

# Youth Partnership

---

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



## *Technology and the new power dynamics: limitations of digital youth work*

*Authors: Alicja Pawluczuk, Pool of European Youth Researchers  
Adina Marina Şerban, European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy*

*Editors: Tanya Basarab and Lana Pasic*

*February 2022*

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this work, commissioned by the European Union-Council of Europe youth partnership, are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of either of the partner institutions, their member states or the organisations co-operating with them.*

## Contents

1. Introduction: is digital youth work still a hot topic? .....	3
2. Young people and digital technology: what do we know about youth digital participation in Europe? .....	4
3.1 The difference between youth work and digital youth work? .....	6
3.2 Digital youth work: in search of a definition .....	7
4. Digital youth work in the European agenda: research, policy developments and gaps .....	10
5. What are some of the limitations of digital youth work? .....	11
5.1 Digital technologies, mental health, and feelings of disconnectedness .....	11
5.2 Big tech and AI v. meaningful communication and youth empowerment .....	13
5.3 Digital inequalities in youth work.....	16
5.4 Strategic digitalisation of youth work .....	18
5.5 Space in digital youth work.....	20
6. Considerations.....	21
7. Conclusions and future work .....	25
8. References .....	27

## **1. Introduction: is digital youth work still a hot topic?**

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented digitalisation of all aspects of life, including youth work. Digital technologies became both enablers and barriers in youth work delivery. The Covid-19 crisis revealed that not all youth workers and young people could equally access, utilise and benefit from digital youth work. Effective use of digital communication tools (e.g. video conferencing, social media) or interactive learning tools (e.g. online quizzes) enabled some to re-invent and sustain their youth work practice through the lockdowns. Having digital technologies as a central part of youth work also came with its limitations. There were practical issues with transferring youth work activities online – with only 58% of youth workers and youth leaders in Europe managing to transfer less than one-third of their youth work online during the pandemic (Karsten, 2020).

Digital youth work continues to be a hot topic – it has become a prominent addition to the European youth work lexicon in the contexts of youth work practice, research, and policy making. A quick online search provides essential information about why and how digital youth work should be implemented. Resources offer guidelines and good practices offer essential insights into how to take it on and get it right.

However, little is known about what cannot be achieved through digital youth work or what its limitations are. While digital youth work's how-to guidelines are important, it is also important to know its boundaries and pitfalls. The understanding of what does not or cannot work within digital youth work is essential to critically and realistically situating it within the ever-changing landscape of digital transformation while aiming to perform the main function of youth work: supporting young people to reach their full personal and professional potential. For decades, youth work has aimed to empower young people to become critical thinkers and active citizens. The foundation of youth empowerment and inclusion is to be achieved through meaningful communication, trustful relations between young people and youth workers and engagement of young people on a voluntary basis. To what extent can these goals be reflected digitally? Thinking about the parameters of youth work, where does digital youth work begin and where does it end? And, most importantly, what are the limits of digital youth work? The aim of this study is to explore these questions.

This study offers some analytical perspectives on the limits of digital youth work. The discussion will reflect on the practical implementation of digital youth work and the underpinning philosophy and values of youth work. The purpose here is to explore the existing digital youth work mechanisms, tools and developments put in place both by state and by non-state actors. This article examines some of the gaps in digital youth work programme design and delivery (both locally and on a strategic level) and provides some guidance on how these might be addressed. The discussion is grounded in research on digital youth work and testimonies of youth workers in Europe based on their experience of delivering youth work services and activities online. The analysis is based on a review of policies and programmes dedicated to digital youth work before the Covid-19 pandemic, but also during and post-lockdown, when the development of digital and “smart” youth work was accelerated.

This paper addresses those who might be (or already are) involved in digital youth work planning and delivery and provides youth workers, youth organisations, policy makers and researchers with some food for thought on digital youth work.

Because of the dynamic and continually evolving nature of digital technologies and youth work, it is impossible to predict how things might develop in the coming years (or even weeks). That is why the aim of this analysis is not to provide a fixed solution on how to get digital youth work right, but to contribute to the discussion on the complex and unpredictable nature of (digital) youth work.

