

Symposium Navigating Transitions –
Covid-19 general impact

James O'Donovan

What is the Knowledge HUB?

- Knowledge HUB comprises
 - data and information sources, meta-analysis of research, and briefing and reports on a range of topics - youth services, youth in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, youth in rural areas, mobility, mental health and wellbeing, and
 - briefing and reports of three surveys conducted

on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people and the youth sector.

What are young people saying?

- **Mental health and well-being** emerged as the single most important issue for young people.
- Other significant issues highlighted by young people included - **employment and financial security, digital skills, participation and civic engagement, social services, youth work and non-formal education and training.**

10 things we found out

- Young people faced significantly **larger rates of job loss and more financial challenges** than other age groups and were **less protected** by job and income supports and other welfare schemes resulting in precarious working and living conditions.
- Those **most affected were young people** from socially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, young people in non-standard employment, and young women lost disproportionately more jobs than young men.
- Covid-19 strongly impacted on young people's mental health and wellbeing and **exacerbate pre-existing mental health problems and disrupted access to often underfunded mental health services.**
- The **mental health and wellbeing of young women appears to have worsened** when compared with that of young men during the pandemic.

10 things we found out

- The Covid-19 pandemic showed that young people did **not have enough digital skills to move to telework or to change to a job where digital skills were required**, in particular for the most disadvantaged population groups.
- While there were innovative practices and projects, both the state/public and NGO sectors generally **lacked digital capacity, accessibility and training**.
- State/public funding for the youth sector appears to have remained relatively consistent during the pandemic and youth policy largely unaffected, though there was **evidence of some pressures** on both: reallocation or postponement in funding and delays and deferrals in policy initiatives. Pressures were most evident in expenditure rather than allocation.
- Consequently, those countries with a well-established and well-funded youth sector were **better positioned** than those countries that are largely dependent on European project-based funding that they were unable to expend because of the pandemic.

10 things we found out

- While the NGO sector was **more pro-active and innovative** in engaging with young people, its **over-reliance on temporary or irregular funding**, greatly hampered its capacity, in particular in relation to digital capacity, responding and adapting its programmes, and in providing youth work services and other supports for young people.
- The state/public sector's communication with young people during the pandemic tended to be **one dimensional and directional**. There were issues with the quality and clarity of official communications and **mixed messaging** resulting from lack of co-ordination among different stakeholders. While the NGO sector sought a more interactive and innovative approach in supporting young people, **shortcomings in sharing information and feedback** and opening up dialogue using digital media were evident.