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Overall report on Open Studios

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Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

List of acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organisation(s)
EU-27	European Union (27 countries)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
OS	Open Studio(s)
WP	Work Package

Summary

The aim of RESISTIRÉ is to understand the unequal impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and its policy responses on behavioural, social and economic inequalities in 30 countries – the EU-27 (with the exception of Malta) plus Iceland, Serbia, Turkey and the UK – and to work towards individual and societal resilience. It does so by collecting policy data, quantitative data and qualitative data, and by analysing and translating these to insights to be used for designing, devising and piloting solutions for improved policies and social innovations to be deployed by policymakers, stakeholders and actors in the field in different policy domains. The project relies on an eleven-partner multidisciplinary and multisectoral European consortium, and a well-established network of researchers in 31 countries.

This report provides an overall look at the Open Studios that were organised as part of the project. They constitute the essential co-creation step in the RESISTIRÉ process, with results from the consecutive research cycles (WP2-4) being interpreted in this multidisciplinary format. The Open Studios are action-oriented, which means that their ultimate output consists of ideas for concrete action, input for recommendations to reshape policies, and unanswered questions (missing insights or knowledge) that can form the foundation of a future research agenda.

In total, twelve Open Studios were organised over the three cycles of the project, with a mix of participants from the consortium and invited participants. Each Open Studio (OS) had a different thematic focus that reflected important topics that came up in the research. For two days, participants went through a creative process inspired by better stories and by personas that were prepared based on results of the research activities of the project. The overall result was a total of 76 action-ideas that were further used and developed in the RESISTIRÉ project to:

- Formulate recommendations towards different target groups including policymakers, civil society organisations (including NGOs), employers, and other kinds of stakeholders.
- Launch pilot actions that tested and demonstrated the potential of innovative approaches
- Feed the research agenda of RESISTIRÉ, which was promoted to research funding organisations.

While the Open Studios generally proved to be a very successful method of translating the research insights into ideas for concrete action, there are still a number of important lessons that were learned throughout the three cycles that can help improve the Open Studio methodology. These are detailed near the end of the report and will serve to finetune the Open Studio concept for use in future projects.

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Introduction

The aim of RESISTIRÉ is to understand the unequal impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and its policy responses on behavioural, social and economic inequalities in 30 countries – the EU-27 (with the exception of Malta) plus Iceland, Serbia, Turkey and the UK – and to work towards individual and societal resilience. At its peaks, the pandemic led to the introduction of national policy responses and measures in multiple policy domains to slow infections and prevent deaths (Cibin et al., 2021, 2022, 2023). But these responses had unequal effects on individuals and groups, not least those already vulnerable or marginalised (Axelsson et al. 2021; Sandström et al. 2022, 2023). The policy and societal responses profoundly changed lives, with physical and social distancing temporarily becoming the new norm and, where needed, quarantining and self-isolation. This process radically shifted how society is organised, with increased working from home, home-schooling and intensification of online presence, all with their own specific (un)intended consequences (Bonaccorsi et al., 2020). It also meant furloughing and job losses, with associated economic hardship and mental health issues, delayed ordinary health treatments, and worse, the loss of life (Nicola et al., 2020; Van Bavel et al., 2020; Lewnard & Lo, 2020). Worryingly, it also meant increases in the levels of gender-based violence (GBV) and variations in access to support and healthcare.
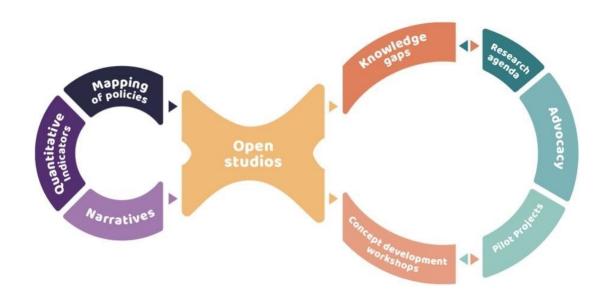
The impacts of these developments, like those of other crises, are gendered and related to sex, age, disability, ethnicity/race, migration status, religion, social class, and the intersections between these inequalities (Lokot & Avakyan, 2020; Walter & McGregor, 2020; Walby, 2015; Axelsson et al., 2021; Sandström et al., 2022, 2023). They are uneven and unequal, disproportional in their consequences for different groups, and their long-term impacts are still uncertain (Cumming et al., 2020). Women have been disproportionally infected by COVID-19 (Sciensano, 2020) and affected by its impact; as front-line workers, as formal or informal caregivers in society; as exposed to a higher risk of men's violence, in particular as intimate partner violence. As these positions intersect with social class, ethnicity, age and other inequalities, our approach deploys a 'gender+' approach, which highlights gender relations and gender inequalities, but always considers how these intersect with other complex inequalities (Verloo, 2013; Walby et al., 2012). Policy responses to this (and any future) pandemic also need to consider the gender+ perspective, and how some groups benefit, while others lose out. It is important to understand how different policy responses have unequal effects, but also how different measures can be put into place to understand and address gender and intersectional inequalities in different policy domains (Lombardo & Kantola, 2019).

To meet these aims, RESISTIRÉ has conducted policy analysis, as well as quantitative and qualitative research activities, to inform the design of innovative solutions. In this way, it responded to the outbreak through co-created and inclusive strategies that addressed

old and new, durable and temporary inequality patterns in and across policy domains. The overall methodology of RESISTIRÉ is based on a step-by-step process running in three cycles over 30 months (April 2021/September 2023). All project activities were organised in these three cycles, feeding results into one another (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: RESISTIRÉ methodological step-by-step three cycle process

This report provides an overall picture of the twelve Open Studios that were conducted in the three cycles of the RESISTIRÉ project and their respective results. Nine of the Open Studios were organised online, while three were held in person: in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain, in Dublin, Ireland and in Prague, Czech Republic. Each one had a duration of two full days and they took place in the following three periods: late September to mid-October 2021, mid-March to early April 2022, and early February to early March 2023. The Open Studios constitute the co-creation step in the RESISTIRÉ process, with results from the previous steps (WP2-4) being interpreted in this multidisciplinary co-design format. This specific approach is a technique developed to design policies in a participative way by bringing together multiple kinds of expertise. The Open Studios are action-oriented, which means that their ultimate output consists of ideas for **concrete action**, input for **recommendations** to reshape policies and towards other stakeholders, and unanswered questions (missing insights or knowledge) that can form the foundation of a **future research agenda**.

