



Erasmus+ programme KA3 - Support for Policy Reform Civil Society Cooperation in the field of Youth

Youth Steering Group Paper

In the context of the Youth Steering Group Meeting of the Erasmus+ programme KA3 - Support for Policy Reform Civil Society Cooperation in the field of Youth (616411-EPP-1-2020-1-DE-EPPKA3-CSC-YOUTH), led by YEPP EUROPE, topics such as **needs survey of youth**, as well as strategies for **involving youth in governance of the YEPP Community Network**, were discussed among the members of the Youth Steering Group.

Young people who became members of this Youth Steering Group, represented the following organisations:



MISSION of the Youth Steering Group was to:

- Connect, engage and empower members of the Group through taking decisions and sharing responsibilities
- Collect recommendations for the topics and format of future YEPP activities, e.g. youth exchange, workshops, online learning, peer learning
- Define local issues and connect them to global issues (European Youth Goals)

Results:

- ✓ Needs survey of young people
- ✓ Recommendations on the topics and formats

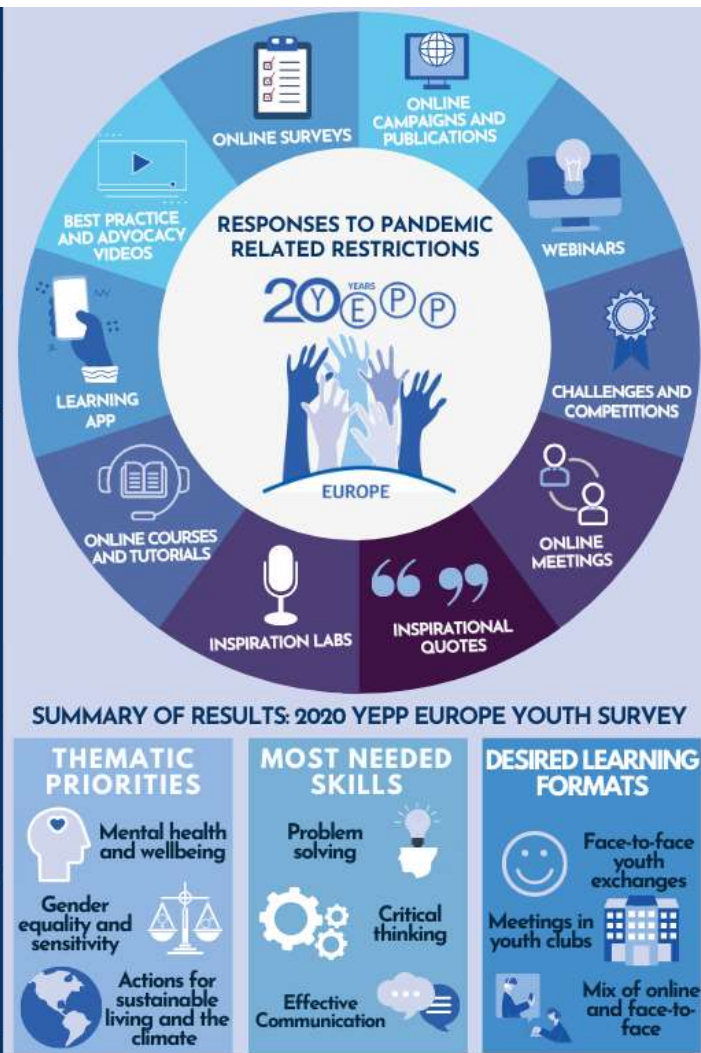
NEEDS SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In summer 2020, YEPP EUROPE in cooperation with Youth Steering Group has conducted the survey of needs of young people¹ to find out about the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on young people and which desired learning formats and topics for young people are needed now and in the post-Corona times. Responses were received from 207 young people residing mainly in Europe between 14 and 29 y.o. The key findings are summarized below.

As stated by young respondents, Covid-19 outbreak and the restrictions affected almost all areas of their life: education, career, employment, social life, as well as physical and mental health. Some changed the place of living being impacted by the situation.

Although the negative impact is more frequently stated, many young people said that lockdown opened their eyes on the issues they have not thought of before: inequality, poverty, racism, oppression of other minority groups, freedom of movement, etc. The time spent in lockdown made them think of importance of mental health, media literacy, sustainable living, climate emergency, and digital activism. Some used this time to educate themselves on these issues, think of their habits and/or change them.

