

## Strengthening your cardiovascular care pathway in times of disruption: a practical tool for European hospitals

William Wijns<sup>1</sup>, MD, PhD; Sandrine Wallace<sup>2</sup>; on behalf of the RESIL-Card consortium

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the leading cause of death in Europe. Despite major advances in diagnosis and treatment, recent crises – from pandemics to geopolitical instability – have exposed the vulnerability of healthcare systems to disruption. In a global health landscape increasingly shaped by uncertainty, proactive preparedness is no longer optional; it is essential.

To address this challenge, at the initiative of the PCR community, the RESIL-Card project<sup>1</sup> supports European cardiovascular professionals in strengthening the resilience of their care pathways. Co-funded by the European Union (EU) under the EU4Health Programme, the initiative has developed and launched a practical, evidence-based tool to help hospitals anticipate disruptions and maintain timely, high-quality cardiovascular care when systems are under pressure.

At the heart of the RESIL-Card tool is a structured self-assessment and improvement framework facilitated by interventional cardiovascular teams. The tool guides users through four steps to evaluate the preparedness of their care pathways across six resilience dimensions that influence care delivery during periods of stress.

Through this collaborative process, multidisciplinary resilience teams – including clinicians, nurses, managers, patients and other stakeholders – map how care is currently organised, identify vulnerabilities and prioritise improvement actions. The result is a visual heatmap highlighting strengths and gaps, supported by practical recommendations and good practice examples identified across Europe.

By using the tool, you can strengthen your capacity to maintain timely diagnosis and treatment for patients with acute and chronic cardiovascular conditions, even during crises. It improves internal coordination, supports strategic

planning and helps hospitals align with broader preparedness and resilience objectives at national and European levels.

A distinctive feature of the project is its co-creation approach. Rather than being designed in isolation, the tool was developed in collaboration with stakeholders across the cardiovascular care pathway. Interventional cardiologists, nurses, hospital managers, emergency medical services, public health experts and patient representatives contributed their perspectives to ensure the tool reflects real-world clinical and organisational needs. The underlying methodology has been described in a publication,<sup>2</sup> highlighting the value of structural multistakeholder collaboration in designing practical health system solutions.

Importantly, RESIL-Card is not a theoretical exercise. The tool has been tested and validated in real-life clinical environments by interventional teams in several European hospitals. During these pilots, teams assessed its usability and practical value in helping institutions maintain essential cardiovascular services. Their feedback helped refine the tool to ensure both practicality and adaptability across diverse healthcare contexts in Europe.

The RESIL-Card initiative is led by a multidisciplinary consortium coordinated by We CARE,<sup>3</sup> PCR's advocacy group within the non-profit We CARE Alliance, which also hosts the global programmes Stent-Save a Life and SHARE. Together with academic institutions, clinical experts, health system specialists and patient representatives from across Europe, they translated research insights and frontline experience into practical solutions for implementation by cardiovascular teams.

The initiative is also aligned with key European strategic priorities. It supports OECD recommendations on health system resilience and contributes to the objectives of the

# CONTINUITY OF CARDIOVASCULAR CARE IS KEY AT ALL TIMES.

## HOW RESILIENT IS YOUR CARE PATHWAY UNDER PRESSURE?



Crises affect healthcare systems, as shown by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cardiovascular care and patient outcomes:

Delayed hospital presentations and fewer admissions



Reduction of interventional procedures



Increased morbidity and mortality



More long-term complications and reduced life expectancy



Increased societal costs



## THE RESIL-CARD TOOL HELPS HOSPITAL CARDIOVASCULAR PROFESSIONALS IMPROVE SYSTEMS' RESILIENCE AND ENSURE CONTINUITY OF LIFESAVING CARE DURING CRISES.

The tool addresses  
6 key resilience dimensions...

... and includes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health protection and well being</li> <li>Shortages</li> <li>Reallocation</li> </ul> <p><b>Workforce</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible infrastructure</li> <li>CV prioritisation</li> <li>Care reorganisation</li> <li>Innovations</li> </ul> <p><b>Care delivery</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roles, processes</li> <li>Tools</li> <li>Trust</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patients, public</li> <li>Professionals</li> <li>Other sectors</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supply chain management</li> <li>Flexibility</li> </ul> <p><b>Medical devices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-defined data collection</li> <li>Data interoperability</li> </ul> <p><b>Data</b></p>

- A care pathway & stakeholder mapping exercise
- A preparedness checklist generating a heatmap
- Resources to develop an action plan

## BE PREPARED FOR THE NEXT CRISIS. USE THE RESIL-CARD TOOL.



Co-funded by the European Union



Safe Hearts Plan, which promotes improved prevention and management of CVD across Europe. It also reinforces the ambitions of the European Union Prevention, Preparedness and Response Plan to strengthen health system resilience against future crises.

As the tool is designed “by and for” the cardiovascular community, interventional cardiologists, nurses, cathlab managers, hospital administrators and multidisciplinary teams all have a role to play in maintaining continuity of care for patients with CVD.

The project has now entered its broad implementation phase, and the consortium is inviting cardiovascular hospitals and professionals across the EU to implement the tool within their institutions.

In doing so, teams will strengthen their own preparedness and demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding cardiovascular care in all circumstances. Ultimately, preparedness is not only about systems or processes – it is

about protecting what matters most to us: ensuring that every cardiovascular patient can rely on continuous, high-quality care, even when the unexpected happens.

### Authors' affiliations

1. *RESIL-Card Principal Coordinator, We CARE Alliance, Toulouse, France, and PCR Honorary Chairman, SFI (Science Foundation Ireland), Lambe Institute for Translational medicine and Curam, University of Galway, Ireland;* 2. *RESIL-Card Project Manager, We CARE Alliance, Toulouse, France*

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2. V Carvalho AS, Brito Fernandes Ó, Piek JJ, et al. Development of a resilience assessment tool for cardiac care pathways in Europe: a mixed-methods study. *BMJ Open*. 2026;16:e110266.
3. <https://www.wecareabouthearts.org/>