and ethical representation of lived experience; exoneree review of all WG3 and WG4 public outputs that describe or draw on exonerees' experiences.

C. State-of-the-art

Research on wrongful convictions has grown over three decades and has identified recurring contributors such as false confessions, eyewitness misidentification, investigative bias, disclosure failures and unreliable forensic evidence (Garrett, 2011). Exoneration cases have been central to this work, but the evidence base is largely North American. In Europe, research and practice are organised mostly within national jurisdictions and comparative European studies remain scarce (Nan et al., 2020; Schneider et al., 2026), which limits comparison and knowledge exchange.

Understanding Exonerations. Registries have shown the value of recording exonerations systematically; the US National Registry of Exonerations has produced detailed evidence on their characteristics and causes. In Europe, the Registry, launched in 2024, lists about 150 cases. A first descriptive analysis (Schneider et al., 2026) identifies false confessions and false accusation or perjury as leading contributing factors, with DNA evidence playing a role in only a minority of cases, in line with North American findings. A Spanish study using a broader definition focuses on case numbers (Sánchez et al., 2025) and shows how definitional choices change what is counted. Yet registries do not by themselves ensure comparability. Definitions, inclusion criteria and coding practices differ, and documentation depends on national recording practices, language barriers and the efforts of academics, journalists and innocence organisations. Even a clear definition (factual innocence declared, acquittal, dismissal, pardon) must be applied across systems where retrials, partial acquittals and compensation thresholds work differently. Without a harmonised framework, it remains impossible to tell whether few recorded exonerations in a country reflect few errors or little documentation.

Securing Justice. Research on the mechanisms through which wrongful convictions are challenged and corrected covers innocence organisations, review bodies, post-conviction procedures and appellate remedies (see Robins, 2023). In Europe, review bodies of the Criminal Cases Review Commission type exist in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in Scotland and in Norway, and an advisory committee operates in the Netherlands (Advisory Committee on Closed Criminal Cases, ACAS); elsewhere review runs through reopening procedures in the ordinary courts, with differing thresholds. The ICCPR (Art. 14(6)) and, in ratifying states, Protocol No. 7 to the ECHR (Art. 3) require compensation after a wrongful conviction, but national implementation differs in what triggers it (Jasiński & Kremens, 2023), and factual innocence, legal recognition, judicial acknowledgement and access to remedies are related but distinct. Safeguards that prevent wrongful convictions and those that correct them, including redress, are usually studied separately and within single jurisdictions. Little is therefore known, particularly in Europe, about how they work together and which institutional structures and procedures help prevent wrongful convictions or make exonerations possible. A low number of exonerations in a country does not necessarily mean that few wrongful convictions occur; it may also mean that the system lacks effective mechanisms to identify and correct them.

Restoring Lives. Research on life after exoneration documents enduring consequences for psychological and physical wellbeing, identity, relationships, employment, finances and trust in institutions (Brooks & Greenberg, 2021; Growns et al., 2024; Kukucka et al., 2022; Sorochinski, 2025; Umamaheswar, 2023). Stigma and exclusion may persist long after the legal case is resolved (Estes, 2023); legal and social exoneration differ, as formal vindication does not necessarily restore reputation (Scherr et al., 2020); and compensation research stresses acknowledgement, apology and procedural justice (Madrigal & Norris, 2022). This evidence comes mainly from the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. European studies are scarce, mostly country-specific and regularly published in the national language; they address compensation and rehabilitation law, as in Germany (Hoffmann & Leuschner, 2017), or case analysis (Sánchez et al., 2024, 2025), rather than life after exoneration. Practical conditions of reintegration (housing, healthcare, identity documents, financial services, employment) and less visible challenges such as loneliness, grief, digital adaptation after long imprisonment and ageing need systematic attention across welfare and legal systems, and exonerees have rarely been partners in comparative research. Without comparative European evidence on post-exoneration needs and support arrangements, services and policymakers must rely on North American findings that may not fit European welfare and legal systems.

Promoting Reform. Research has clarified weaknesses in investigation, interviewing, forensic evidence and post-conviction review, but identifying an error does not automatically lead to institutional learning. Work in Germany on what wrongful convictions mean for expert assessment and sentencing (Rettenberger & Leuschner, 2025) illustrates a link to professional practice that remains rare in Europe. Little is known about why some cases prompt change and others do not, or about the role of professional cultures and incentives. Communication through journalism, documentary and education can make wrongful convictions visible, but is no substitute for institutional change. Learning from error presupposes that errors are documented, understood and compared; while these steps remain fragmented, institutions cannot learn from wrongful convictions systematically, and the same weaknesses can recur unnoticed in different countries.

Existing Networks and Initiatives. A review of the COST database found no Action dedicated to the comparative documentation of exonerations and of life after exoneration in Europe. The Global Innocence Network provides casework and advocacy, and the US National Registry of Exonerations (NRE) documents North-American cases, but these efforts focus on individual cases and North America. RESTORE does not take on casework; it builds on these initiatives and seeks to engage relevant organisations, registries and networks that are not yet participating while strengthening collaboration with those already represented. No existing European initiative is known to combine systematic documentation, institutional comparison, stakeholder participation and post-exoneration reintegration within a single framework.

Advancing the State of the Art. RESTORE advances the state of the art by treating four fields as one pathway. Documentation moves from registries with differing definitions to a consensus definition, a versioned Codebook and a coordinated picture of what is documented and how completely. Research on review moves from single-country studies to a comparative view of prevention, correction and redress, supported by a shared Index. Research on life after exoneration moves from North American studies treating exonerees as subjects to comparative European evidence in which exonerees help set priorities. Work on reform and institutional learning starts in Year 1, not only after the evidence is complete. Methods are chosen for comparability across legal systems: multi-round expert consensus, standardised coding with inter-coder reliability testing, comparative synthesis of country reports, shared scoring and practitioner questionnaires, and trauma-informed co-creation with exonerees. Each strand builds on existing foundations and delivers value on its own, so that a delay in one does not stop the others. Taken together, these advances shift the field from isolated national studies and disconnected initiatives towards a cumulative, comparative and participatory European evidence base. The methodological innovation is therefore inseparable from the networking innovation. Shared definitions and methods cannot simply be transferred from one country to another; they need to be tested and refined by participants working in different legal systems, professions and documentation practices. RESTORE uses this diversity as a resource for developing robust European methods.

D. Rationale for choosing networking

Exonerations are rare events within any single jurisdiction, while legal frameworks, review mechanisms, compensation arrangements, innocence organisations and post-exoneration support differ widely across Europe. No single country offers enough variation to answer the comparative questions raised by the four challenges in 1.A, and much relevant knowledge is embedded in national case files, legal sources, professional practice and publications in national languages, making collaboration with local experts essential.