In the next chapter, the process of organising and conducting the Open Studios is described. The chapter starts with a brief description of the approach and how the Open

Studios were prepared. After that, each individual Open Studio and its main themes are briefly described. The following chapter provides an overview of the results of the Open Studios that were utilised to formulate **operational recommendations**, calls for **pilot projects**, and the **future research agendas**. It also provides some overall statistics on participation in the Open Studios. The subsequent chapter describes the many lessons that were learned from organising the Open Studios over the course of the RESISTIRÉ project, followed by a chapter presenting overall conclusions.

Process

Open Studio Approach and Preparation

Approach

The Open Studios approach is a technique developed to design policies and societal interventions in a participative way, bringing together multiple kinds of expertise including the user experience. Within the context of RESISTIRÉ, they should be considered an action-oriented analysis of the research results of the previous steps in the project.

The original concept that inspired the RESISTIRÉ Open Studios, was described in Boyer, Cook and Steinberg (2011), and had a duration of five full days. The approach used in RESISTIRÉ is for two days, given the scope of the issues covered and considering the feasibility of recruiting participants. During an Open Studio, participants go through periods of **divergence** (exploring in an open way, brainstorming) and of **convergence** (bringing ideas together into concepts of potential solutions). Different exercises spread over various sessions shape this process, as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Generic overview of a RESISTIRÉ Open Studio

DAY 01	TIME	INPUT / *TOOLS*	OBJECTIVE	OUTPUT
00 *Optional Miro Tutorial*	9:00-9:15	/	Familiarise participants with the Miro board (if OS is held online)	/
01 Warmup; getting started	9:15-10:30	Participant profiles	Familiarise participants with one another and with the OS approach. Get participants thinking beyond their own experience (considering target groups).	Examples of long-term impacts, both individual and structural
02 Inspiration	10:45-13:00	*Presentation on inequalities, set of inspiring/promising policy and societal responses*	Have participants look critically at previous responses to issues (indirectly) caused by COVID-19 to understand what has been done and what can be done better. What have been the better stories of responding to the pandemic (policy & initiative)?	Common characteristics of better stories and their shortcomings: initial identification of opportunities; What/who is missing in

			Ask participants to critically assess the provided policy and societal responses.	the existing better stories?
03 Empathy	14:00-15:30	Impacts (01) and responses (02); *personas*	What/who would have made a difference for this persona? What would have been their better story? What kinds of support mechanisms, resources or actions would have helped? What would the participants have done if they found themselves in a similar situation?	Identification of additional gaps and opportunities/ideas for action
04 Brainstorm	15:50-17:00	Opportunities (02+03); *Lotus Blossom*	Develop ideas on how to overcome barriers creating inequalities and how to enable a more inclusive and creative response to the pandemic.	A selection of ideas to be characterised; Who/what is missing?
DAY 02				
05 Brainstorm	9:00-10:30	All ideas from day 1; *Mind map*	Reflecting on the results of the first day and identifying potential better stories of societal and policy responses	A selection of ideas to be characterised; Who/what is missing?
06 Co-create	11:00-12:30	Ideas selected from 04+05	Turning ideas into better stories of societal and policy responses	Potential pilot actions; Recommendations for stakeholders; Open questions for the research agenda
07 Co-create	13:30-15:00	Ideas selected from 04+05	Turning ideas into better stories of societal and policy responses	Potential pilot actions; Recommendations for stakeholders; Open questions for the research agenda
08 Conclusions	15:20-17:00	Open for conclusion	Define priorities and follow-up actions	Priorities for stakeholder recommendations and for pilot actions

Techniques and tools mentioned in Table 1, like the better stories and personas, are described in more detail below. Each cycle of the project provided for the organisation of four Open Studios (twelve in total), which were held either face-to-face or online depending on the development of COVID-19 in the timeframe that they were supposed to take place. Opting for a face-to-face workshop over an online one (or vice versa) did not have an impact on the general structure and content of an Open Studio. As it turned out, this also did not have a significant effect on the quality of the end results. However, one difference that was observed (also based on feedback from participants) is that in-person Open Studios have led to more in-depth conversations among the participants, resulting in future networking and collaborations among people who come from diverse backgrounds and yet work on shared issues and concerns. One OS in the second cycle and two OS in the third cycle were organised in physical locations, while the remaining nine took place online.

Preparation – Choice of Themes

Two to three months before the envisioned dates of the OS, the thematic foci of each cycle were decided on, typically during the final stages of the research activities of a cycle. This is important because Open Studios need a clear goal and a scope that is

compatible with the method: sufficiently broad to allow for creativity and innovative thinking, but also sufficiently focused to ensure concrete results at the end of an OS. Each time, the selection of subjects was done in steps, with a long list that led to a shortlist and, eventually, a choice. This process was carried out with a mild degree of variation in each cycle; for instance, in the first cycle, a Miro board with potential themes was created by the 'Open Studio team' (consisting of YW, ORU and SU) and shared with the wider consortium in a workshop to gather their feedback, whereas in the second cycle the consortium partners were simply asked to vote on a long list, as they were already familiar with the concept and practical implementation of the Open Studios.

Criteria used included the feasibility of handling a topic within the OS format, the likeliness to get operational results, the balance of themes covered, and the risk factor. The final decision in each cycle was always taken by the YW, ORU and SU teams (with the addition of the ISAS team in the third cycle) and reflected the differing priorities of each cycle. Each Open Studio and corresponding thematic focus are discussed in more detail below.

