

# Reflection Rounds

## Intellectual Output 4

### National Report

### Cyprus

### Pilot 1

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## 1. Introduction

The reflection rounds applied through the Mindful Managers project aim to provide tools and resources to actively support wellbeing at work and teams. Some tools include effective questioning, coaching questions, reframing, etc. The reflection rounds enable individuals to share their problems, issues, opportunities and challenges with others, gaining experience of action learning.

The reflection rounds took place in parallel with the training sessions of IO2. At the first two sessions of IO2, the reflection rounds were advertised to participants in order to gain insights about attendance. The interest was high and so the reflection rounds were scheduled right after each of the sessions for IO2 as follows:

- Session 1: 29<sup>th</sup> November at the Reporter's hub, Nicosia
- Session 2: 2<sup>nd</sup> December, at the Classic Hotel, Nicosia
- Session 3: 6<sup>th</sup> December, at the Classic Hotel, Nicosia

The facilitator for all trainings and reflection rounds was Dr. Maria Solomou, who is highly experienced in designing and delivering training. She has a background in education and in business and applies her knowledge to improve performance and professional development. Dr. Solomou has over 4000 hours of delivering training in diverse settings.

### 1.1. Overview of Reflection Rounds Purpose and Methodology

Overview of the purpose and methodology of the Reflection Rounds:

- Reflection Rounds were inspired by the Mentoring Circles™ methodology developed by Inova Consultancy.
- Reflection Rounds enable public sector managers to reflect on their problems, issues, opportunities and challenges with others going through similar experiences and supporting them to reflect on wellbeing at work.
- Reflection Rounds provide a safe yet challenging environment where ideas for managing stress at the workplace can be discussed and explored.
- Possible options for action can be generated and discussed.
- Encouraging development of self-reflection and self-belief.
- The individual is helped to find the next steps forward in focusing on their mental wellbeing.

For a full description of Reflection Rounds methodology, please see the Reflection Rounds Facilitator's Guide.

## 1.2. Recruitment

For the Reflection Rounds pilot 1 in Cyprus participants were recruited through advertising the reflection rounds at the first two training sessions for IO2. Since the very first session was organised in October, it allowed us to get insights of the interest for participation. The interest was high. Therefore, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 4 sessions of IO2, we asked participants to express interest to attend the reflection rounds at each of the next 3 sessions. Almost all participants wanted to attend the reflection rounds.

## 2. Overview of Participants

A summary of background data from each participant can be seen below. Due to data protection, only their positions or organisations are mentioned.

Participant	Background
1	HR Manager
2	BeNatural
3	Ministry of Education and Culture
4	Contractor
5	Cosmos Insurance
6	Life Guidance Today
7	Cyprus Productivity Centre
8	Pedagogical Institute
9	TC Square
10	Ministry of Defence
11	Ministry of Education and Culture
12	Mihub
13	Strovolos Municipality
14	Expansive Learning English
15	Strovolos Municipality
16	Cyprus Academy of Public Administration
17	Pedagogical Institute
18	N/A
19	M.M. Institute

### 3. The Format and Process of Reflection Rounds in Cyprus

The first of Reflection Rounds delivery in Cyprus was attended by 19 participants. All sessions took place at the Classic hotel in Nicosia. The Cyprus facilitator was Dr. Maria Solomou. All sessions were led by the participants, in the sense that they could share their knowledge, thoughts, and discuss with the rest to get insights. As per the philosophy and methodology of the program, participants take turns to outline their problems and the other group member can ask questions in order to guide them. The focus is on questioning rather than on advising, so that they can discover and understand better the issues at hand. This also enables self-reflecting.

Some pictures from the 3 reflection rounds are shown below:



#### Sessions overview:

The following table provides an overview of the sessions:

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
<b>Name of the session</b>	<b>Reflection round 1</b>	<b>Reflection round 2</b>	<b>Reflection round 3</b>
<b>Date</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> November 2019	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2019	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
<b>Number of participants</b>	6 (More attended but only 6 signed the attendance list)	8	17
<b>Topics covered</b>	Self-assessment, self-understanding, discussion of reflection models	Tools and techniques for reflection, expressing issues	Self-assessment, reflection and discussion

### 3.1. First Session

The first session took place on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the Classic Hotel in Nicosia. The goal of the session was to give participants time for self-assessment, understanding themselves and identify goals and actions.

The discussion started with a reminder of the activity of understanding personal traits and characteristics, from IO2, as well as the activity with the strengths, allergies and challenges. As a starter, this enabled participants to reflect on their characteristics in relation to issues they were facing at work. After that, the session proceeded to emphasizing on building our strengths to develop our sense of wellness and wellbeing.

The 12 wellness domains were presented to participants and were asked to reflect on the importance of each domain. The group also noted down individually their strengths in relation to each of the 12 domains and shared their ideas with the whole group.

After having noted their strengths for each domain, participants were asked to think and discuss 1-2 strengths that they would like to enhance and find ways to do so by creating a plan with actions they would like to take.

One of the resources the group used was also the “Forming, storming, norming and performing”, as part of an issue that came up with issues within teams and also in relation to one of the scenarios in the game that one participant had played. Through the particular activity, the participants reflected on how their colleagues might behave based on the four stages and also what their role would be in each stage in order to ensure wellbeing within their team.

### 3.2. Second Session

The second session took place on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 at the Classic Hotel in Nicosia. The goal of the session was to demonstrate some tools and techniques to guide reflection.

First a case study was presented and participants discussed the two characters’ stories. In groups, they worked on drafting questions that could help the two characters improve the issues they were facing. The OSCAR model was applied as a tool for generating solutions.