Achieving these goals requires close collaboration between academics, practitioners and organisations across Europe. A COST Action provides the framework to bring together expertise from different countries, coordinate activities and develop shared approaches that individual research projects cannot achieve. Four tasks depend on such coordination. First, comparative documentation requires agreement on what counts as an exoneration across legal systems. How to classify retrials, pardons, wrongful imprisonment without full acquittal or different forms of judicial recognition of innocence cannot be settled by one team; it needs an ongoing consensus process that stays open to new participating countries and refines definitions as experience accumulates. Second, comparing legal safeguards depends on expertise from within each jurisdiction and on practitioners who know how they work in practice, so indicators must be agreed, adapted and applied by participants with direct knowledge of national systems. Third, understanding life after exoneration requires pooling evidence: exonerees form a small, hard-to-reach population in all jurisdictions and support arrangements differ across welfare systems, so comparison depends on trusted relationships with local innocence organisations, support providers and exonerees, sustained over time. Fourth, translating lessons into reform depends on professional bodies, training institutions and policymakers in each country, whose routes for change differ and can only be understood and compared with their participation.

The network is also needed because capacity differs. Some jurisdictions have established documentation initiatives, innocence organisations or review mechanisms; others are only beginning to recognise and document wrongful convictions, and some have no independent body or organisation at all to identify and review such cases. Starting such initiatives needs peer support and experience from countries that have built them, which only a network can provide. Shared methods, mobility and peer learning allow emerging initiatives to build capacity while contributing their own legal and institutional perspectives, so that knowledge moves in both directions: established initiatives contribute experience, and emerging contexts reveal assumptions and blind spots invisible elsewhere. Legal frameworks also change during the Action, for example through reforms of review procedures, evidence retention or compensation law. A network with contacts in each country can follow these changes as they happen and keep documentation definitions, country profiles and the Index current; a time-limited research project with fixed national samples cannot.

Finally, the RESTORE network connects academics, practitioners, policymakers, communication professionals and exonerees who rarely work in one collaborative framework. These prerequisites for comparative understanding cannot be achieved within a single national project or a consortium built around a fixed research plan. The added value of RESTORE lies not primarily in producing new data, but in creating the durable relationships, shared methods, mutual trust and coordination structures needed for comparative learning across Europe. These network effects are themselves the main instrument through which RESTORE addresses the challenge. COST networking tools (STSMs, Training Schools, and provisions for ITCs and YRIs) are designed for exactly this kind of exchange and provide a timely mechanism for building shared European approaches before emerging national practices become further fragmented.

E. Critical mass of the network

The initial network brings together participants whose expertise covers all four RCOs: wrongful conviction research, exoneration documentation, post-conviction review, innocence work, forensic evidence, compensation, trauma and mental health, reintegration, criminal justice reform, policy development, professional education and public engagement. Although the network is not yet organised as a formal collaboration and has no shared governance or funding structure, it already brings together a sufficiently broad range of expertise, sectors and perspectives to initiate all four RCOs and to support further growth through COST networking activities. However, no single area of expertise can deliver RESTORE alone: registry expertise needs national legal expertise to make coding comparable; legal comparison needs practitioners to distinguish law-on-the-books from practice; reintegration research needs trusted access through support organisations; translation into reform needs professional and policy institutions.

RCO1 is supported by expertise in wrongful-conviction research, exoneration registries, criminology, psychology and case documentation. RCO2 brings together legal scholars (criminal procedure and evidence), innocence organisations, human-rights expertise and practitioners working on investigation, trial safeguards, post-conviction review, evidence and compensation. RCO3 combines psychology, victimology, compensation expertise, support perspectives and lived experience, complemented by further targeted recruitment of clinical and mental-health expertise. RCO4 draws on expertise in criminal-justice reform, public policy, professional education and public communication. Additional expertise in journalism, documentary production and other communication-related fields will be strengthened through targeted recruitment and stakeholder engagement activities. International participants complement rather than substitute European capacity, particularly in areas where established evidence or practice remains concentrated outside Europe, including post-exoneration mental health and established innocence practice.

The network combines academic, professional and lived-experience expertise. In Europe, innocence work is carried out both by independent organisations and by university-based clinics and projects. As a result, the institutional profile of the network understates the extent of practitioner involvement: several academic participants are actively involved in innocence projects, legal clinics or exoneration-related practice initiatives. Academics from law, criminology, psychology, victimology, human rights and public policy work alongside innocence organisations, legal practitioners and exonerees. Additional participation from clinical and mental-health professionals, review bodies, communication professionals and related stakeholder groups will be sought through targeted network expansion activities. The network spans diverse legal traditions, including common-law, civil-law, Nordic, Southern European and post-socialist traditions, and includes both jurisdictions with established innocence infrastructures and countries where documentation and review mechanisms are only beginning to emerge. This allows methodological, professional and experiential knowledge to inform one another from the outset and addresses wrongful convictions as legal, institutional and human challenges at once.

Some expertise is still thinly represented, notably forensic scientists, the judiciary, prosecution and victim support. Network development is treated as capacity building, not numerical growth. A network-mapping task in the Core Group will identify gaps in disciplines, legal systems and stakeholder groups at the end of Years 1 and 2. Invitations will go through professional associations, innocence organisations, review bodies and research societies, with an open call at the Kick-Off Conference.

2. IMPACT

A. Impact related to objectives

RESTORE aims to change how knowledge about wrongful convictions is generated, shared and used across Europe. Impacts are described along a pathway from outputs (what the Action produces), to outcomes (what changes for those who use them), to longer-term impacts to which RESTORE contributes but which also depend on actors beyond it. RESTORE coordinates, and does not fund, primary research; claims are limited to what the network can realistically influence.

Scientific Impact and Research Coordination. RESTORE turns dispersed national efforts into a comparable European evidence base. By month 12, a consensus definition of exoneration and a revised Codebook allow exonerations from different legal systems to be coded in the same way (RCO1). By month 24, comparative overviews of access to justice (at least 15 countries) and of post-exoneration needs (at least 10 countries) are available, and an inter-coder reliability exercise has tested the Codebook; by month 36, cases are coded with the Codebook in at least 20 COST Member Countries, including at least five countries where documentation is newly started, with a documentation-completeness assessment for every participating country (RCO1). Coordinated coding makes it possible to pool cases from the Registry and other sources that are too few in any single country (RCO1), while the Index, with indicators agreed by at least 10 experts from at least six countries by month 24, and applied by participants in at least eight countries (law as written) and at least three (practice) by month 36, shows how legal safeguards differ (RCO2). Together, they create the first coordinated European infrastructure for comparative analysis of exonerations, legal safeguards, redress and reintegration across different legal and welfare systems.