## **2. Young people and digital technology: what do we know about youth digital participation in Europe?**

In Europe, young people are most likely to use digital technology to express themselves, source and share information and communicate online. Whether for news consumption, entertainment, or digital activism, young people have been both receivers as well as co-creators of digital content. A 2019 survey of children’s and young people’s (ages 9-16) online habits from 19 European countries revealed that only 1% of young people in the EU have never accessed the Internet, while 95% use it daily (Eurostat, 2019). However, young people’s quality of digital participation varies greatly across Europe. In their analysis of children's digital

deprivation in Europe, Ayllón et al. (2021) report that in 2019, 5.3% of children in Europe were digitally deprived. Ayllón et al. (2021) define digitally deprived children as those who “lived in a household that could not afford to have a computer and/or lived with adults who claimed they could not afford to have an internet connection for personal use at home” (2021:1). The Ayllón et al. (2021) analysis reveals some striking differences: in Iceland, only about 0.4% of children are digitally deprived, while in Romania and Bulgaria the figure reaches 23.1% and 20.8%, respectively. Similar disparities in young people’s digital literacy levels could be found in a 2019 data set (Eurostat, 2020) that revealed disparities across the EU’s youth digital literacy levels. For example, Croatia had the highest share of individuals aged 16 to 24 with basic or above basic overall digital skills (97%), followed by Estonia, Lithuania and the Netherlands (all three at 93%). By contrast, the lowest shares were observed in Romania (56%) and Bulgaria (58%). The European Data Portal for Covid-19 (data.europea.eu, 2020) revealed that there are still areas in Europe where up to 20% of students cannot use computers for school. This lack of internet connectivity is detrimental in the context of the worldwide shift towards online education during the pandemic.

The digital divide is a complex phenomenon. Young people are part of very diverse groups of individuals, whose digital participation (or lack thereof) might be affected by an intersectional factor such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or multiple forms of discrimination (Alper et al., 2016). Digital youth participation should not only be analysed in terms of young people’s reliable access to digital technology or internet connections. Therefore, to understand young people’s digital participation in the context of digital youth work, it is essential to frame it within the “interconnected systems of oppression and privilege” (ibid 2016:107). Alper et. al. shows that most of the web-based tools on digital youth participation/digital youth work are developed by NGOs or private entities and very few are created by government bodies. The majority are designed exclusively for young people (often framed as young technology users), addressing topics such as education, mental and sexual health, cyberbullying or the rights of minorities. While many of these digital tools are mostly available through websites, a large majority also include mobile versions or applications (“apps”) and are accompanied by complementary means of communication, such as chat rooms, instant messaging apps, e-mails or phone lines. With most of the identified practices, young people are the beneficiaries rather than co-creators of the

developed platforms, which makes it difficult to evaluate the extent to which these tools directly cater for young people's needs and interests, particularly for groups at risk of exclusion (EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, 2020). Informed and meaningful youth digital participation requires young people to have sufficient digital and data literacy skills and the ability to exercise their human rights both offline and online (Pawluczuk, 2020). In other words, young people should be supported to navigate and manage their digital and non-digital lives in a pro-active and informed way – this is where youth work could make a greater contribution.

### **3.1 The difference between youth work and digital youth work?**

To understand the multidisciplinary and unpredictable nature of digital youth work, it might be useful to take a step back and contextualise it in the current understanding of what youth work is. For decades, youth work has been grounded in a set of values and driven by its unique philosophy. For example, youth work aims to enhance social inclusion, empower young people to become critical thinkers; and pursue authentic and meaningful communication between youth workers and young people. Youth work includes:

a variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making (Council of Europe, n.d.).

Defining youth work itself has been a challenge, as highlighted by Schild et al. (2017), who outlined the cross-European confusion with regards to the definition of youth work:

In many countries, however, we do not easily find “youth workers”. We find people who are termed socio-cultural instructors, intercultural mediators, educators or animateurs, social workers, community workers, youth leaders, educators and trainers, cultural workers, volunteers and activists in youth

organisations or youth movements. All of them meet at the junction of “youth work” in one way or another, but does this allow “youth work” to build an identity of its own? A teacher is a teacher, everywhere, and everybody knows what a teacher does (in a good or a bad way). But a youth worker? (2017:8)

In 2017, Siurala argued that youth work as a practice was undergoing an identity crisis: he suggested that youth work “desperately tries to find the right blend between working with youth and for society”. Similar issues can be found in understanding the role of youth workers and what their functions and responsibilities are. To understand the boundaries of digital youth work, it is essential to take a critical look at this new profession in the making and ground it within the understanding of “what a youth worker is” (Schild et al., 2017:7).