Preparation – Recruitment of Participants

Once themes were established for all of the Open Studios in a given cycle, the recruitment of participants was started, both from within the consortium and invited experts. For every OS, the objective was to have twelve participants from among the team members of consortium organisations and to have eight external participants participate. For external participants, it was imperative to have a mix of different profiles, including but not necessarily limited to:

- People directly involved (professionally) in the subject of the OS;
- People who had been studying the thematic area (mostly from academia and some from CSOs/NGOs);
- People with a creative/artistic background;
- People working for social partner organisations;
- Activists;
- Policymakers.

The identification of suitable experts was a collective responsibility, with all consortium partners contributing to develop a long list for each OS. The YW team complemented this list through desk research to identify and screen additional stakeholders and experts. Based on this long list, invitation mails were sent out in waves to ensure the previously established quota would be met as adequately as possible. The YW team was in charge of sending out invitations and coordinating the recruitment process. ESF was involved in contracting the external participants as experts.

Preparation – Tools and Techniques

The content of the Open Studios as well as the materials to be used in the exercises were prepared in the same time period. This was done through the exploitation of the research results from WP2, WP3 and WP4 which either became available in the weeks and months leading up to the OS or was already available from previous cycles.

A package of materials was prepared and sent to all participants one week prior to each OS. This included a briefing note on the project, the OS approach and practical information; an introduction to the theme of the OS that included results from the research phases (WP2, 3 and 4); and a set of better stories (see below) related to the theme of the OS. These materials also provided the basis for a presentation that is given by one of the facilitators at the start of the second session.

Better stories were the first specific tool applied in the workshop itself, used as inspiration and material to work with in the second session of the Open Studios (as well as in the third session for one specific OS in the third cycle). They are stories that identify how a given (negative) societal situation can be ameliorated to improve on existing practices, without being a perfect fix that turns out to be unattainable (i.e., a 'best story'). As feminist scholar Dina Georgis (2013) argues in her book *The Better Story*: "There is always a better story than the better story". The better stories serve to inspire and form the groundwork for the development of more concrete results, like policy recommendations and potential societal initiatives. In this regard, the Open Studios tried to find answers to some key questions, which included the following:
- What have been some inspiring practices, initiatives, and policies that we have been able to observe in different contexts across Europe?
- What can we learn from these to imagine even better stories of responding to this crisis that we all share, but are not equally affected by?
- How can a gender+ perspective help us explore, make visible, and co-create more egalitarian and inclusive policies, initiatives, and practices?

The better stories were selected from the mappings containing policies and societal responses collected by the national researchers (WP2) and complemented with desk research for a sufficiently balanced portfolio. They were then further developed in a standardised format adapted for use in Open Studios. Better stories that were collected in the project are available on the RESISTIRÉ project website. These include not only better stories used in the Open Studios, but also others that were selected as particularly inspiring initiatives/policies.

Personas were used in the third session, following the better stories, as a tool to stimulate creativity, create empathy and take some distance from the personal experiences of the participants. These personas are based on earlier research in the project and profile different archetypes of people that were affected by the pandemic in one way or another. The ORU team in charge of analysing the narratives (WP4) was

briefed in the first cycle on the OS method and process, as well as the personas. This allowed ORU to identify narratives that could be inspiring for the development of the personas. They were developed by the YW, ORU and SU teams in two steps: firstly, defining the basic characteristics of at least six personas for each OS, checking the consistency and the coverage of inequalities. Secondly, the development of drafts for each set of personas, including the choice of visuals and the development of quotes (inspired by real quotes in the narratives). These drafts were reviewed by the team before their finalisation.

Finally, in the fourth session of the Open Studios, **lotus blossoms** were used to facilitate one last brainstorming exercise. Lotus blossoms contain a central idea, issue or question that is to be discussed in the middle of a poster. Participants are asked to develop eight ideas that are subsequently placed on the poster as sticky notes around the central issue. The poster then allows participants to develop each of these eight initial ideas further if the group wishes to do so. The central ideas/issues/questions were developed in advance by the Open Studio team and sometimes adapted on the fly if interesting and unforeseen topics or directions came up in the preceding three sessions.

Overview of Open Studios

What follows is an overview of the twelve Open Studios that were organised, categorised by cycle. Table 2 lists the topics of these Open Studios as well as the cycle and format they were organised in.

Table 2 – Overview of all twelve Open Studios

Cycle and OS Number	Topic	Format
Cycle 1 - OS1	Support for Healthcare Workers	Online
Cycle 1 - OS2	Inclusive Telework	Online
Cycle 1 - OS3	Inclusive Green Spaces	Online
Cycle 1 - OS4	Masculinity Roles	Online
Cycle 2 - OS1	Gender-based Violence	Online
Cycle 2 - OS2	Support for Young People in Education	Face-to-face (Donostia-San Sebastián)
Cycle 2 - OS3	Support for Teachers	Online
Cycle 2 - OS4	Digital Gender-based Violence and Digital Activism	Online
Cycle 3 - OS1	Support for Older People	Face-to-face (Dublin)
Cycle 3 - OS2	Ecosystems of Care	Face-to-face (Prague)
Cycle 3 - OS3	Creative Civic Responses to Crises	Online
Cycle 3 - OS4	Inclusive Digitalisation	Online

Cycle 1

For the first cycle, held between late September and late October 2021, the decision was taken to have significantly different themes for all four Open Studios, and to mix OS with a **target group focus** (i.e., health workers) and OS with a **thematic focus** (i.e., green spaces).

The first Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Improving Support for Healthcare Workers**' and sought to find solutions to the myriad difficulties faced by healthcare staff, paying attention to the gendered dimensions of the problems faced by the healthcare sector. It looked at the severe impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers' physical and mental health, as well as the bad working conditions under which they had to (and still have to) work in various national contexts. It also covered the domination of decision-making processes and healthcare management by men despite the female-majority composition of the healthcare workforce, as well as the patriarchal gender norms and harassment/violence that female healthcare workers contend with on a daily basis.

The second Open Studio, titled '**Better is Possible: Solutions for Inclusive Telework**', covered the various socioeconomic implications of the shift to telework in the wake of the pandemic. These include the increased domestic workload on women working from home, the negative physical and mental health effects that are sometimes associated with telework, and the lack of digital skills and/or equipment that prevents many from engaging in remote work.