The approach is innovative in three ways: it follows one pathway from wrongful conviction to reintegration instead of four separate topics (documentation, access to justice, life after exoneration and reform); it builds in safeguards against misuse (rather than describing prevalence, documented cases are reported as a minimum figure and the Index describes safeguards and gaps); and exonerees help set priorities and interpret findings. In the long term, shared methods provide the basis for a sustained European research agenda, supported by at least two joint follow-up funding applications (CBO1).

Professional and Institutional Impact. Innocence organisations, review bodies and legal practitioners gain a concrete reference for strengthening their own systems: a documented set of promising practices covering safeguards before and after finality, with examples drawn from different legal systems and an Index-based comparison (RCO2). Support organisations and professionals gain a practical tool, the Guide, co-created with exonerees and used in training of at least 15 organisations or professionals in at least five countries (RCO3). The expected outcome is that organisations are better able to identify gaps in existing arrangements, recognise post-exoneration needs, adapt practices from other jurisdictions and develop support, review or documentation initiatives where these are currently absent. Countries with emerging infrastructure can build on tested approaches rather than starting from scratch, while established systems can test their assumptions against different legal contexts.

Societal Impact. Exoneration is often seen as an endpoint. RESTORE will provide European evidence that exoneration is the start of a process of recovery and reintegration, and that documented exonerations are only the visible part of the problem. Public understanding is addressed through three routes that reach different audiences: podcast episodes, public events with documentary makers and artists, and an open teaching package for students of law, criminology and psychology. All materials are developed with journalists, educators and artists and reviewed by exonerees (CBO4), to support more accurate public understanding and fewer stigmatising portrayals. In the long term, RESTORE aims to make the participation of exonerees as partners in research, policy and practice a normal part of work in this field.

Policy Impact. WG4 maps actors, barriers and opportunities for reform from Year 1, so that evidence reaches decision-makers while it develops. Outputs are one white paper, four policy briefs and at least five policy or professional institutions taking part in policy roundtables. At least two structured exchanges with European institutions (e.g. the Council of Europe, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Judicial Training Network) take place by month 36. Where suitable opportunities arise, RESTORE will also prepare Index findings for contribution to relevant UN or European human-rights monitoring, consultation or stakeholder processes by month 48 (RCO2, RCO4). RESTORE does not promote a single model; it shows how different approaches work in different legal contexts. Changes in legislation and practice lie beyond RESTORE, but it creates the evidence and relationships that make them possible.

Capacity-Building and Long-Term Impact. The network grows from its initial network of proposers to at least 70 active participants from at least 28 COST Member Countries by Year 2 and to about 100 participants by the end of the Action (CBO1). At least 16 STSMs (half involving ITCs), two Training Schools (25–30 participants each), an ITC Coordinator in the Core Group and reserved ITC places strengthen emerging national capacity (CBO2), and the five countries where documentation is newly started establish, with network support, a national contact group (month 24), a country profile and a short roadmap (month 30). Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs, at least 40%) take part in every WG task and lead on at least eight outputs (e.g. publications, policy briefs, teaching modules) (CBO3), gaining methods, international contacts, publications and leadership experience. The outcome is a trained next generation and national contact points able to continue the work after the Action. The Core Group reviews progress against the targets in 1.B annually and reports to the MC.

Timeline of Impact. In the short term (Years 1–2), the network adopts a shared definition and Codebook, a common inventory template and a participation protocol, and exonerees and stakeholders are embedded in governance. In the medium term (Years 3–4), comparative evidence and tools (the documentation overview, the Index, the Guide, policy briefs and the white paper) are used by academics, practitioners and institutions, and YRIs and participants from ITCs take on leading roles. In the longer term, beyond the Action, RESTORE aims to contribute to the adoption of shared methods by registries and innocence organisations, to evidence-informed reform in individual countries, and to a continuing European network supported by follow-up funding. Progress is checked against the targets in 1.B at the mid-term review (month 24) and at the end of the Action.

B. Involvement of stakeholders

Stakeholders participate in RESTORE as contributors to knowledge, priorities, interpretation and outputs, not only as audiences. WG4 maps relevant actors in Year 1, while the Core Group reviews geographical, disciplinary and stakeholder gaps at the end of Years 1 and 2. Missing perspectives are addressed through targeted recruitment via professional associations, innocence organisations, review bodies and research networks.

Exonerees and Lived Experience. Exonerees and their families bring knowledge that cannot be derived from legal records or professional perspectives alone, particularly concerning the consequences of wrongful conviction and the conditions for recovery and reintegration.

An Exoneree Advisory Group (at least eight members from at least five countries by month 12) will help set WG3 priorities, interpret findings, co-create the Guide and review WG3 and WG4 public outputs drawing on exonerees' experiences. Participation is voluntary and flexible, with low-burden options including advisory roles, rotating review and anonymous input. Exonerees may participate as Working Group members through a support or innocence organisation, or as ad hoc contributors to specific activities such as workshops, consultations and review of outputs. A participation protocol by month 6 covers informed consent, withdrawal, access to support and ethical representation. Costs of exonerees' participation will be reimbursed in line with COST rules.

Innocence Organisations and Review Bodies. Innocence organisations, legal clinics and review bodies contribute case identification and validation to the documentation of exonerations, contribute to the comparison of review mechanisms, review Index indicators and help identify promising practices. In Europe, innocence work is often organised through both independent organisations and university-based clinics or initiatives. Consequently, the participation of practitioners in RESTORE extends beyond participants affiliated with non-profit organisations alone. Their participation is particularly important for distinguishing formal legal provisions from how review operates in practice. Limited resources and confidentiality obligations are addressed through proportionate requests for involvement, anonymised coding where required, data-sharing protocols and STSMs that allow participants to work directly with relevant organisations.

Legal and Forensic Professionals. Judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, investigators, forensic experts and professional bodies will help assess whether comparative findings and resources are accurate, relevant and usable in practice. They will contribute to expert agreement on the Index, responses to its practitioner questionnaire, practitioner workshops, Training Schools and professional and educational resources. RESTORE addresses possible institutional defensiveness by framing comparison around learning from error rather than assigning blame and by engaging professionals through relevant associations and training bodies. National experts review their country's results before publication.

Victims, Families and Victim-Support Organisations. The original victims of the offence and their families are affected when a conviction is overturned, and the offence is again unresolved. Victim-support organisations will advise, through the Stakeholder Advisory Forum and targeted consultation, on how WG3 and WG4 consider these consequences and on respectful communication.

Policymakers, Public Authorities and Civil Society. These stakeholders provide knowledge of legislative, institutional and policy contexts and of the conditions under which evidence can inform change. Target institutions include judicial training bodies, professional associations of lawyers and forensic experts, national review bodies and European and international human-rights bodies (e.g. the Council of Europe, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and UN human-rights mechanisms). They participate through the Stakeholder Advisory Forum, policy roundtables and targeted consultation on policy briefs, the Index and the Year 4 synthesis.