At the next activity of the session, we agreed that we will rotate roles in the small teams. In particular, there was the person that was sharing the issue they were facing, another that was the “active listener”, namely, was rephrasing the issues and the saying of the first participant, and the rest were asking questions to enable reflections. The roles rotated within the teams so that everyone can experience each role. The goal of this was to enable participants to understand the stance they could be adopting in different situations and how

active listening and asking the right questions could help resolve an issue. The activity was also linked with the strengths activity that took place on the previous day.

The scaling exercises followed, where participants placed themselves on a scale 1-10 and then shared their reasoning with the group.

One suggestion we received from this session was that the activities were quite helpful, and that, in order to have better results, the reflection rounds should take place once every month so that people/managers can have time and opportunities to apply them in context and then come back into a session for reflection. Of course, this is something that could take place in non-pilot settings.

### **3.3. Third Session**

The third session took place on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the Classic Hotel in Nicosia. The goal of the session was for participants to do a final self-assessment and reflect. The particular session was the largest one, as all participants expressed their interest to stay for a bit more, after we completed the IO2 session. Therefore, the number is much higher than the other two sessions. To manage the large number of participants, all activities were conducted in small groups. After each task taking place within the small group, there was sharing with the whole group, so that we can expand on the discussion. This worked fine as participants were already familiar with each other and comfortable sharing reflections, issues and propose ideas on how to control them. At the beginning of this third session, a summary of the two previous sessions was provided, to bring the newcomers up to speed.

The session started with a short description of the circle of influence. Participants then revisited their strengths that they had noted down from previous session and discussed how those related to the circle of influence – what control they have in different situations, and then reflected on that influence, thinking how they can use those strengths to promote wellbeing in their teams.

In this session, participants agreed that this could be applied over a larger period of time so that it allows for practical application of the materials of IO2 and IO4. Overall, they were pleased by the reflection rounds, as they enabled them to actually realize different things about themselves and about situations they can deal with.

## 4. Impact of Reflection Rounds

### 4.1. Soft Skills Development

The evaluation questionnaires regarding the self-assessment of skills were not collected but discussed briefly at the beginning of each session. Overall, it was discussed that the self-assessment tool includes a good list of skills and that it can be used individually over a course of some time (long term) so that people can continuously work on improving the particular skills mentioned.

The reasons for not collecting the evaluation forms are 2:

1. Participants (some) argued that they would like to keep their self-evaluations for future reference. We suggested that this tool can be applied also as a guide for their personal development in the future.
2. More importantly, it is impossible to develop skills in 3 sessions, in such a short time and period. Methodologically, it cannot be claimed whether there was improvement of skills or not, first because it is a self-assessment and in self-assessment, it is a personal feeling of the participant how they subjectively evaluate themselves and their development.

We suggest that this tool (self-assessment of skills development) is applied more objectively, if we want to measure, or just give to participants for self-reference.

### 4.2. Participants' testimonials

Participants evaluated the reflection rounds and provided some comments through the forms. Below are some indicative quotes. In the question "What were your expectations from today's session", participants answered (indicative responses from the collection of the evaluation questionnaires):

1. "Develop the ability to make mindful decisions"
2. "To help me improve my working environment experience-communication with colleagues"
3. "Keep developing myself and my skills as a manager"
4. "How to get focused on solutions rather than problems in my team"
5. "Learn how to communicate positively"

In the question "Has today filled these expectations?" all participants answered "Yes".

In the questions "What are three things that you have learned about yourself today?", participants answered (indicative responses from the collection of the evaluation questionnaires):

1. “Be flexible. Be organized. Be confident.”
2. “I am solutions focused. I can work with groups on any topics. Have much more awareness and capabilities developed than evaluated”
3. “Don’t focus on the problem. Set goals. GROW”
4. “Ability to solve job’s problems/difficulties. Interviewing capability.”
5. “Be positive first to discuss any negative issues with team. Reward good members of the team. Arrange time and good manner to solve any issue with productivity”

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

A final outcomes evaluation form was completed by participants at the end of the final session. 2 participants completed the evaluation form at this stage. The reason was that there were too many forms to complete and participants and the things to say became redundant. Participants noted that they provided evaluation for each session. Therefore, we did not insist for the final evaluation form, and so we only received 2.

The final evaluation form included questions about actions taken as a result of attending the Reflection Rounds and the development of soft skills during the programme.

The responses from the first section of this form enable an analysis of the quantifiable impact of the Reflection Rounds on the participants.

One comment in the final evaluation form about how the reflection rounds helped participants think about how to manage stress at the workplace, says “To focus more mindfully on the positive before giving feedback”.

### 5.1. Facilitator’s Comments

Overall, the group in all sessions was very positive and open to share and discuss. Clearly, the fact that participants spent time together in the IO2 sessions, freed them and felt comfortable. One challenge was time. Many activities, also because they included discussions, took more time than anticipated and so we had to make adjustments in the time we delivered the activities.

The reflection rounds provide a solid ground to support the seminars of IO2. One suggestion would be for trainers to inject activities from the reflection rounds in the IO2 sessions, as some activities blend well with each other and it would be productive to extend those reflections in that way.

## 6. Annexes

In separate documents:

ANNEX 1: Attendance list 29 November 2019

ANNEX 2: Attendance list 2 December 2019

ANNEX 3: Attendance list 6 December 2019

ANNEX 4: Evaluations 29 November 2019

ANNEX 5: Evaluations 2 December 2019

ANNEX 6: Evaluations 6 December 2019