To answer this question, Basarab and O’Donovan (2020) outline youth workers’ responsibilities as motivating and supporting young people to become autonomous, active and responsible individuals and citizens. Youth workers’ role is primarily to facilitate (on a paid or voluntary basis) young people’s personal development, learning and empowerment. Youth workers can therefore be seen as facilitators of young people’s development, acting as role models who serve as bridge builders to other social or public services for young people and the community. To what extent can the existing qualities of youth work be reflected in digital youth work? Where does digital youth work begin and where does it end? What does it mean to be or become a digital youth worker? Reflecting on these questions will contribute to understanding the limits of digital youth work.

### **3.2 Digital youth work: in search of a definition**

Digital youth work has been dealing with an identity crisis. As it stands, the practice continues to search for its meaning and recognition. In the context of this paper, digital youth work is understood as an evolving practice affected by intersectional factors (both for young people and youth workers). Grounded in the values of youth work and the wider context of digitalisation, digital youth work aims to empower young people to become active, mindful, responsible individuals.

The term “digital youth work” originated in Finland in the summer of 2012, when European youth work organisations met to discuss the impact of digitalisation on youth work and its

practices (Kiviniemi & Touvimen, 2017). “Digital youth work” is the term accepted in Europe (Harvey, 2016; Kiviniemi & Touvimen, 2017) and it is perceived as a vital part of youth engagement practices, defined as an area of youth work that implements digital technologies to enhance outcomes of youth-centred initiatives (Harvey, 2017). In 2017, The Expert group on risks, opportunities and implications of digitalisation for youth, youth work and youth policy, set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018, developed the following definition:

Digital youth work means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work. Digital youth work is not a youth work method – digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work, etc.). Digital youth work has the same goals as youth work in general and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals. Digital youth work can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and technology can be either a tool, activity or content in youth work. Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values and principles as youth work. (European Commission, 2018)

Just as the boundaries of youth work are not set, digital youth work is not static. It cannot be given a definite meaning, structure nor value. Digital youth work is a continually evolving practice affected by intersectional and socio-technological factors (both for young people and youth workers). In simple terms, digital youth work can be messy and unpredictable. It is, therefore, impossible to draw specific boundaries as to where digital youth work begins and ends. Instead, it might be useful to think of it as an additional layer to existing youth work, whereby all involved try their best to navigate the intertwined and fluid realities of youth in the digital age.

Similar issues relate to the understanding of what it means to be or to become a digital youth worker. In the last decade, youth workers’ responsibilities and their practice had to expand and evolve to adapt to the process of digitalisation. Many youth workers have had no choice but to become intermediaries between young people, society, and digital technologies. With



all of this in mind, how does one define a digital youth worker?

At present, there is a lack of clear distinction between what it means to be a digital youth worker and/or a youth worker. It might be argued that many oscillate between these two areas of practice, blending elements of traditional and digital spaces, tools, approaches and methodologies. There is limited information about people's professional and educational paths into digital youth work. Existing digital youth work projects have involved not only youth workers, but also other professionals, such as programmers, mental health practitioners and digital artists. Future research should consider an analysis of existing characteristics of those facilitating digital youth work to provide more clarity on this topic.

With the above limitations in mind, perhaps the best way to understand the role of a digital youth worker is to take a look at the desirable competencies for digital youth work. According to the Digital Youth Work Expert Group, it is important to:

not only focus on the skills related to using digital media but look more broadly at the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to ensure an engaging and meaningful digital youth work experience. An agile mindset is crucial for youth workers to perform their work in our dynamic society. (European Commission, 2018)

Digital youth work competencies are divided into four categories: (1) youth work competencies; (2) digital competencies; (3) competencies related to organisational digital development; and (4) knowledge of the digitalisation of society (European Commission, 2018). The digital youth work competency framework offers an extensive list of training needs for youth workers. Although this list does not serve as a checklist for what it means to be a digital youth worker, it might offer a reference point for distinguishing skills and responsibilities related to digital youth work and youth work.