Communication, Education and Art Professionals. Journalists, documentary makers, podcast producers, educators and artists contribute expertise in how wrongful convictions are represented, understood and communicated beyond specialist communities. They will collaborate with WG4 on the podcast series, documentary screenings, arts events and educational materials and help translate complex findings without reducing wrongful convictions to individual or sensational cases. Production requiring resources beyond COST networking activities will be funded externally. Editorial guidelines developed with the Exoneree Advisory Group and review of materials before publication will reduce risks of sensationalism, stigma or misrepresentation.

The Exoneree Advisory Group reports to the Core Group. The Stakeholder Advisory Forum, established by month 9, has about 10–12 members nominated by professional associations, review bodies, support and victim-support organisations, policy institutions and the media, with balanced geographical representation. It will be consulted at defined decision points: after initial mapping, during development and testing of major comparative resources, and during the Year 4 synthesis. Feedback and RESTORE's response will be documented, creating a traceable route from consultation to adaptation. The Forum will meet at least annually, online or hybrid, with additional targeted consultation where required.

C. Communication, dissemination and valorisation

RESTORE distinguishes between communication (awareness and dialogue), dissemination (making findings and methods accessible to users) and valorisation (supporting their uptake and continued use). A Science Communication Coordinator, together with WG4, oversees a communication and dissemination plan agreed by month 6 and adapted through annual monitoring. A public website hosts the Knowledge Repository, news and the newsletter.

Academic Community. The Codebook, documentation overviews, Index methodology and comparative outputs will be published open access and presented through conferences and workshops. STSMs and Training Schools transfer methods between countries. Short summaries of the Codebook, the Index and the Guide will be made available in at least four languages besides English, prepared by national contacts and checked by native-speaking participants. By month 48, communication and dissemination are monitored through at least 12 open-access scientific publications (of which at least four YRI-led), at least 20 conference contributions (at least four of them at professional or policy conferences; supported through ITC, YRI and Dissemination Conference Grants), at least 15 network events, and a newsletter.

Professional Users. Innocence organisations, review bodies, legal and forensic professionals and support organisations receive the Index, promising practices, Guide and training materials through practitioner workshops, Training Schools and professional associations. The Guide will include a plain-language version and be used in training at least 15 organisations or professionals in at least five countries.

Policymakers and Institutions. Four policy briefs, a final white paper and targeted briefings translate comparative findings for decision-makers. The first brief presents the consensus definition of exoneration for use by registries, innocence organisations and policymakers. At least five policy or professional institutions participate in roundtables. Index findings are prepared for, and where suitable opportunities arise submitted to, UN and European human-rights processes (RCO2).

General Public and Engagement. Public engagement uses existing audiences and channels. At least six podcast episodes will be recorded using existing university facilities or in collaboration with established podcasts,each combining scientific, professional and lived-experience perspectives on wrongful convictions and exoneration. RESTORE will provide content, expert guests and exoneree review. At least four public events (at least two documentary screenings and at least two events with artists and exonerees, such as an exhibition or performance) will take place in at least four countries, including at least one ITC, each with stakeholder discussion. An open teaching package for students of law, criminology and psychology, in the format of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Education for Justice university modules (class outline, exercises, slides and teaching guide), will be piloted at universities in several countries and published open access in the Knowledge Repository; RESTORE will also approach UNODC about making it available through its resource library. Where exonerees wish, they will be offered the chance to contribute to an open-access collection of lived-experience narratives, edited with them and a publishing partner experienced with such series. Production costs beyond COST networking activities are funded externally. Ethical guidelines agreed with the Exoneree Advisory Group (consent, the right to withdraw, no sensationalism) apply to all materials.

From Dissemination to Uptake. Major outputs follow the same path: development, validation or testing with intended users, revision and release. The Codebook is piloted through coordinated coding and reliability testing; the Index is agreed by experts and applied by participants; the Guide is co-created with exonerees and tested with support organisations; policy resources are discussed with users through the Stakeholder Advisory Forum and policy roundtables. This shows not only whether outputs reach their audiences, but whether users find them clear, relevant and applicable.

Intellectual property. The consensus Codebook builds on existing, documented codebooks and will be developed in agreement with the owners of existing codebooks, confirmed in writing by month 6. Codebook v1.0 and later versions, the Index methodology and the Guide will be released under open licences (CC BY 4.0, subject to rights-holder agreement). Case-level data remain with their owners and are shared in tiers under data-sharing agreements (see data-sharing provisions below and Section 3.A).

RESTORE's main valorisation infrastructure is the Knowledge Repository, providing structured open access, where legally and ethically possible, to the Codebook, Index methodology, Guide, training materials and policy resources under open licences. Data and materials follow the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles; case-level data are shared in tiers (public summary data openly, detailed data on request under data-sharing agreements), in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Hosting and stewardship responsibilities are agreed by month 36 and confirmed in the Sustainability Plan (D15). The Core Group monitors uptake annually through use of resources, professional and institutional engagement, training, policy citations and new collaborations, feeding results back into dissemination and resource development. Sustainability is further supported by integrating resources into participating organisations and by at least two follow-up funding applications.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

A. Action Structure

RESTORE is organised in four WGs that correspond to the four RCOs and follow the pathway from wrongful conviction to reintegration. Each WG has a Leader and a Co-Leader from different countries and includes Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs), participants from ITCs and stakeholder representatives.

WG1 (*Understanding Exonerations*) agrees a consensus definition of exoneration, revises the European Exoneration Codebook, coordinates coding across countries and supports the extension of documentation across countries, including in the Registry. WG2 (*Securing Justice*) coordinates the comparative mapping of legal safeguards, review and redress and the agreement, testing and application of the Index. WG3 (*Restoring Lives*) coordinates comparison of post-exoneration needs and support arrangements and co-creates the Guide with exonerees. WG4 (*Promoting Reform*) synthesises comparative evidence on how lessons from wrongful convictions become institutional learning, policy, training and public understanding. A cross-cutting network development and sustainability work stream (T5) supports all WGs. It coordinates network mapping, targeted recruitment, stakeholder engagement, monitoring of disciplinary and stakeholder gaps, and preparation of sustainability and follow-up funding activities.

The WGs are linked through concrete dependencies rather than a strict sequence. WG1 provides documented cases and a shared vocabulary that WG2 uses to illustrate how institutional conditions operate in real pathways to exoneration, and that WG3 uses, together with innocence organisations, to reach exonerees. WG3 returns the post-exoneration variables that WG1 includes in the Codebook, and WG2 gives WG4 a comparative picture of where safeguards fail. WG4 maps reform actors from Year 1 and feeds their questions back to all WGs. Interdependence is managed through shared milestones (the Codebook in month 12, the Index pilot in Year 3, the joint synthesis in Year 4), early pilots and a joint annual workshop, so that a delay in one WG does not stop the others.

