Crisis Management for All:

Inclusive, Multi-Actor Crisis Management

Recommendations to policymakers to mitigate the gendered impacts of COVID-19, based on RESISTIRÉ findings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of a European-level response to crises, for which the development of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) was an important, yet insufficient, first step. In order to develop the capacity of European countries and the European Union to respond to future crises in ways that do not increase the existing gender+ inequalities or create new ones, there is an urgent need to develop comprehensive, inclusive, multi-actor crisis management plans that build on a gender+ intersectional approach.
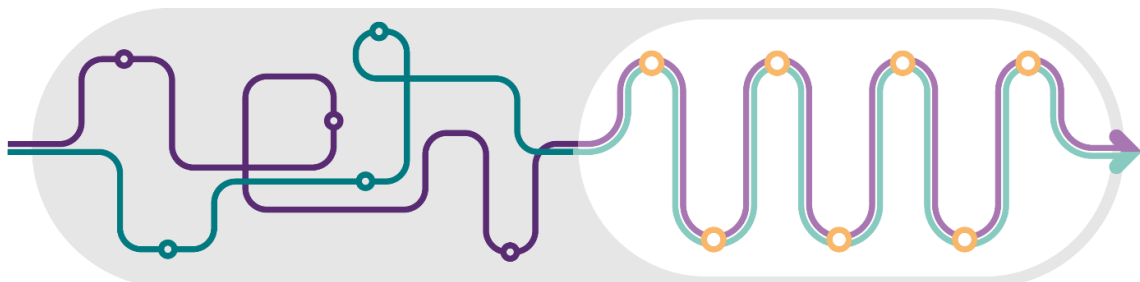
ROADMAP TO RECOVERY: CURRENT METHODS | **COLLABORATION FOR COORDINATED ACTION**

> Recommendations

To provide crisis management for all, the **public sector must recognise the role that CSOs and civil society at large play in filling the gaps during times of crisis**, **especially when it comes to reaching the most vulnerable groups in society**. Civil society participation in policymaking is critical for agenda setting in view of the complex dynamics of society. It can contribute to developing effective responses to reduce inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind.

We call on the European Commission and the Council of Europe to develop coordinated action for governments to create national, regional, and local level crisis management plans that are comprehensive, participatory, and inclusive of the representatives of vulnerable groups and CSOs.

- Prepare **guidelines for governments** to develop national, regional, and local-level crisis management plans that are **comprehensive, participatory, and inclusive, and that build on a gender+ intersectional approach**.

- Make sure that **CSOs and representatives of vulnerable groups are key partners** and are included in all processes of planning, preparation, implementation, and monitoring, without turning them into service providers that assume the responsibilities of the state.

- **Allocate budget and provide other incentives** (integration into EU Accession requirements, trainings, awards, certificates, knowledge-sharing, and networking opportunities, etc.) to **enable, encourage, and ultimately make mandatory the development of effective crisis management plans**.

- Make sure that **inter-agency coordination and cooperation mechanisms are put in place** not only at the European level but also at the national and local levels to strengthen governments' emergency response capacity, as well as to prepare for effective and timely crisis response.

› Problem Statement

The EU has developed several crisis response mechanisms since the early 2000s to deliver aid and respond to crises, whether natural or human-made. The Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) unit was established in 2018 with the aim of developing coordinated decision-making at the EU level for **'major and complex crises, including acts of terrorism'**. At the level of policy implementation, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UPCM) has been developed to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States in the areas of the **prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters**. In response to COVID-19, the UPCM's legislative framework was revised in February 2020 to provide more comprehensive cross-sectoral emergency management support to Member States and their citizens. Based on lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, and informed by scientific advice, the European Commission (EC) has proposed a major legislative package to revamp the EU's entire health crisis preparedness and response architecture. The EU has also launched a massive financial response to the COVID-19 crisis and recovery. As part of a temporary recovery instrument, **The Recovery and Resilience Facility was established as the key instrument through which funds are distributed to Member States**. Under this facility, Member States are asked to design a National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) which has to be approved by the Council and ratified by the national parliaments.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY

RESISTIRÉ research revealed the significant challenges that the preparation and implementation of NRRPs faced in relation to **gender+ inequalities and the use of intersectional and participatory approaches**. One of the major reasons for these shortcomings appears to have been a **lack of collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs)**.