The third Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Solutions for Inclusive Access to Green Spaces**' and looked more closely at the unequal availability of green spaces (i.e., the urban grey-green divide) from an intersectional perspective and the consequences of this phenomenon for mental and physical health inequalities, as well as the unequal opportunities for social interactions, community-building and managing or designing green spaces. Moreover, it covered issues related to the accessibility of green spaces, as well as their safety.

The final Open Studio of the first cycle, titled '**Better is Possible: Transforming Masculinity Roles**', covered the rethinking of masculinities in the wake of the gender care gap becoming more visible during the pandemic. It looked at the increased involvement of fathers in childcare activities and the consequences of telework on family dynamics.

Cycle 2

The second cycle, held between early March and early April 2022, focused on two broad themes – **education and gender-based violence** – which covered two Open Studios

each.

The first Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Post-pandemic Innovations to Counter Gender-based Violence**' and sought to address several issues. It looked for innovative ideas to help prevent GBV, improve the protection offered to survivors, improve the prosecution of perpetrators, ameliorate the provision of services to survivors and their families, improve cooperation between civil society and public institutions, and gather ideas for more concrete policies that could help with all of the above.

The second Open Studio, titled '**Better is Possible: Young People in Education During and Beyond the Pandemic**', looked more closely at the plight of young people and their (existing and newfound) difficulties in education, paying special attention to gender+ inequalities among them. It paid attention to their mental health struggles, the difficulties in keeping up with digital/hybrid education in terms of skills and equipment, and the reduced presence of peer and teacher support networks during the pandemic.

The third Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Solutions for Teachers in a Post-pandemic World**' and looked at the other side of the coin in education: teachers. Issues that it covered included their unsustainable workload and working conditions, the inception or exacerbation of mental health issues among teachers due to the pandemic, the difficulties in keeping up with digital/hybrid education, and the reduced interactions with pupils and other teachers during the pandemic.

The final Open Studio of the second cycle, titled '**Better is Possible: Gender-based Digital Violence and Digital Activism**', covered the many digital iterations of GBV and the various forms of digital activism that have proliferated. It looked at the intersectional gender+ dimensions of digital GBV, as well as its consequences on mental health, personal relationships, feelings of (dis)empowerment, and any economic impacts.

Cycle 3

Since no pilot actions could be initiated in the remaining timespan of the project, the third cycle, held between early February and early March 2023, focused on subjects that could reinforce and contribute to the project's advocacy activities.

The first Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Solutions for Older People in a Post-pandemic World**' and focused on age-related intersectional inequalities and violations of older people's rights in light of the pandemic. It covered such topics as age discrimination, access to and provision of care for older people, isolation and mental health, and the participation of older people as active agents in crisis situations.

The second Open Studio, titled '**Ecosystems of Care: Inclusive and Healing Urban Ecologies**', covered the concept of ecosystems of care (as developed by the pilot projects) in more detail. It explored the ways in which ecosystems of care could be replicated in different contexts, as well as scaled up. It sought to create the basis for a community of researchers and activists around this topic and to create action plans for the advocacy of these innovative green space interventions.

The third Open Studio was titled '**Better is Possible: Creative Civic Responses to Crises**' and reflected on both the better stories collected throughout the project and the pilot actions initiated as part of the project. It focused on ways of stimulating the creativity/innovation of civic responses, ways that the public sector can support the emergence of civic responses during crises, and ways to improve the gender+ inclusivity of civic responses.

The final Open Studio of the third cycle, titled '**Better is Possible: Inclusive Digitalisation and Bridging the Digital Divide**', covered inequalities related to digitalisation and how they have been exacerbated during the pandemic. It covered the impact of digitalisation on education, social services and remote work, but also ethical concerns in terms of unethical behaviour in digital spaces and the inclusive design of digital tools/platforms.

Results

The twelve Open Studios produced a total of **76 ideas for action** that were developed further in the RESISTIRÉ project, serving as the foundation for various pilot actions, informing future research agendas, and inspiring the factsheets containing operational recommendations. As these action-ideas were listed and described in previous reports covering each cycle of Open Studios, they are not repeated here. Links to these reports can be found on the [dedicated page](#) on the project website.

In order to highlight the concrete results that the Open Studios contributed to, however, Table 3 below lists all of the outputs that were – to varying degrees – based on, informed by, or influenced by the various action-ideas that were developed. Most, if not all, of these outputs were, of course, also based (directly or indirectly) on the results and insights of the project's research activities.

Throughout the three cycles, the Open Studios have contributed directly and significantly to the development of eleven of the 22 produced factsheets containing policy recommendations. Nine of the sixteen future research agendas were also influenced in some capacity by OS results, while all seven concepts for pilot projects

(resulting in the implementation of nine different projects) were first developed during the Open Studios. Finally, one card game (as an unplanned, additional output) was produced by RESISTIRÉ as a result of the OS as well.

Table 3 – List of project outputs informed by Open Studios

Output	Open Studio(s)
CYCLE 1	
Factsheet No. 3 – Gender Equality in the Healthcare Sector	Open Studio 1.1
Factsheet No. 4 – Green Spaces and Gentrification	Open Studio 1.3
Factsheet No. 5 – Care and Crisis: Fostering a Paradigm Shift	Open Studios 1.2 & 1.4
Factsheet No. 7 – Telework as a Double-edged Sword: Risks and Opportunities	Open Studios 1.2 & 1.4
Pilot Project: Caring Workspaces	Open Studio 1.2
Pilot Project: Employers Who Care	Open Studio 1.4
Pilot Project: Green Spaces as Ecosystems of Care (two projects)	Open Studio 1.3
Research Agenda: Care	Open Studio 1.2
Research Agenda: Work and Pay	Open Studio 1.2
Research Agenda: Human Rights and Health	Open Studio 1.1
CYCLE 2	
Factsheet No. 8 – Crisis Management for All: Inclusive, Multi-Actor Crisis Management	Open Studios 2.1 & 2.3
Factsheet No. 9 – Gender-Based Violence during Crises: Risk Assessment, Prevention and Effective Response	Open Studio 2.1
Factsheet No. 10 – Creating Safe Digital Spaces	Open Studio 2.4
Factsheet No. 11 – Education: Developing Resilient Education Systems	Open Studios 2.2 & 2.3
Pilot Project: Engaging with Gender-based Violence Through Sports (two projects)	Open Studio 2.1
Pilot Project: Exhale: Moving Through Secondary Trauma Together	Open Studio 2.4
Pilot Project: Inclusive Schools – Engaging Parents of Vulnerable Youth	Open Studio 2.2
Pilot Project: Care Fair – A School-based Wellbeing Event	Open Studio 2.2
Research Agenda: Education	Open Studios 2.2 & 2.3
Research Agenda: Gender-based Violence	Open Studio 2.1
CYCLE 3	
Factsheet No. 16 – Digital Transformation for an Inclusive Post-COVID Recovery	Open Studio 3.4
Factsheet No. 18 – Crisis as a Continuum: Learning from an Inclusive Feminist Crisis Response	Open Studio 3.3
Factsheet No. 19 – Transformative Funding: A Pathway for Creative and Effective Crisis Response	Open Studio 3.3