Scientific and operational coordination is provided by the MC and a Core Group composed of the Action Chair, Vice-Chair, WG Leaders, the Science Communication Coordinator, the Grant Awarding Coordinator, an STSM Coordinator and an ITC Coordinator (the STSM and ITC Coordinator roles may be combined). The Core Group monitors dependencies between WGs and resolves operational issues between MC meetings. Decisions affecting shared definitions, methodologies or cross-WG outputs are prepared jointly by the relevant WG Leaders and, where agreement cannot be reached, referred to the MC. Progress against the targets in Section 1.B and identified risks is reviewed annually, allowing activities and recruitment priorities to be adjusted where necessary. The ITC Coordinator supports participants from ITCs in joining activities and applying for STSMs and Training Schools. The Vice-Chair leads, with the ITC Coordinator, the network-mapping task and recruitment described in 1.E. A representative of the YRI Forum and of the Exoneree Advisory Group attend Core Group meetings. Leadership positions are distributed with attention to ITC and YRI participation and to gender balance. At least two of the eight WG Leader and Co-Leader positions are held by YRIs (CBO3). Three cross-cutting bodies support RESTORE: the Exoneree Advisory Group (lived-experience input, reporting to the Core Group), the Stakeholder Advisory Forum (professional, institutional, policy and civil-society stakeholders) and the YRI Forum (participation, networking and leadership opportunities for YRIs).

Ethics and Data Protection. Case documentation uses public or lawfully obtained sources and follows national law and the GDPR; identifiable information beyond what is already public is not published without consent. Exoneree participation follows the participation protocol (informed consent, voluntary and flexible participation, right to withdraw, access to support). Where participants collect primary data (including practitioner questionnaires), ethical approval is obtained through their own institutions, responses are anonymised, and anonymised coding and data-sharing protocols apply where confidentiality requires it.

Internal Communication. The MC meets at least once a year in person, combined with a WG workshop or conference, and at least once online. The Core Group meets monthly online and each WG at least every two months online. A shared online workspace supports internal collaboration and version control. Validated public outputs are transferred to the RESTORE Knowledge Repository as they are released. A bimonthly newsletter keeps the network informed, and new participants receive an onboarding pack and a named mentor from their WG. Key resources are made available in other languages through national contacts.

B. Work plan (tasks, activities and timeframe)

RESTORE follows a cumulative four-year plan with continuous activity in all WGs; the phases show where the emphasis lies rather than creating rigid boundaries. The research behind the outputs is carried out by participants with national or other funding; the Action funds coordination, exchange and capacity building. Stakeholder engagement, network expansion, communication and maintenance of the Knowledge Repository continue throughout. At least 16 STSMs, half of them involving ITCs, support the transfer and application of shared methods for case documentation (WG1), comparative mapping of legal safeguards and redress (WG2), exchange and synthesis on reintegration evidence (WG3), and knowledge exchange on institutional learning (WG4).

The work is organised in 15 tasks (T1.1-T5.2). The Gantt chart in Section 3.D shows the tasks, deliverables (D), milestones (M) and events. Each WG task includes at least one Young Researcher and Innovator (YRI).

Year 1: Foundations. A Kick-Off Conference (month 3, M1) sets shared priorities and opens recruitment through an open call (T5.1). By month 6 (M2), the participation protocol, an Exoneree Advisory Group of at least five members and the communication plan are in place. WG1 runs the consensus process on the definition of exoneration (T1.1), agreed by month 8 (M3), and revises the Codebook (T1.2). The Stakeholder Advisory Forum is established by month 9 (M4). A first Training School (month 10) covers exoneration documentation and comparative methods. By month 12 (M5), Codebook v1.0, the inventory template with country profiles for at least 10 countries (T2.1), the mapping of post-exoneration needs and reform actors (T3.1, T4.1) and the first policy brief are delivered, and the Advisory Group has at least 10 members. The brief, prepared by WG4 with WG1, presents the consensus definition and proposed inclusion criteria and explains why European documentation needs shared definitions. Network mapping at the end of the year identifies gaps in countries, disciplines and stakeholder groups.

Year 2: Comparative Analysis. WG1 completes pilot coding and the inter-coder reliability exercise (T1.2), publishes the first annual documentation overview and, together with T5.1, identifies the five countries where documentation is newly started and establishes a national contact group in each by month 24. WG2 expands the inventory to at least 15 countries, compares review mechanisms and barriers to exoneration (T2.1), completes expert agreement on indicators and the scoring method by month 24, fixed and published before any country is scored, and prepares a draft practitioner questionnaire (T2.2). Country profiles are updated annually to reflect legislative change. WG3 compares reintegration pathways in at least 10 countries (T3.2) and holds exoneree roundtables. WG4 delivers the comparative inventory of institutional learning and reform in at least 10 countries (T4.2). WG workshops, stakeholder consultations and STSMs support this work. A second policy brief, on access to review, draws on the comparative report. By month 24 (M6), the reliability exercise is complete, indicators and scoring method are agreed, country profiles cover at least 15 countries, and the network has grown to at least 70 participants from at least 28 COST Member Countries after a second network mapping exercise. The Core Group and the Stakeholder Advisory Forum review progress against the targets in 1.B at the mid-term review.

Year 3: Resource Development and Testing. WG1 expands coordinated coding, completes the documentation-completeness assessment and extends documentation to countries not yet represented (T1.3). By month 30, each of the five countries where documentation is newly started has a country profile and a short roadmap for starting documentation, supported by STSMs and network guidance (T1.3, T5.1). Codebook v2.0 follows in month 30 (M7), together with a second Training School on advanced comparative methods and stakeholder engagement. WG2 adapts and translates the practitioner questionnaire for at least three countries by month 30 and coordinates participants' application of the Index: law as written in at least eight countries, practice questionnaires in at least three (T2.2). WG3 develops the Guide, co-created and reviewed by exonerees and tested with professional and organisational users (T3.3). WG4 develops policy, professional and educational resources (T4.3), including a first version of the open teaching package (four modules: defining and documenting exonerations; safeguards, review and redress; life after exoneration; learning from error and reform), piloted by YRIs and educators at no fewer than five universities in at least four countries. Podcast production begins (T4.4), and a first documentary screening and a first event with artists and exonerees (e.g. an exhibition) take place in two different countries, one of them in an ITC (T4.4). Practitioner workshops, policy roundtables, including two structured exchanges with European institutions by month 36 (T4.3), and user testing of major resources take place. A third policy brief, on post-exoneration support, draws on the comparative report and the tested Guide. By month 36 (M8), the Index pilot and the tested Guide are complete, cases are coded with the Codebook in at least 20 COST Member Countries and hosting of the Knowledge Repository is agreed.