NRRPs, despite their limitations, have contributed to the accumulation of knowledge and experience on how the development of national and local recovery mechanisms can be steered at the EU level. This policy recommendation argues that the experience of the NRRPs (with all the lessons learned) can be used to develop **comprehensive, inclusive, multi-actor crisis management plans** in order to transition from recovery to preparation for effective and timely response to crises. Although crises cannot be avoided, their detrimental impact, particularly for vulnerable groups, can be managed, mitigated, and even avoided.

› Insights from RESISTIRÉ

The absence of national and municipal 'crisis management plans' is a major obstacle to intervention and equality measures.

In the words of an expert interviewed by RESISTIRÉ, *'the absence of "crisis management plans" at the national and municipality level is a major obstacle to intervention and equality measures. The economic system had to undergo a transformation, but it could not be managed properly.* **There is a need for a more flexible economy that responds to the emerging needs of a crisis situation like the pandemic**. *There should be a pool of resources and specific plans that are ready to be mobilized during a crisis.'*

National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) do not recognise the fundamental role of CSOs in responding to crises, particularly for addressing intersectional inequalities.

RESISTIRÉ research showed that **CSOs played an essential and fundamental role in managing and mitigating the pandemic crisis and tending to the needs of vulnerable groups in various areas such as education, work, gender-based violence, and care**. In most cases, teachers' unions and CSOs working in the field of education played a key role in mitigating the negative impact and burden of the pandemic on teachers. Similarly, women's and LGBTQI+ rights organisations were key in the struggle against GBV, yet they were often **not financially supported by the government and were typically excluded from crisis resilience funding**.

ROLE OF CSOs = FILLING GAPS IN POLICY

Governments moreover failed to develop sufficient communication and coordination channels between relevant ministries and civil society actors during the pandemic crisis. As a result, they could not take sufficient advantage of the experiences and skills of CSOs in reaching out to vulnerable groups and developing effective responses to inequalities. In addition to being excluded from crisis management processes, **CSOs were also omitted by governments and policymakers when developing NRRPs**.

In their assessment of the NRRPs and their preparation process, an overwhelming majority of the CSOs engaged in the RESISTIRÉ project expressed disappointment, concern, and criticism. **Lack of involvement and ineffective ways of setting up consultation processes** are among the key issues raised by CSOs and experts. Issues with the consultation processes concern both the **late timing and ineffective ways in which the processes were organised**.

In some cases, the draft was shared publicly just a few months (sometimes only weeks or days) before the submission, which left only **a very short period of time for organisations to submit their comments, and this hindered the consultation process itself.** In other cases, there was essentially token involvement, where the consultation process was limited to the existence of a single e-mail address to which people or organisations could submit proposals and/or it was reduced to a single meeting, in both cases failing to organise a proper discussion about the drafts.

CSOs also raised concerns about the **lack of transparency** in the process of NRRPs design, including claims about contradictions between the information stated in the plan and what actually happened, or a lack of public information available on social dialogue.

Most NRRPs do not have a gender+ and intersectional approach to inequalities due to the low level of involvement of relevant CSOs in the designing of the plans.

The research found that there is almost **no discussion of intersectional inequalities related to religion/belief, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity and nationality in the NRRPs**. The low level of attention to issues relating to these types of inequalities is the result of the limited involvement of representatives of feminist, immigrant, and LGBTIQ+ organisations in the process of designing the plans.

Another recurring theme is the **lack of connection between the policies adopted in the plan and the pandemic crisis** that the plan was allegedly designed to address. Many CSOs argued that the plan is not innovative, but rather a collection of old or previously approved reforms unrelated to the pandemic.

The lack of coordination or ineffective collaboration between policy makers, different government agencies, and CSOs is an obstacle to fair recovery.

Experts consulted by RESISTIRÉ underlined the **lack of coordination between different government agencies**, which made the pandemic more challenging for schools to handle, particularly in relation to the contradictory advice on safety measures. Another expert working for a CSO focusing on disability in education mentioned the **lack of continuity in the collaboration** between CSOs and policy makers as an obstacle, as well as the lack of information on how CSO's contributions are implemented by government agencies. However, while the lack of coordination was perceived as an obstacle, **effective collaboration with political leadership, public bodies, CSOs, and frontline workers can be key for achieving a fairer recovery, and may also be crucial for a more effective and fairer management of future crises.**