Research Agenda: Inequalities in Age and Ageing	Open Studio 3.1
Research Agenda: Digitalisation	Open Studio 3.4
Research Agenda: Gender+ Inclusive Green Spaces	Open Studio 3.2
Research Agenda: Civic Responses to Crisis	Open Studio 3.3
Additional output: "Right(s) now!" card game	Open Studio 3.1

The project website presents the factsheets containing operational recommendations as well as the descriptions of the pilot projects and the future research agendas. The website also features the "Right(s) now!" game, which includes a downloadable set of cards.

In terms of participation, Table 4 provides an overview of the total number of participants in each cycle of four Open Studios, as well as overall numbers. The numbers for internal participants include the facilitators.

Table 4 – Number of participants per Open Studio cycle and overall

	Internal Participants	External Participants	Total
Cycle 1	66	30	96
Cycle 2	58	27	85
Cycle 3	47	27	74
Overall	171	84	255

Lessons Learned

Throughout the project, the Open Studios consistently produced the expected results and, in many cases, exceeded prior expectations, proving that the OS approach works. In total, twelve Open Studios were organised on themes that differed significantly from each other and required very different groups of participants each time. However, only very minor changes were made throughout the three cycles of workshops. Nevertheless, there are a number of lessons that were learned over the course of the three cycles that can be taken into account for any future applications of the Open Studio approach. What follows are some of the many lessons that were learned in the course of organising and facilitating the Open Studios.

Firstly, the results that were produced corresponded to the initial expectations: the OS yielded ideas for **feasible pilot projects** as well as concepts or significant contributions for **recommendations** to various target groups. The contribution to the research agenda was, however, less visible: there were mostly no specific outputs, as the posters/tools used did not permit to harness the research questions that came up.

Instead, inputs for the research agenda needed to be identified through an ex-post analysis of results. Resolving this situation is one of many topics that can be explored in an Open Studio-focused event organised in September 2023 (see below).

In any case, the number of outputs from the Open Studios was, in effect, too much for RESISTIRÉ. It was simply impossible to exploit all of the results within the limited timeframe and budget of the project, meaning that choices had to be made. There was often competition among the outputs of one single OS, but also between the outputs of all four OS in a given cycle. One can contend that this is a healthy process, as, for example, only the best ideas are supposedly operationalised in the form of factsheets. However, this is not entirely the case because of two reasons:

- There is an inefficiency due to the imbalance between the output potential of the Open Studios on the one hand, and the available resources in the project to exploit them on the other hand.
- It can be frustrating and potentially demotivating for the team. This was not the case for RESISTIRÉ, as there was no time to reflect and the team had to move on and look forward given the fast-paced timeline of the project.

It is clear from the diverse choice of subjects throughout the three cycles that the Open Studio format can adequately and effectively cover a wide variety of different topics. While the specific format used was mostly the same across all Open Studios, it was slightly altered for one Open Studio in the third cycle to accommodate an approach that was more focused on better stories (as opposed to a combination of better stories and personas). This development illustrates that the OS format as used in the RESISTIRÉ project can be successfully adapted to cover more topics and elicits the question of how it can still be adapted further to accommodate an even broader range of subjects; i.e., in terms of its length, the specific sessions and methods used, the balance in the profiles of participants, the tools used in both online and face-to-face contexts, etc.

Over the three cycles of Open Studios, a lot of useful feedback on the OS method was also provided by the participants. Moreover, the facilitators finetuned some aspects of the OS approach and practical organisation based on the experiences of previous cycles. Some observations of how the Open Studios could be adapted for the better only came up in one OS, while other sentiments were expressed over multiple OS (and sometimes cycles) by multiple different participants.

These useful observations and feedback provided intriguing notions for future adaptations and reinforced some of the ideas for potential improvements that already existed among the Open Studio team. For instance, it was proposed that a session could be included in future OS that would cover promotional efforts and advocacy: how to promote the ideas that came out of this creative process to relevant stakeholders, and how to anticipate potential criticisms and even opposition to the ideas proposed? Such

a session could also enhance the possibilities of future collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in Open Studios and provide them with a basis to continue connecting, co-creating, co-implementing and co-advocating the meaningful results of the Open Studio.

In this regard, it is very important that additional efforts are undertaken to include more representatives of user groups (related to the subject covered) and policymakers in future Open Studios. While some Open Studios did include user groups (i.e., healthcare workers in OS 1.1, students in OS 2.2) and relevant policymakers (i.e., OS 1.3), this was generally not the case and remains an issue to be addressed. In the case of the former, it is often difficult to find and approach people who are both part of the targeted user group and willing/able to participate in an Open Studio. In the case of the latter, the two-day format is one of the biggest obstacles, with policymakers generally not being able to free up their schedules for such a large block of time. While it is not easy for any of the participants to set aside this much time, this target group might encounter the most difficulties in doing so.