Year 4: Synthesis, Valorisation and Sustainability. WG1 completes the final documentation round and publishes the final documentation overview (T1.3). WG2 consolidates the Index and WG3 the Guide, after expert agreement, application by participants, exoneree review and user testing, both by month 44 (M9). Index findings are prepared for, and where suitable opportunities arise submitted to, UN and European human-rights processes (RCO2). Three regional workshops using the tested Guide train at least 15 support organisations or professionals from at least five countries (T3.3). The white paper, the fourth policy brief (on institutional learning and reform), the policy, professional and educational resource series (month 46), including the final teaching package, and the podcast series of at least six episodes are completed, with a second documentary screening and a second event with artists and exonerees, in two further countries (T4.3, T4.4). A Final Conference (month 46) and a Stakeholder Summit (month 47) integrate findings and connect policy, practice and lived experience (T4.5, M10). By month 48 (M11), the network has about 100 participants, long-term hosting of the Knowledge Repository is confirmed in the Sustainability Plan and at least two follow-up funding applications are prepared (T5.2).

Risks. Limited access to case files and confidentiality constraints are addressed through anonymised coding, public-source coding where necessary, and data-sharing protocols. Delays in access to existing codebooks or registry data are mitigated through the consensus process and development of shared coding guidance from published sources. As RESTORE does not fund primary research, uneven national resources are addressed using existing data, targeted STSMs and preparation of joint follow-up funding applications. If resources remain limited, core outputs (Codebook, country profiles and the law-as-written layer of the Index) take priority, while practice-based components are scaled accordingly. Uneven country engagement is addressed through targeted recruitment and support for ITCs. Limited willingness of exonerees to participate is addressed through voluntary, low-burden participation options. The risk of distress for exonerees is addressed through the participation protocol, trauma-informed practice and access to support. Low response rates in practitioner questionnaires are mitigated through professional associations and triangulation with documentary sources. Institutional resistance to, or misreading of, Index results is addressed by fixing and publishing the scoring method before any country is scored, review of each country's results by national experts before publication, data-completeness flags, and framing comparison around learning rather than blame. Shared milestones, early pilots and transparent reporting reduce the risks associated with delays and misinterpretation of findings.

C. Deliverables

RESTORE will produce 15 main deliverables. They follow the cumulative logic of the Action: shared methods and mappings in Year 1 provide the basis for comparative synthesis in Year 2; this evidence is translated into tested tools and resources in Year 3; and Year 4 consolidates the scientific, professional and policy learning and establishes arrangements for continued use beyond the Action. Annual updates, policy briefs, podcasts, screenings and other communication activities are treated as outputs and milestones within these deliverables rather than as separate deliverables.

Year 1: Foundations.

- *D1: Consensus Definition and European Exoneration Codebook v1.0 (WG1, M12).*A shared framework for identifying and documenting exonerations across jurisdictions, developed through a multi-round expert consensus process. It will specify the definition of exoneration, inclusion and exclusion criteria, variables, coding rules and guidance for application across different legal systems. Existing Registry codebooks provide the starting point. The consensus definition and inclusion criteria are also published as the first policy brief.
- *D2: European Inventory of Legal Safeguards and Redress (WG2, M12).* A common template and initial country profiles for at least 10 countries across the eight pillars. The template follows the eight pillars and doubles as the law-as-written layer of the Index. The inventory provides the empirical and conceptual basis for subsequent comparative analysis and the Index.
- *D3: Stakeholder, Reintegration and Reform-Actor Mapping (WG3/WG4, M12).*A structured mapping of post-exoneration needs and support arrangements, relevant stakeholder communities, reform actors, professional and policy institutions, and existing institutional-learning initiatives. The mapping will also identify geographical, disciplinary and stakeholder gaps requiring targeted network development.

Year 2: Comparative Analysis.

- *D4: Comparative European Exoneration Evidence Base and Reliability Assessment (WG1, M24).* Coordinated application of the Codebook across participating jurisdictions, accompanied by an inter-coder reliability exercise and documentation of differences in national coverage and data availability. The evidence base will support comparative analysis while explicitly distinguishing documented exonerations from estimates of the prevalence of wrongful conviction.
- *D5: Comparative Synthesis and Practice Map on Access to Justice and Exoneration (WG2, M24).*A comparative analysis of legal safeguards and redress across at least 15 European jurisdictions, complemented where useful by international comparators. The report will examine barriers and enabling conditions across the eight pillars and document promising practices, while accounting for differences between legal systems and gaps in available information.
- *D6: Comparative Report on Life After Exoneration (WG3, M24).*A comparative overview of post-exoneration needs, experiences and support arrangements across at least 10 countries, covering psychological wellbeing, housing, employment, healthcare, finances, relationships and other dimensions of recovery and reintegration. The report will integrate research, professional knowledge and lived experience and provide the evidence base for the Guide.
- D7: Comparative Inventory of Institutional Learning and Reform (WG4, M24). A comparative inventory of how criminal justice institutions in at least 10 countries have responded to exonerations (policy, professional practice, training and public communication), identifying actors, barriers and conditions for learning. It provides the basis for the policy and professional resources developed in Years 3–4.

Year 3: Resource Development and Testing.

- *D8: European Exoneration Codebook v2.0 and Documentation Completeness Assessment (WG1, M30).*The revised Codebook (v2.0), incorporating experience from cross-jurisdictional application, the reliability assessment and relevant post-exoneration variables developed with WG3. It will be accompanied by an assessment of documentation completeness in participating countries and documentation of progress in expanding documentation across Europe, including in the Registry. It will also document the establishment of national contact groups, country profiles and short roadmaps in the five countries where documentation is newly started.
- *D9: Wrongful Conviction Index: Pilot Application (WG2, M36).* A pilot version of the Index. Building on the country profiles and comparative analysis developed in Years 1–2, the network will use the indicators and scoring method agreed by at least 10 experts from at least six countries by month 24 (M6). Participants apply the Index in at least eight countries (law as written) and at least three (practice), representing different legal systems. Results are presented by pillar and in tiers, with data-completeness flags and methodological limitations; no overall country score is published at this stage.
- *D10: European Reintegration Resource Guide – Tested Version (WG3, M36).*An evidence-informed and practically oriented resource addressing immediate and longer-term post-exoneration needs, relevant support arrangements and pathways to recovery and reintegration. The Guide will be co-created and reviewed by exonerees and tested with intended professional and organisational users before finalisation.