LACK OF COLLABORATION

POLICY vs CSOs
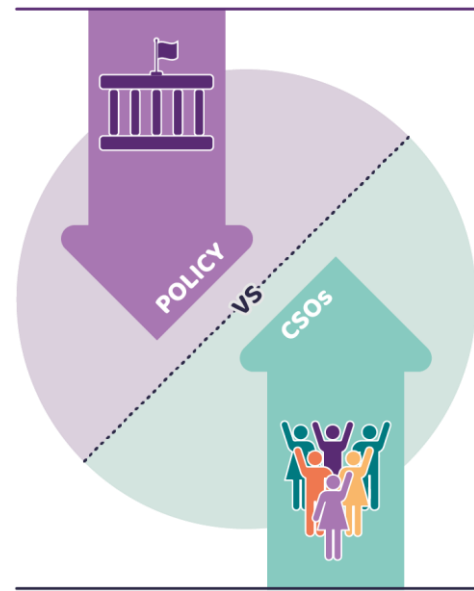
= OBSTACLE TO RECOVERY

> Better Stories

Within RESISTIRÉ, we use 'Better stories', a term borrowed from Dina Georgis to refer to promising practices that identify how a given societal situation can be ameliorated to improve existing practices.

The role of CSOs in tackling inequalities

In various countries, CSOs and their initiatives played an important role in mitigating inequalities exacerbated by pandemic-related measures in the education system, as well as providing social support to students, parents, and teachers. A representative from a Czech organisation reported on their work helping parents to support their children during home-schooling as a better story. They had also worked with teachers and social workers using a **trauma-informed approach**. Another participant, representing an education initiative in Turkey, mentioned the toolkits developed for improving the relations between children and parents. Two of the participants, from Ireland and Finland, both working for organisations that operated helplines for children and youth during the pandemic, stated that the **pandemic had a severe effect on young people's mental health**. The Irish participant added that education was one of the most common concerns of those calling the helpline during the pandemic. The role of CSOs in combating inequalities in terms of education outcomes was also highlighted by examples such as offering tutoring for children (online/offline) in socially excluded localities (Czech Republic) and developing methods for reaching more vulnerable groups, such as children in rural areas and children with special needs (Turkey).

CSOs as enabling actors in crisis management and response

IRELAND

In Ireland, close collaboration between trade unions, Women's Aid, and the relevant state department on domestic violence was established to **ensure that workplaces were supportive environments for people experiencing domestic violence**. This collaboration brought several issues to light, including the introduction of flexible working arrangements and the introduction of paid domestic violence leave. The Irish trade union representative provided a positive example of such collaboration: women returning from maternity leave were initially excluded from government payment schemes, but when this issue was brought to the attention of the government by trade unions and the National Women's Council, it was quickly addressed.

Effective policies on GBV were adopted in Spain and Latvia as a result of cooperation between policymakers and CSOs

SPAIN

In Spain, the 'Catalogue of Urgent Measures of the Plan for Improvement and Modernisation against GBV' was agreed on by the Ministry of Equality and the Ministry of the Interior. The catalogue was drafted in July 2021, after a meeting with **associations that work with victims of GBV**. **In Latvia**, a series of laws were passed during the pandemic to **secure more protection for survivors**, which was partly brought about as a result of strong campaigning and organising by women's rights groups, and partly by the presence of a more favourable government.

> About RESISTIRÉ

This factsheet is based on data collected within RESISTIRÉ's second research cycle which ran from December 2021 to 28 February 2022. In this research 31 national researchers worked with the consortium to map policies, societal responses, and qualitative and quantitative indicators relating to the pandemic in EU-27 countries, along with Iceland, the UK, Serbia, and Turkey. This research activity was accompanied by workshops and interviews with gender equality experts whose input informed the main findings from expert consultations.

RESISTIRÉ is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project the aim of which is to 1) understand the impact of COVID-19 policy responses on behavioural, social and economic inequalities in the EU27, Serbia, Turkey, Iceland, and the UK on the basis of a conceptual gender+ framework, and 2) design, devise and pilot policy solutions and social innovations to be deployed by policymakers, stakeholders and actors in different policy domains.

Find out more about the project at **https://resistire-project.eu**.

@Resistire_EU   **@RESISTIRÉ**   **@resistire.EU**

Discover all project outputs at https://resistire-project.eu.
Contact us: resistire_eu@esf.org

> Authorship and Contributions

Authors: A.G. Altınay (SU), N. Türker (SU), P. Ensari (SU), H. Adak (SU)
Coordination and revision: M. Linková (ISAS), A. Kolasinska (ISAS)
Infographics: G. Romeo (YW)

> Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.