In terms of the methods used, there was a generally positive reception of better stories; participants were usually quite interested in the various initiatives and policies that made a positive difference in different (but often similar) contexts across Europe. Not only did they themselves learn from these better stories, but they also contributed to an understanding of what elements could be changed for the better and how these initiatives could be improved. One critique could be that not all better stories were 'created equally', meaning that they sometimes introduced more questions or doubts than they answered (i.e., because they were not detailed enough). However, what is important is that they always triggered a constructive discussion among the participants: critiques were usually accompanied by ideas for solution, and any 'gaps in the story' presented participants with the opportunity to come up with their own solutions.

The personas, while usually received positively, did attract some criticism from participants in a few Open Studios. Even though they were inspired by the many narratives that were gathered as part of WP4, the personas did not always manage to generate sufficient empathy among the participants, as they sometimes found it quite difficult to relate to the circumstances/situation of the people described. As a result, it was not clear to participants (in these specific cases) in what ways the described people could endeavour to improve the circumstances they found themselves in, nor what policies/initiatives could have made a significant difference to their situation. Nevertheless, a significant number of useful insights was still gathered in the persona sessions of each OS, providing the facilitation team with part of the foundation for the activities of the second day. In any case, it is clear that there is some potential for improvement with regard to the personas, which will be a topic covered in the September 2023 event that will, among other activities, brainstorm on improving and

further utilising this promising tool.

Some new tools have also been suggested over the course of the three cycles. For example, it was proposed to include inequality schemes in one of the sessions of the first day; these would help participants – especially those without specialised knowledge of the relevant inequalities, like user groups in some cases – to better understand the various intersectional inequalities that are related to the topic at hand. Similarly, a scheme detailing the various relevant actors and/or existing regulations could be useful in helping the participants understand the contemporary framework that they are operating in, illustrating any current limitations or institutional rigidities that might prevent positive change from happening. These schemes could take the form of an easily readable overview or table, a visual presentation, etc. Service design methods like the use of journey maps could also be included in an alternative OS approach. If applied in a different OS approach, this would most likely be the case during the proceedings of the second day of activities.

With the first in-person Open Studio having taken place in the second cycle of the project, a number of lessons were learned and incorporated in the organisation of the in-person Open Studios of the subsequent cycle, which can be consulted in the report on the third cycle. While the quality of results is similar for online and in-person Open Studios, there are still obvious and meaningful differences in how they are experienced, which could inform the further finetuning and adaptation of the OS approach (in both formats). For instance, it would benefit the online Open Studios if the more informal social interactions in-between sessions and the more organic discussions of the in-person Open Studios could somehow be reproduced in a digital context, thereby capturing the 'spirit' of an offline OS.

With regard to the in-person Open Studios, on the other hand, the usage of Miro has been introduced in certain sessions, though it could be expanded further (for example, to capture and share input more efficiently). It has also been suggested that there could be more 'extracurricular' activities (like field visits) related to the subject of the Open Studio. This could improve the overall experience and enhance the development of connections and networking between the participants. The consequence is, however, a longer Open Studio.

While the outputs of the Open Studios are of similar quality for both the online and face-to-face formats, there are still distinct advantages and disadvantages to using each of them. These are reflected in Table 5 below and are based on interviews conducted with all consortium partners who were both present in the first in-person OS and have also experienced an online OS.

Table 5 – Advantages and disadvantages of online and face-to-face Open Studios

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online Open Studios	Output on a digital whiteboard is more comprehensive and more readable. Sticky notes are quickly and easily restructured. Facilitators can correct and complement sticky notes more easily than physical sticky notes on a real poster.	Barrier to using Miro: some participants experience difficulties. For others it is often a new tool, and they require a tutorial to get started.
		Participants can be distracted by their environment and lose focus: e.g., checking mails while in the OS, answering the door, etc.
	Working online allows participants to produce more: while someone talks, others can still write sticky notes or contribute on the board.	The quality of the participants' hardware and internet connection plays an important role. Having a bigger or second screen is an advantage when using Miro.
		Zoom fatigue.
Face-to-face Open Studios	The impact of the experience on the participants is much bigger. This is illustrated by a better recollection of what happened, of who the other participants were, and of the results that came out of the OS.	The cost, which includes actual expenses (like travel and accommodation costs) but also travel time.
	Networking impact: much more likely to lead to follow-up contacts between participants who got to know each other.	

The Open Studios – both online and face-to-face – were generally perceived to proceed in a smooth and uninterrupted manner by the participants, as a careful eye was always kept on time management by the facilitators and participants were kept engaged throughout the whole process. Nevertheless, there could still be ways to streamline the OS experience in relatively small ways. For instance, participants did not always put their feedback on the poster/Miro board, instead relying on facilitators to capture their input after speaking out. While this is not necessarily an issue, it can somewhat delay the exercises in the smaller breakout groups.

With regard to Miro in particular, participants were not always familiar with this tool beforehand (especially in the first cycle) and sometimes struggled to make use of it. This was addressed by organising a brief tutorial session fifteen minutes before the actual start of the Open Studio to help participants get acquainted with the basic functionalities. Another lesson learned during the first Open Studio was to not allow

participation through a smartphone. The OS team did not anticipate this possibility before it occurred, and it poses an issue since using Miro on a smartphone is not feasible. Participants were informed that a desktop or laptop computer was required instead. For both face-to-face and online OS, Miro proved to be an indispensable tool for compiling the results of the first day and, consequently, providing a solid foundation for the activities of the second day.

There is also the need to take adequate care of the participants' physical and mental health during Open Studios, as they can ask quite a lot of energy from participants over two days. This is especially the case for online OS where Zoom fatigue sets in: participants cannot socialise with each other and are sitting behind a computer screen for most of the day. One of the facilitators being a certified qi gong instructor, qi gong sessions were adopted from the second OS onwards to counter mental and physical fatigue, providing participants with an energy boost and an opportunity to move around (both during online and face-to-face Open Studios) before the last session of each day. These sessions also gave the participants a sense of being 'cared for' which proved to be essential during the pandemic, particularly with much of the conversations in the Open Studios revolving around care and wellbeing. They helped pilot a 'better story' of co-creation through an ethics of care. Nevertheless, it can be fruitful to think of other methods to keep participants active and engaged in a healthy way.