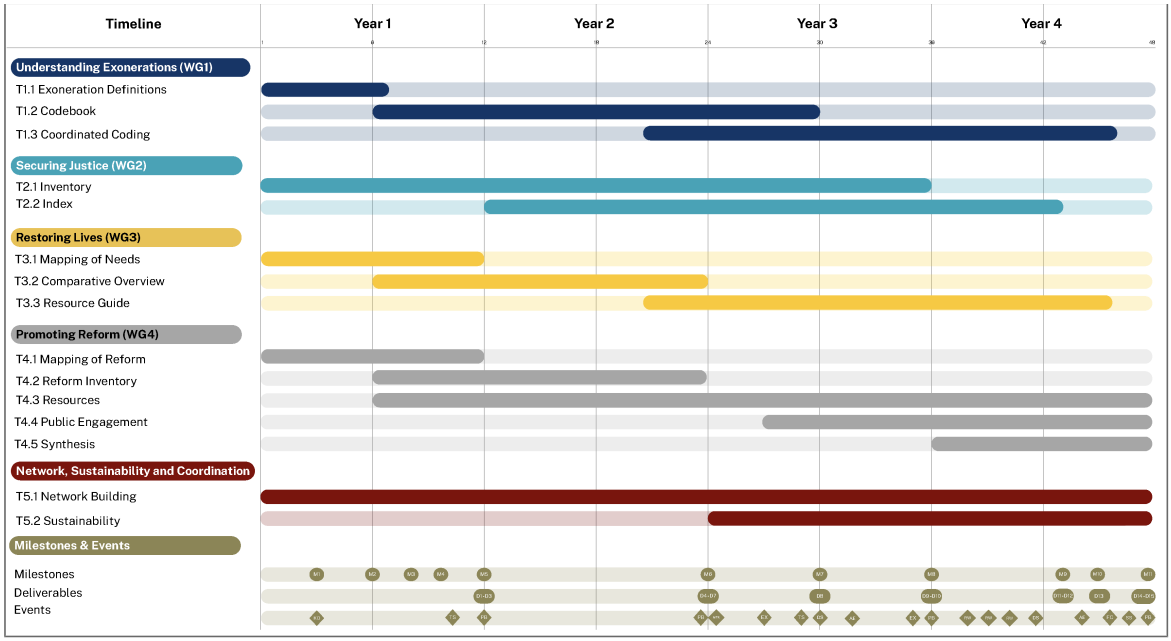
Year 4: Synthesis, Valorisation and Sustainability.

- *D11: Wrongful Conviction Index: Consolidated Framework and Guidance (WG2, M44).*The consolidated Index, revised on the basis of expert agreement, application by participants and feedback from relevant professional and institutional users. It will include the final indicator framework, the scoring method, including a sensitivity analysis and the MC's decision on whether and how to publish an overall country score, guidance for interpretation and application, data-completeness criteria and documented limitations. The final version will support transparent comparison and mutual learning across different legal systems and is not a measure of the prevalence of wrongful convictions.

- *D12: European Reintegration Resource Guide: Final Version (WG3, M44).*The final Guide, revised following exoneree review and testing with support organisations and professionals and accompanied by a plain-language version. Its finalisation will incorporate feedback on accessibility, relevance and applicability gathered during Year 3 and Year 4 training and stakeholder activities.
- *D13: Policy, Professional and Educational Resource Series (WG4 with all WGs, M46).*A coordinated set of audience-specific resources translating RESTORE findings for policymakers, innocence organisations, review bodies, legal and forensic professionals, support organisations, educators and other relevant users. It includes a Starter Toolkit for countries without an independent innocence or review body: practical guidance on documentation, routes to case review, legal-aid partnerships and reintegration support, adapted to different legal systems. It will consolidate the annual policy briefs, final Guide, training and educational materials, and other practice-oriented resources developed and tested during the Action. The series includes the open teaching package. Public-facing outputs, including the podcast series and materials accompanying documentary screenings, will complement this series.
- *D14: European Exoneration and Institutional Learning Synthesis (All WGs, M46).*An integrated synthesis bringing together evidence from the four RCOs. It will combine comparative findings on documented exonerations and contributing factors with analysis of legal safeguards and redress, post-exoneration experiences, reform initiatives and mechanisms of institutional learning. The synthesis will include the final white paper and will identify lessons that can travel across jurisdictions as well as areas where legal and institutional context limits transferability.
- *D15: Sustainability Plan and Consolidated RESTORE Knowledge Repository (All WGs, M48).*A sustainability framework for continued European collaboration and the long-term accessibility and stewardship of RESTORE resources. The consolidated Knowledge Repository will provide structured access, where legally and ethically possible, to reusable methodological, comparative, professional, educational and policy resources, with appropriate information on their scope, methodology, provenance and limitations. The Sustainability Plan will identify institutional responsibilities for maintaining key resources, arrangements for continued stakeholder involvement, future collaboration and funding opportunities, and priorities for extending RESTORE's work beyond the Action.

D. Gantt chart

The work is organised in 15 tasks (T1.1-T5.2). Figure 2 (Gantt Chart) shows the tasks, milestones (M; see Section 3.B), deliverables (D; see Section 3.C), and events (Kick Off Conference [KO], Training Schools [TS], Policy Briefs [PB], Regional Workshops [RW], Final Conference [FC], Documentary Screening [DS], Mid-Term Review [MTR], Event with Artists and Exonerees [AE], Exchange with European Institutions [EX] and Stakeholder Summit [SS]).


Timeline
Year 1
Year 2
Year 3
Year 4
Understanding Exonerations (WG1)
T1.1 Exoneration Definitions
T1.2 Codebook
T1.3 Coordinated Coding
Securing Justice (WG2)
T2.1 Inventory
T2.2 Index
Restoring Lives (WG3)
T3.1 Mapping of Needs
T3.2 Comparative Overview
T3.3 Resource Guide
Promoting Reform (WG4)
T4.1 Mapping of Reform
T4.2 Reform Inventory
T4.3 Resources
T4.4 Public Engagement
T4.5 Synthesis
Network, Sustainability and Coordination
T5.1 Network Building
T5.2 Sustainability
Milestones & Events
Milestones
Deliverables
Events
Figure 2

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Network of Proposers - Features

COST Inclusiveness Target Countries
54.17 %

Number of Proposers
47

Country and Specific Organisation distribution of Proposers

Country/Specific Organisation	ITC/ non ITC/ other	Number of institutions	Number of researchers	Percentage of the proposing network
Argentina	other	1	1	2.13 %
Australia	other	2	2	4.26 %
Bosnia and Herzegovina	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Bulgaria	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Canada	other	1	1	2.13 %
Croatia	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Czechia	ITC	1	2	4.26 %
Finland	non ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Germany	non ITC	2	2	4.26 %
Greece	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Hungary	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Israel	non ITC	2	2	4.26 %
Italy	non ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Latvia	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Luxembourg	non ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Netherlands	non ITC	3	3	6.38 %
North Macedonia	ITC	2	2	4.26 %
Norway	non ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Poland	ITC	2	2	4.26 %
Portugal	ITC	1	2	4.26 %
Romania	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Serbia	ITC	1	1	2.13 %
South Africa	other	1	1	2.13 %
Spain	non ITC	3	3	6.38 %
Sweden	non ITC	1	1	2.13 %
Switzerland	non ITC	2	2	4.26 %
Türkiye	ITC	2	2	4.26 %
United Kingdom	non ITC	3	3	6.38 %
United States	other	4	4	8.51 %