As digital youth work keeps searching for its meaning, new challenges related to inclusion, accessibility, and skills continue to rise to the surface. The fast-changing nature of digital technologies means that many youth workers struggle to keep up with their latest impacts on young people's lives - and on youth work practice. A detailed analysis of these challenges is included further.

#### **4. Digital youth work in the European agenda: research, policy developments and gaps**

EU-Council of Europe youth partnership extensively explored the implication of digitalisation on young people's social inclusion. In 2018, the symposium report *Connecting the Dots: Young People, Social Inclusion and Digitalisation* concluded that, while digitalisation was contributing to a bigger gap between accumulating advantages and disadvantages, hence increasing inequalities, there was a need for a better understanding of digitalisation in young people's lives and its implications for the youth sector, including the adaptations required from youth work and youth policy. Topics covered during the symposium included: developing and supporting digital volunteer communities and volunteer technical communities around youth work; better synergies with the labour market and academia; putting in place training activities; mentorship and coaching as online instruments for youth workers.

In 2019, this work was further explored through the study and Youth Knowledge book dedicated to the intersection of social inclusion and digitalisation, which looked at the specific situation of young people facing multiple disadvantages in the context of growing digitalisation, and policy responses.

Also in 2019, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe organised its first seminar on artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on young people, followed by a second [seminar](#) in 2020. A working group on artificial intelligence literacy was set up to develop a toolkit for educators and youth leaders, including a framework of AI literacy competencies.

Building on this pre-pandemic research, digitalisation was further explored in the context of Covid-19. The pandemic had profound implications on youth transitions and on youth work development and delivery. The Knowledge Hub: Covid-19 Impact on the Youth Sector includes essential information about the impact of the pandemic on the youth sector, including the key challenges that digital youth work is to address. The analysis looks at the impact of the pandemic on the practices of youth organisations in trying to keep their projects running while responding to young people's needs. Digital youth work activities changed from complementary to core activities when face-to-face youth work service delivery became impossible (Lonean and Escamilla, 2021).

Significant policy steps were also taken during the pandemic. The Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Digital Youth Work (2019) adopted under the Finnish EU Council presidency in December 2019 highlighted that digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting and that it has the same goals as youth work in general, while the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020) stressed the importance of developing an open and multilingual European digital platform dedicated to youth work in close co-operation with the youth work community of practice to share information, knowledge and good practices and to engage in co-operation and peer-learning. The Final Declaration of the European Youth Work Convention (EYWC) in December 2020 stressed the importance of innovation in youth work, of digital communities and the need for digital competencies of youth workers and of young people to overcome the digital divide. It also advocates for the development of safe spaces for young people, both online and offline. The Declaration recognises the limits of digital youth work, as not all young people may have access to digital learning processes, due either to a lack of competencies or to a lack of access to devices or infrastructure or both. As youth work provides bridges in young people's lives, youth work should be delivered where these bridges are needed, including through digital participation spaces. The Declaration recognises the role of online youth work practice in exploiting a new space for youth work in a meaningful way, supporting digital literacy and enabling young people to deal with some of the associated risks. Youth workers require new competencies and new ways to maintain boundaries in relationships with young people. It is also important to define which of the youth sector stakeholders should be responsible for ensuring these safe boundaries and inclusive participation spaces.

## **5. What are some of the limitations of digital youth work?**

### **5.1 Digital technologies, mental health, and feelings of disconnectedness**

The use of digital technologies in youth work might have an impact on one's mental health. From digital fatigue<sup>1</sup> caused by spending too much time online during the pandemic, to

---

1. "Digital fatigue" describes the state of exhaustion and disengagement that occurs among people who are required to use numerous digital tools and applications concurrently.

feelings of inadequacy because of a lack of digital competencies or digital technologies to fully engage in youth work, the emotional impact might be different for different people. It is important to explore how digital technologies impact both youth workers and young people. So far, discussions have generally centred around time spent in front of the screen. It is crucial to move beyond screen time<sup>2</sup> narratives and to open debates on a more holistic view of how youth work experiences and those involved are affected by digital technologies.