Lastly, some participants have expressed interest in keeping in touch with each other after an Open Studio, exchanging contact details to remain in contact. With a little bit of preparation, the creation of a community of OS participants could be facilitated by RESISTIRÉ. In fact, for a few Open Studios, social media pages were created to keep the participants connected to each other. However, these communities did not display a lot of activity after the conclusion of the related Open Studio and could be leveraged more effectively (i.e., for advocacy purposes). For instance, a 'digital coffee hour' or other low-threshold events could be organised to 'gather' participants in a structured but open way. Providing a platform does not seem to be sufficient, so perhaps setting a day and time or giving a call to action would reignite the enthusiasm seen at the end of many Open Studios.

While all of the lessons learned that have been described above are important to further improve the Open Studio concept, OS participants generally agreed that this innovative approach worked very well, with some being so enthusiastic that they expressed the desire to incorporate a similar creative methodology in their own work and organisations. There were suggestions in multiple Open Studios to propose the OS methodology as a pilot action for participatory co-creation. The Open Studios also provided adequate input and ideas for the operational recommendations, the pilot projects, the future research agendas, and advocacy actions, which are the purview of WP6 and WP7. Nevertheless, it is important to the potential of Open Studios to elicit

creative (re)actions that the above lessons are integrated into a future OS approach.

Conclusions

The results of the research activities performed in RESISTIRÉ have shown that "COVID-19 and its policy responses have made the most vulnerable even more vulnerable, with strong gender regimes and social class and social capital regimes cutting across multiple domains" (Axelsson et al. 2021). The Open Studios have shown that this negative trend creates an opportunity as it emphasises the need for change. The situation has become worse for many vulnerable groups due to the pandemic and the policy responses associated with it, but this has made the inequalities more visible as well. There is no excuse anymore not to act.

The Open Studios are one step in the RESISTIRÉ process: from research to insights to solutions to piloting those solutions and to advocating change based on evidence. It is a short but critical step in that process whereby actual impact and conclusions have become visible in the subsequent stages. Most of the action-ideas produced through the Open Studios were triggered by what happened during the lockdowns and the different waves of the pandemic, but the final results encompass solutions to tackle the root causes of the inequalities, even after the end of the pandemic. From RESISTIRÉ's operational recommendations to its pilot actions to its research agendas over three cycles, the Open Studios have made a substantial contribution to the various solutions and creative innovations that the project has championed.

In order to reflect further on the many lessons that were learned during the organisation and facilitation of the Open Studios, an event will be organised in Istanbul in September 2023 that will explore the promising potential that the Open Studios still have. It will cover a variety of topics, from adapting the 'traditional' approach that the Open Studios follow now to improving the tools and methods that are used (including the personas) to improving the flow of the workshop.

Whatever the conclusions of the exploratory event in September will be, the better stories proved to be a useful tool across all cycles in having the experts critically assess existing policies and societal initiatives, without them immediately proposing unattainable goals/solutions. They allowed the experts to be inspired by the positive aspects of an existing policy/initiative and made them think about how to improve those aspects to make them more inclusive for vulnerable groups and to target existing inequalities in a more effective way. Overall, the better stories and the initial discussion around them has enhanced the imaginative and inclusive nature of the recommendations, pilot projects, and advocacy actions, and helped to focus discussions on solutions rather than on problems.

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Annex

Generic Guideline

OPEN STUDIOS – Creating better stories

In Open Studios, we will be exploring the possibilities for co-creating better stories of responding to the pandemic. What have been some inspiring practices, initiatives, policies that we have observed in different contexts across Europe? What can we learn from them to imagine even better stories of responding to this crisis that we all share, but are not equally affected by? How can a gender+ perspective help us explore, make visible and co-create more egalitarian, more inclusive policies, initiatives and practices? As feminist scholar Dina Georgis argues in her book The Better Story, "there is always a better story than the better story."

This Open Studio will enable a co-creative setting where we will learn from the existing better stories of responding to the pandemic in more inclusive ways and co-design even better stories together.

OS(#) – Better is Possible: (Insert Title)

This Open Studio has to contribute to following objectives:
- Translate the results of the research activities into insights.
- Develop ideas of potential actions and solutions to:
    - **(Describe challenges here)**
- Critically assess these ideas in terms of impact and feasibility.

Material to be sent in advance to participants
- A general briefing on the RESISTIRÉ project;
- A set of promising practices corresponding to the theme of the OS (both policy and societal responses);
- Highlights of the RESISTIRÉ deliverables on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on inequalities (with a specific section dedicated to the theme of the OS).

What to ask participants before the OS:
- In case of online OS, to register and try out Miro in order to familiarise themselves with the digital whiteboard, including to have a look at who the other participants are (alternative is to organise a briefing session beforehand);
- Any examples of promising practices corresponding to the theme of the OS (both policy and societal responses).

What to prepare and have available during the OS:
- In case of online OS, Miro board
- Better Stories
- Personas
- PPT on issues linked to **(open studio theme)**

DAY 01

In case of online OS, 15-minute optional Miro tutorial starting at 9:00

Session 01 – Warmup & Getting Started – 9:15-10:30

9:15-9:30 – Participants are welcomed and given brief introduction to RESISTIRÉ project and Open Studio methodology. (Main facilitator)

9:30-9:45 – Participants are divided into groups of two, who will introduce themselves to each other through 'our better stories' (Main facilitator):
- Who are they? Based where? Doing what?
- Personal better story/stories linked to **(open studio theme)**?

Rapporteur puts all participants in rooms by two (at random)

9:45-10:15 – Participants return to plenary, introduce their conversation partners and their respective answers to the above questions. (Main facilitator)
In case of online OS, all participants are invited to meet on Miro. Short intro to make sure all are at the same place.
One of the co-facilitators is the active listener and asks questions/clarifications if needed, also goes to the next duo and acts as timekeeper. The other co-facilitator is writing on the poster.