¹ Youth survey of needs. YEPP EUROPE. October 2020.



Below are some of the quotes of young people on the impact of Covid-19 outbreak on their lives:

Positive effect OR New insights:

- I started working out by myself at home and followed a healthier lifestyle.
- It has actually impacted me in a positive way, as I picked up habits that I otherwise wouldn't have, such as running, a skincare routine, learning graphic design, etc.
- I have found a few passions of mine and worked on them a little bit.
- Working from home has been a change for a more sustainable life.
- I care more about my relatives and value every second I can spend with them or with good friends.
- I decided to study something that has to do with healthcare.

Negative effect:

- My academic year was affected, bachelor thesis, laboratory work.
- I lost personal contacts during my studies. My job as a dance teacher was affected.
- I was affected financially and tourism was affected in my area. Also, I noticed that human rights policies were affected.
- I had to stop volunteering at a refugee council.
- Opportunities seem to have disappeared or it's really difficult to find something.
- My intellectual growth was affected.
- I am not going to school and I can't go practice the sport I love.

- I have started to notice the inequality and other human right issues around the world and also the lack of effort we are willing to put into solving the problems.
- I started thinking more about environmental change in the world and how to stop climate change.
- My sexuality opened my eyes about oppression, not only versus the LGBTQ+ community
- Made me think more about my mental health.
- I can't focus anymore and being alone has made me suffer from loneliness.
- I am becoming more anxious and my and many others' well-being have in general been worse due to constant worrying about the virus.
- My mental health got worse, ended up in a psych ward for 10 weeks.
- Doing online school was frustrating, stressful, and just made me sad. I don't want to do it again. My mental stability has gone down since.

Both positive and negative:

- Lockdown was a terrible experience but the fact that we were a cohesive European community made me feel calmer.
- Made a bad impact on my studies and a big one on my future career (sports, baking, etc.).
- School community has been torn, nobody wants to go back. Close friends and interest community has been flourishing.
- A lot of fear and panic.
- Stressful family.
- I am not able to see my family.
- I am being stuck in a different country than the one I call home.
- I am studying English language teaching, but I am interested in aviation. Because of Covid-19, I am about to give up on my aviation dreams unfortunately.
- I am not sure if I am able to study abroad and built my career anymore if the pandemic continues.

Recommendations on the topics and formats by survey respondents

- **Thematic priorities:** 1. Mental health and well-being. 2. Gender equality and sensitive approaches in all areas of life of a young person. 3. Actions for sustainable living and climate emergency.
- **Most needed skills:** 1. Problem solving. 2. Critical thinking and 3. Effective communication.
- **Desired learning formats:** face-to-face youth exchange, meetings in youth clubs or other places designed for youth, and a mixture of online and face-to-face activities.

Further research on impact of Covid-19 on youth conducted in 2020

A comprehensive study on Youth and COVID-19 was conducted in summer 2020 by the global initiative Decent Jobs for Youth and its partners including the International Labour Organization, the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, AIESEC, the European Youth Forum, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the United Nations Human Rights Office. The findings were based on 12,605 responses received from people aged 18-34 years from all regions including urban or suburban areas. These are grouped in four areas of impacts on

young people: namely, employment, education and training, mental well-being, and rights and voices².

Employment

- **One in six** youth had stopped working since the outbreak of the coronavirus.
- Those more likely to lose their jobs were younger workers aged 18 to 24 who had limited work experience and were engaged in entry jobs as well as youth working in clerical support, services, sales, and crafts.
- For youth who remained employed after the onset of the pandemic, working hours **fell by nearly a quarter** and **40 percent** of young people reported a reduction in their income.
- Young people in lower-income countries are the most exposed to reductions in working hours and the contraction in income.

Education and training

- **75 percent** of young students and youth combining study and work experienced school closures, yet not all were able to transition into online and distance learning.
- COVID-19 left **one in eight** young students without any access to education or training. Youth in lower-income countries were hardly affected by the disruptions in education. Notably, **65 per cent** of youth in high-income countries were taught classes via video-lectures, compared to **55 per cent** in middle-income and **18 per cent** in low-income countries. These figures underline the deep **digital divides** that exist between regions and suggest a deep digital divide between high-, middle-, and low income families.
- **65 per cent** of young people studying reported having learnt less since the pandemic began. As a result, **51 percent** believed their education may be delayed and **nine per cent** feared their education might fail.