Research (UNICEF, 2017; OECD, 2017; Moxon et al., 2021) provides important information about young people's mental health in relation to digital technologies. The reliance on digital technology has fuelled concerns of teachers; governments, youth workers, parents and young people themselves. The concerns were mainly that social media may exacerbate the feelings of anxiety and depression, lead to cyber-bullying and low-self esteem or disturb sleeping patterns (Siurala, 2021). Associations exist between the use of the internet and mental wellbeing – while using a little bit of internet can contribute to young people's well-being (communication, fun, information, etc.), the excessive usage comes with a negative impact (UNICEF, 2017). The OECD PISA survey indicates that extreme internet users (>6 hours/day) were most likely to have lower life satisfaction and well-being while moderate internet users (1-2 hours/day) marked the highest life satisfaction even in comparison with the ones who used it for less than one hour or less during weekdays. Other research projects found a small association between social media use and depression or between anxiety symptoms and high daily social media use (OECD, 2017). The pandemic had an overall impact on young people's social and economic rights and also contributed to widespread issues in young people's mental health and well-being: nearly two-thirds of young people in Europe may now be affected by depression and anxiety, while young people with fewer opportunities are more likely to be severely affected (Moxon et. al, 2021: 4).

There are limited insights into youth workers' mental health and their emotional response to the digital transformation in youth work. Pawluczuk et al. (2019) provide some insights into how youth workers perceived digitalisation in the pre-pandemic period. The study revealed some evidence of scepticism, "tech-fears" and insecurities among youth workers, who felt under pressure to present themselves as technology enthusiasts. In their 2018 study,

---

2. "Screen time" is a term used to describe sedentary activity that happens in front of a screen. Screen time accounts for almost all time spent in front of a screen, whether using a mobile device or computer screen for work, watching films or playing video games.

Pawluczuk et al. reported that for many youth workers digital technologies get in the way of their relationship with young people (e.g. lack of human contact, body language). For example, a youth worker described how digital technologies impacted the emotional connection with young people: “[digital media] is not live, it's not I speak to you, I see you falling asleep, that's the reaction, and therefore I modify what I'm saying. If I'm creating a short text or a short piece of audio, I cannot know immediately what the impact of that is.” At that time, there was a lot of anxiety related to not knowing enough or not being up to date with the latest digital trends and developments. In many ways, youth workers felt under a lot of pressure to use digital technologies in their work, without being provided with sufficient training or equipment. (2019:4).

Similar issues have been found during the pandemic (Pawluczuk, 2021). Many youth workers reported being anxious about using digital technologies and perceived them as a communication barrier. Some felt that they could not keep pace with the digital competencies’ development of young people. Other youth workers argued that digital communication undermined the emotional connection that youth workers had with young people. Lack of human connection, eye contact and physical contact made it clear that (online) digital youth work could not have the same positive impact on one’s well-being and mental health. Some youth workers mentioned missing non-verbal communication, failing to get into a relaxed atmosphere when their camera was on, boredom and lack of attention when switching between different social media during online calls – all of these were barriers to establishing meaningful relationships with young people. Digital youth work activities also had an impact on teamwork, collaboration and conflict resolution. While some youth workers appreciated the fact that they could connect with others, work internationally in a rapid way and join different learning activities, others felt that online communication demanded an abrupt adaptation – missing the informal socialisation and human contact during the preparation of their activities made them less interested to explore intercultural learning aspects.

## **5.2 Big tech and AI v. meaningful communication and youth empowerment**

Young people’s empowerment is central to youth work. Framed within existing socio-economic power structures, youth work aims to support young people not only to understand

the power structures but to be able to proactively participate in their formation. What happens if digital technologies become a part of the empowerment process? To what extent can youth workers facilitate youth empowerment using commercially owned digital tools?

Digital technologies are not power-neutral. Digital technologies are owned and run by technology companies, whose aim is to generate profit. Digital technologies (and, therefore, “big tech”<sup>3</sup>) can be described as a new, pro-active actor (or a third party) involved in the relationship between young people and youth workers. Whether it is the use of online communication tools or digital tools during offline workshops, digital technologies impose new rules of engagement onto the youth work environment. As digital technologies bring about a new set of power dynamics into youth work practice, it is needed to consider the amount of power they have over those involved.