10:15-10:30 – General discussion about what was heard, what personal experiences in different contexts tell us about pandemic's impact, what better stories are possible. Also pay attention to the common characteristics of our better stories and who/what institutions have helped enable them. (Co-facilitator)

15-minute break

Session 02 - Inspiration - 10:45-13:00

10:45-10:55 – Presentation about inequalities created and/or deepened during pandemic related to theme. (Rapporteur)

10:55-11:15 – In plenary, sharing of participants' knowledge and experiences &

discussion of the basic questions and observations behind the OS. (Co-facilitator)

11:15-12:15 – Participants split into 4 smaller groups which each receive a set of policy responses and a set of societal responses. Groups should spend approximately the same amount of time on both sets and process at least one of each (preferably two or even more) by identifying on a poster: (Main facilitator)

- What makes the policy/societal initiative a positive one?
- Which aspects of the policy/societal initiative could be improved?

12:15-12:45 – Participants return to plenary, present their results and review the findings of the other groups. Important points of focus are the common characteristics between policies/initiatives and what actors, institutions, resources, etc. have contributed to these policies/initiatives. (Main facilitator)

12:45-13:00 – Remaining in plenary, participants identify what/who is missing in the existing better stories & who is still excluded and could benefit from further inclusion. (Co-facilitator)

1-hour lunch break

Session 03 – Empathy – 14:00-15:30

14:00-15:00 – Participants are split into 4 smaller groups which are assigned two personas each. They should identify what circumstances, policies, societal initiatives and/or other factors would have made a difference for the specific issues of these personas. Their answers are captured on a poster with pre-defined issues as per the presentation in session 02. Participants should spend maximum 30 minutes per persona. (Main facilitator)

15:00-15:30 – Participants return to plenary where they share their findings. This enables them to identify any additional gaps and opportunities/ideas for future action. (Main facilitator; co-facilitator writing on board)

10-minute break
10-minute optional Qi Gong session

Session 04 – Brainstorm (1) – 15:50-17:00

15:50-16:35 – Participants are split into 4 small groups and start brainstorming with the help of a Lotus Blossom. Brainstorm should look at the barriers present from the perspective of socioeconomic inequalities (which are placed beforehand in the Lotus

Blossom) and how the participants can develop ideas on how to overcome those barriers. (Main facilitator)

Barriers/questions:

- **(Insert barriers/question related to OS theme)**

16:35-16:50 – Participants return to plenary to share their findings. (Main facilitator)

16:50-17:00 – Remaining in plenary, participants reflect once again on what/who has been missing from the discussion and what groups of people would not be able to benefit from the ideas that were brought up. (Co-facilitator)

DAY 02

Session 05 – Brainstorm (2) – 9:00-10:30

9:00-10:30 – In plenary, facilitators present clusters of ideas from day 1 that could be developed in day 2. The context of RESISTIRÉ is explained again: concrete actions need to be developed that improve the situation of vulnerable groups. These can be: recommendations (to policymakers, employers, NGOs); or actions that could be initiated during the project with external partners. (Main facilitator)

The list proposed is challenged by the participants in a brainstorm: what is missing, what can be merged, what can be split? During this discussion, co-facilitators are copy-pasting the ideas for action in a Lotus Blossom-type of poster on the right side. They are adding sticky notes characterising the idea based on the discussion (in another colour).

A maximum of 8 ideas is selected for further deliberation. These are divided over sessions 06 and 07. Selection of participants to work in small groups happens at the end of this session.

Longer 30-minute break to allow facilitation team to select the ideas to be worked on in further sessions

Session 06 – Co-create (1) a societal response – 11:00-12:30

11:00-11:30 – Participants are split in smaller self-selected groups which are assigned one idea from the list of ideas compiled by the facilitation team during the break. Participants should start with a brief brainstorming exercise to identify any additional elements that could enhance the impact of the initial idea. There is a standard poster with proposed dimensions to be considered for the brainstorm; but these can be

changed depending on the idea, both by the facilitators, or by the group. (Main facilitator)

11:30-12:00 – Participants, still in smaller groups, fill in a poster with basic information for a policy/societal response that could lead to a pilot action and/or to recommendations for stakeholders. At the end of the session, the facilitator asks to identify any 'open questions' that could be included in the next research cycle.

12:00-12:30 – Participants return to plenary where all of the results are reviewed and participants are encouraged to add questions, comments and/or suggestions next to the group posters. (Main facilitator)

60-minute lunch break

Session 07 – Co-create (2) a policy – 13:30-15:00

13:30-14:00 – Participants are split in smaller self-selected groups which are assigned another idea from the list of ideas compiled by the facilitation team during the break. Participants should start with a brief brainstorming exercise to identify any additional elements that could enhance the impact of the initial idea.

14:00-14:30 – Participants, still in smaller groups, fill in a poster with basic information for a policy/societal response that could lead to a pilot action and/or to policy recommendations. At the end of the session, the facilitator asks to identify any 'open questions' that could be included in the next research cycle.

14:30-15:00 – Participants return to plenary where all of the results are reviewed and participants are encouraged to add questions, comments and/or suggestions next to the group posters. (Main facilitator)

10-minute break
10-minute optional Qi Gong session

Session 08 – Conclusions – 15:20-17.00 (recorded session)

15:20-16:40 – All individual participants are asked to share their conclusions one by one with the group on which ideas they consider to have the highest potential to be developed further and implemented by RESISTIRÉ (target is to choose two ideas). Participants explain why this is their choice. Miro is not used for this session, but co-facilitators are filling in the results on the Miro board, including the 'votes' expressed for action-ideas. (Main facilitator)

This time can also be used to:
- Include an unplanned session triggered by the results of the previous sessions.
- Add further details to some of the most promising ideas identified (i.e., a strong candidate for a concrete pilot action).

<u>16:40-17:00</u> – Participants are asked what experiences they take away from the Open Studio, what their recommendations would be for future Open Studios and what they would recommend for the RESISTIRÉ project as a whole. (Co-facilitator)

Miro is not used for this session, but co-facilitators are harnessing responses on the Miro board to be able to share results with the group.

General thank you from the facilitators and reminder that Miro board stays open.