Mental wellbeing

- **17 per cent** of young people are possibly affected by anxiety and depression. Mental well-being is lowest for young women and younger youth (between the ages of 18 and 24).
- Young people whose education or work was either disrupted or had stopped altogether were almost **twice as likely** to be affected by anxiety or depression as those who continued to be employed.

Human Rights

- COVID-19 has had a negative effect on the rights of children and young people in many different areas: health, education, safety, freedom, access to information, equality, etc. Especially marginalised children and youth have been suffering severely, poor families have become poorer and there has been a sharp rise of domestic violence during the lockdowns. **One in three** young people noticed a marked impact on their right to participate in public affairs, while **over a quarter** experienced difficulties in exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief.

² *Youth and Covid-19. Impacts on jobs, rights, education and mental well-being. Global Survey. September 2020.* https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Youth-and-COVID-19-Survey-Report_English.pdf

- About a **quarter** of young people felt the misinformation around the pandemic was in fact limiting their right to access information. Basic needs were an issue too: for a **fifth** of youth, especially the ones out of work, their right to housing was being challenged as they struggled to make ends meet.

Social activism and youth voices on the pandemic and policy responses

- Young people were determined to step up and partner safely and effectively to “Build Back Better”. Over **one in four** reported actively engaging in volunteerism and in making donations towards the COVID-19 response.

The findings of the Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 reveal that the impacts of the pandemic on young people are systematic, deep and disproportionate. This is confirmed by other research and surveys, e.g. Council of Europe and European Union Youth Partnership group, the Global Citizen Report and ILO Monitor³:

- 91,3 percent (1,6 bln.) of the world’s enrolled learners in 191 countries have been impacted by lockdown.
- Nearly 830 million children who were not attending school due to stay-at-home orders, did not have access to a computer. More than 40 percent do not have internet access at home.
- 56 percent of young people have insufficient savings to cope without an income.
- Five per cent of working hours were lost during the first three months of the year, compared with the last three months of 2019. This is equivalent to approximately 135 million full-time jobs based on a 48-hour working week.
- 50 percent of young people are at risk of depression whereas 20 percent feel lonely.
- The risk of online harms, such as sexual exploitation, cyber-attacks, cyberbullying, misinformation, fraud and breach of private data has significantly increased during these times.
- Women, younger youth and youth in lower income countries are especially affected by the crisis.

Covid-19 impact on youth work

Not only young people have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Lockdown measures also shook youth work to the core. A study of RAY Network Corona research project⁴ surveying over 1.700 youth workers and youth leaders in Europe showed that almost all aspects of youth work have been affected majorly: youth work spaces (69%), youth work methods (52%), youth work timing (47%) and youth work tools (46%). Most youth organisations have seen delays and interruptions to their youth work; 74% of organisations participating in the survey had to close their office temporarily. The need to experiment and adapt quickly led to the need to transfer the youth work to online environment, as well as address the pandemic and its effects in the youth work. While 84% of responding youth

³ CoE-EU Youth Partnership. Beyond Covid-19 pandemic. Infographics. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/72797090/CouncilOfEurope_INFOGRAPHIC+04_COVID_07_HR.jpg/e2ce7493-79db-42ad-7a28-80772be3ed40?t=1603295602000.

Global Citizen Report.

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/830-million-children-cant-learn-online-unesco/>

ILO Monitor: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064912>

⁴ RAY Network Corona research project. <https://www.researchyouth.net/news/first-findings-corona-research-project/>

workers and youth leaders said that they were addressing the pandemic and its effects in their youth work, only 17% of respondents transferred all of their youth work online and 7% transferred none. The vast majority of the sector managed a mixture of offline and online work whereas the details in terms of impact and effectiveness remain unknown at this stage. The lockdown measures affected access to youth activities or projects for 54% of responding young people significantly, and for 25% moderately. However, youth work activities also helped young people to navigate the crisis. The majority of young people (74%) who were involved in youth work during the pandemic stated that this gave them something meaningful to do and something to look forward to.