As young people continue to learn and socialise online, an increasing amount of data is produced by them and about them. Young people’s everyday activities, such as communicating with youth workers, seeking advice with regards to mental health or applying for a job are being monitored, analysed, shared with third parties and monetised. Data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence produces vast amounts of information on young people’s lives, personality traits and even intellectual abilities. As the EdTech<sup>4</sup> industry continues to invent new approaches to algorithm-driven learning, should we expect similar trends in non-formal education? If so, what can we learn about the new power structures and limitations they might bring into youth work?

When trying to navigate the multiple power structures of the digital world, youth workers might find themselves stuck between embracing (and being encouraged to embrace) digital youth work (e.g. employment opportunities) and protecting themselves and young people from its possible side-effects (e.g. data profiling, privacy breaches). Keen to empower, youth workers might become disempowered by digital technologies. Digital technologies can interfere with and therefore, negatively affect the youth empowerment process. For example, recent reports<sup>5</sup> of Facebook’s internal research revealed that the company has been aware that its algorithmically managed and pushed content has had a negative impact on

---

3. “Big tech” refers to the major technology companies that have inordinate influence.

4. “EdTech” often refers to the industry of companies that create educational technology.

5. [“Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show”](#) (Wells et al., 2021)

teenage girls (e.g. self-image, mental health). How can such algorithmic selection impact youth work activities? A paradoxical example of using social media for empowerment (and potentially resulting in disempowerment) might include youth workers using Instagram to create body positivity activities, with the Instagram algorithms choosing to show young people “thinspiration”<sup>6</sup> content. If one’s social media feed knows a young person better than they know themselves, how can we expect youth workers to understand or challenge these unique power dynamics?

The problems of datification of non-formal education have been examined in the European youth field (Declaration on Youth Participation in AI Governance, 2020; Di Paola, 2021; Penn, 2020). First, in his paper, “A modest proposal. Is it time to develop digital and smart youth work strategies?” (2021), Di Paola offers a youth worker’s perspective and asks crucial questions about the role of big tech in youth work delivery. He argues that most of the tools and platforms used in digital youth work are not designed for this purpose. Tools such as Facebook, WhatsApp or Instagram belong to multibillion-dollar company whose key aim is not to facilitate a meaningful connection between young people and youth workers, but to monetise their use of these tools. To address this problem, Di Paola calls for action:

As a youth worker, educator, parent and citizen, I feel an urge to know more about the use of data by social media and technology platforms and their impact on our life and choices. There is clearly a need to have a more secure regulation about the use and exploitation of our behavioural data and the ways in which data and algorithms are used to shape our values, choices and subsequent behaviour. (2021:3)

In line with Di Paola, Penn argues that there is a need for “algorithmic silences to craft spaces for youth (and adults) to grow free from the strong influence of technological ideologies” (Penn, 2020: 4). The consequences of such fast-paced development of AI were also highlighted in the Declaration on Youth Participation in AI Governance, which argued that privately owned digital technology companies might leave behind many youth field stakeholders (e.g. youth actors, human rights activists, policy makers), and “result in

---

6. “Thinspiration” social media content might refer to photos, videos, advertisements, etc. intended to inspire a person to remain thin or to lose weight and become thin.

normatively questionable and ineffective self-regulation in the private sector” (2020:2). They call for a more nuanced and just approach to the use of digital technologies in the youth sector.

Youth empowerment and opposing any forms of oppression is central to youth work – be it offline, online, or blended. Non-formal and democratic education should begin by increasing the ability to critically assess and understand the existing power imbalance and its consequences. So far, little is known about the impact of datafication, AI and surveillance on youth work, which should be considered and further explored.

### **5.3 Digital inequalities in youth work**

Digital inequalities<sup>7</sup> have a significant impact on one’s participation in digital youth work. Many young people and youth workers in Europe experience digital exclusion. “Digital exclusion” might refer to young people’s lack of digital devices (e.g. computer, tablet), lack of or limited access to functional wi-fi digital access, digital competences (EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, 2020). As pointed out by Gonçalves, “digital youth work is neither the magic formula for all inclusion and diversity issues, nor the backup of face-to-face youth work” (2021). Digital exclusion comes with a set of limitations for the design and delivery of inclusive digital youth work programmes.