Specific Organisation	other	0	0	0 %

Gender Distribution of Proposers

29.8% Males
70.2% Females

Number of Young Researchers and Innovators

22(representing 46.81% of the network)

Core Expertise of Proposers: Distribution by Sub-Field of Science

74.5% Law
19.1% Psychology
2.1% Health Sciences
2.1% Other social sciences
2.1% Sociology

Institutional distribution of Network of Proposers

72.3% Higher education, research-performing & associated organisations
17.0% Non-for profit organisation or association
6.4% Business enterprise (small- or medium sized; SME)
4.3% Governmental organisation or agency (national, regional or local)

Higher education, research-performing & associated organisations:34
Non-for profit organisation or association:8
Governmental organisation or agency (national, regional or local):2
Business enterprise (small- or medium sized; SME):3

COST Full Member (23) : Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Kingdom
COST Cooperating Member (1) : Israel
COST Partner Member (1) : South Africa
International Partner (4) : Argentina, Australia, Canada, United States
European RTD Organisation (0)
EU Institutions, Bodies, Offices and Agencies (EC/EU) (0)
International Organisation (0)

Network of Proposers - Details

Main Proposer's Details

Title:	Dr		
First Name:	Linda	**Gender:**	F
Last Name:	Geven	**Is Young Researcher and Innovator:**	Yes
Institution:	Universiteit Leiden	**Category of country:**	COST Full Member
Sector:	Higher education, research-performing & associated organisations	**Core Area of Expertise:**	Psychology (Legal Psychology)

Secondary Proposers' Details

Argentina

Ms Micaela Prandi (Innocence Project Argentina)

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: International law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Australia

Dr Celine van Golde (The University Of Sydney [School of Psychology])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Legal Psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Dr Lisanne Adam (Royal Melbourne Institute Of Technology*rmit University [School of Law])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ms Adriana Pranjic (University of Mostar [Department of Criminal Law, Faculty of Law])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Bulgaria

Dr Sylvia Petkova (Sylvia Petkova Lawfirm [Criminal])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Canada

Prof Kimberley Clow (University Of Ontario Institute Of Technology [Forensic Psychology])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Social psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Croatia

Mr Andrej Bozhinovski (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law [Criminal Law])

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Czechia

Mr Simon Mach (Spolek Šalamoun)

Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M

Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Mr Václav Peričevič (Spolek Šalamoun)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Finland

Dr Julia Korkman (Abo Akademi University [Åbo Law School])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: legal and forensic psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Germany

Ms Laura Farina Diederichs (Fehlurteil und Wiederaufnahme e.V.)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Mr Florian Junker (Innocence Project Deutschland)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Greece

Ms Kyriaki Papadopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Hungary

Dr Judit Szabó (Orszagos Kriminologiai Intezet [Division of Criminal Law Sciences])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Israel

Dr Anat Horovitz (Hebrew University of Jerusalem [Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Ms Noa Mishor (Israeli Public Defender's Office [Retrial Department])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Italy

Prof Giulia Lasagni (Alma Mater Studiorum - Universita di Bologna [Department of Legal

Studies])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Latvia

Ms Gabriela Santare (ZAB COBALT SIA)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Luxembourg

Dr Ashlee Beazley (University of Luxembourg [Department of Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Netherlands

Dr Jenny Schell-Leugers (Universiteit Maastricht [University College Maastricht])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Legal Psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Mr Nicolas Mansfield (Stichting Lex Populi)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

North Macedonia

Prof Besa Arifi (South East European University Tetovo [Faculty of Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Elena Maksimova (Goce Delcev University, Stip [Faculty of Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Norway

Prof Ulf Stridbeck (Universitetet I Oslo [Department of Public and International Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Poland

Prof Pawel Waszkiewicz (University of Warsaw [Faculty of Law and Administration])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law

Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Wojciech Jasiński (Uniwersytet Wroclawski [Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics, Digital Justice Center])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Portugal

Prof Pedro Freitas (Universidade Catolica Portuguesa)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Privacy and Data Protection; Terrorism; Criminal Procedure
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Ms Ana Teresa Espírito Santo (Universidade Catolica Portuguesa [Faculty of Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Romania

Prof Laura Visu-Petra (Babes-Bolyai University [Department of Psychology])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Developmental psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Serbia

Ms Tijana Golic (ex Durdevic) (Vojvodina Bar Association)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

South Africa

Ms Natasha Espag (University Of Cape Town)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Legal Psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Spain

Dr Nuria Mallandrich-Miret (Universitat de Barcelona [Dret Administratiu, Dret Processal i Dret Financer i Tributari])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Dr Nuria Sánchez (Universidad de Salamanca)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Social psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Dr Natale Seron Arizmendi (Universidad De La Iglesia De Deusto Entidad Religiosa [Law Faculty])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: International law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Sweden

Prof Minna Gräns (Uppsala University [Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Legal decision making, evidence law, criminal proceedings, legal theory
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Switzerland

Dr Teresa Schneider (Lucerne University of Applied Science and Arts)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Psychology: Legal Psychology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Mr Guglielmo Palumbo (Projet Innocence Suisse)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Türkiye

Dr Ezgi Cirak Karali (Izmir Demokrasi Unversitesi [Faculty of Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

Dr Nurten Ozturk (Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University [Faculty of Law/ Criminal and Criminal Procedure law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: Yes

United Kingdom

Dr Louise Hewitt (University of Greenwich [Law and Criminology])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Claire McGourlay (University of Manchester [Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Miscarriages of Justice
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Dr Cyrille Rossant (University College London)
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Health Sciences: Applied mathematics, statistics, non-computational modeling

for health sciences
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

United States

Dr Tinneke Van Camp (California State University, Fresno [Criminology])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Other social sciences: Criminology
Gender: F
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Martin Tankleff (Georgetown University Non Profit Corporation [Department of Government])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Simon Cole (University of California, Irvine [Criminology, Law & Society])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Sociology: Sociology of science
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No

Prof Mark A Godsey (University of Cincinnati [Law])
Participating as Secondary Proposer
Core Expertise: Law: Criminal law
Gender: M
Is Young Researcher and Innovator: No