Even before the pandemic, young people with fewer opportunities struggled to join online activities, due to either a lack of access to digital devices, lack of equipment or internet, or lack of competencies. Young people’s digital access and use of digital technologies can be affected by age, gender, race, ethnicity, and/or socio-economic status. For example, research indicates that boys are 1.5 times more likely than girls to own a mobile phone and 1.8 times more likely to own a smartphone (Girl Effect and the Vodafone Foundation, 2018). Refugees experience restricted digital participation due to lower digital skills rates (especially among women, girls and the elderly) as well as a lack of online content in their native languages (Kaurin, 2020). For young people living in rural areas, the low level of education is the most common cause of low ICT skills. Even for those who use the internet regularly, reliance on the

---

7. “Digital inequality” describes differences in the material, cultural and cognitive resources required to make good use of information and communication technology.



internet due to the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the size of existing digital gaps and inequalities, raising questions even on the availability of data related to access to internet and computers within households. The pandemic left most European governments blindsided on the digital needs of marginalised young people, including young people living in rural areas (Şerban and Braziene, 2021). An increased strain has appeared even in households equipped with a device and connection and where the access to the device has to be shared when activities happen simultaneously – especially for remote education (Şerban and Ştefan 2020). Shared access also has led to exclusion in some cases. Youth workers talked about some young people not feeling confident to switch on their camera to avoid showing their households. In other cases, it became hard to participate fully as their housing situation did not allow privacy due to limited physical space.

Digital youth work comes with limitations for those who are at risk of digital exclusion. Lack of or limited accessibility of digital youth work content might result in young people's exclusion from digital youth work activities, impacting their right to participate. As Chupina argued:

Contrary to popular belief, online activities are not accessible to everyone by default. There is a lack of (readily available) accessibility tools, services or formats such as live captioning for the hard of hearing, sign language interpretation, accessible multimedia, web content compatible with screen readers for the blind, alternative texts for images, the information in “easy-to-read” format or pictograms for youth with intellectual disabilities and so on. (Chupina,,2021)

Online participation proved to be challenging for some young people with disabilities. Many digital youth work tools and activities showed their limits when working with young people with partial sight or blindness or with young people with mental health issues and neurodiverse youth.

While these issues have been around for a while, during the pandemic they were discussed more widely. In her study on digital youth work and the pandemic, Pawluczuk (2021) found

that many youth workers had to rely on their personal devices and data allowance to manage and deliver youth work. Many youth workers not only had to deal with young people's digital participation but also with their basic digital inclusion needs (e.g. access to personal digital devices, reliable internet connectivity). Youth workers' ages might be a significant factor in their abilities and willingness to use digital technologies in their work. Factors that might affect youth work centres include being located in rural or deprived areas where there is significantly less access to online services. There is limited data on the competency development of youth workers with disabilities or youth workers delivering activities to young people with different types of disabilities.

#### **5.4 Strategic digitalisation of youth work**

Youth organisations' activities were severely affected by the pandemic. Very few organisations were prepared for the shift and a limited number of projects were suited to online formats. Youth workers and project managers initiated digital youth work activities, keeping both volunteers and target groups involved. Other youth organisations were not able to implement their projects – youth workers were lacking digital skills and equipment. Project participants faced numerous challenges to access digital youth work activities (RAY Network, 2021). Mobility learning activities, internship programmes or regular youth work services were cancelled. The pandemic brought fragile pathways of youth workers towards quality learning opportunities – most of them had to rapidly adapt, to challenge their autonomous learning competencies while dealing with limited social contact and struggling to keep their organisations and projects running (Potočník, 2021).

The problems related to the financial sustainability of youth work were outlined in a study carried out by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership. The study covering forty organisations across the Council of Europe member states revealed that most youth organisations had to cancel all their programmes for 2020-2021 due to a lack of funding and/or difficulties in keeping the organisations motivated at a distance (EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, 2020). The Eurofund survey (2020) showed that 43% of young workers started to telework, significantly more than other age groups. Many youth organisations outlined limitations related to implementing youth work digitally (Böhler et al., 2020; PEYR, 2020). Lack of face-to-face activities has had a negative impact on the quality of youth work

itself. Many argued that while digital spaces have offered temporary relief during the Covid-19 crisis, they cannot substitute offline forms of youth engagement.

Youth organisations and youth workers called for a stronger social and political recognition of youth work, better professional development of youth workers, better funding programmes and a stronger framework of youth work policy and practice explicitly linking it with other sectors (European Parliament, 2021, European Youth Work Agenda and the Bonn Process, 2020; Pawluczuk, 2021). At the European level, a study conducted by the European Parliament in 2021 recommends the reconsideration of financial instruments and funds available to the youth work sector at national and EU levels, highlighting that quality (digital) youth work needs adequate financial and human resources. Pawluczuk (2021) reports that youth workers call for digital youth work to be taken seriously on a strategic level:

More recognition (e.g. from the local councils, governments) should be given to the role of youth work settings as an informal, responsive and democratic education hub for young people. To make digital youth work sustainable it is important to recognise the importance of strategic planning and guidance.

Persisting challenges related to the recognition of the role of youth work across Europe need to be addressed to provide young people with better support, services, and activities in times of crisis (Lonean and Escamilla, 2021).

The efforts of those youth organisations that decided to continue their work with limited resources should be appreciated. Limited digital resources – equipment, youth worker competencies, limited access of target groups and the rapid transformation also came with reduced quality in youth work services/delivery. The shift to online activities and the inception of digital transformation in youth organisations was not accompanied by sufficient funding nor support (especially from state actors – local, national and European). Digitalisation generated additional costs: for equipment, for youth worker training, for access/paid accounts to collaborative platforms, etc. At the same time, already-granted project budgets were reduced as physical meetings were cancelled.

Digital transformation in youth organisations is more than a project-based activity: it requires a strategy and careful identification and allocation of resources. If, before the pandemic, the

discussion was about the need for innovation in youth work and digital youth work was linked to innovation, the current context calls for sustainability in digital youth work. Youth work organisations need support to develop their strategies and digital youth work sustainability plans.

### **5.5 Space in digital youth work**

Safe and inclusive space, as well as co-ownership of activities, are central aspects of youth work delivery. The use of digital technologies in youth work has a detrimental impact on how space and participation are experienced and defined. Digital tools and spaces bring about a new set of dynamics, some of which might undermine the participatory and co-creative nature of youth work. Research has shown that the rapid adaptation of youth work to digital formats during the lockdown impacted first on youth work spaces (69%) (RAY Network, 2020).

Youth policy emphasises the importance of youth infrastructure, which might include youth clubs, youth centres, social work delivery institutions, etc. (Williamson et. al, 2021). These physical spaces are meant to provide young people and youth workers with a sense of companionship, co-creation and collaboration. In face-to-face youth work delivery, young people co-create spaces and activities in participatory ways. The terms of participation and perceptions of space are different in digital youth work. Space in digital youth work might mean different things to youth workers and young people. In their understanding of space in digital youth work, youth workers referred to them as landscapes, playgrounds, communities, meeting places – metaphors that are essentially linked to physical spaces. In contrast, young people see digital places as sources of constant connection to their peers, a way of validating who they are becoming and receiving emotional reassurance that they belong. The limitations of digital spaces in youth work have been examined by Melvin (2018):

One of the advantages of youth work practice is that it can take place in the spaces where young people choose to gather (detached youth work, street work or outreach work), and dedicated youth provision (youth clubs, projects and building-based work) can work with young people to create a sense of place to keep them gathering there. However, digital spaces and places pose challenges for youth workers, not least because they cannot compete with commercial social media platforms which generate concerns related to access,

privacy, purpose, appropriateness, and safety. Youth work often states in its offer to young people that it provides safe spaces, yet in the context of digital spaces and places, the notion of “safe” is subjective, especially when spaces and places for digital youth work are outside a youth worker’s control, in that content may be too visible, and can be shared, cloned and changed, and advertisements targeting users may not be appropriate in the context of professional youth work practice.

This new sense of space in youth work is linked to a novel type of youth ownership of activities: a youth worker arranges all the details, then young people come to the physical space with an aim to co-shape the activity. As Andrei Dobre, co-creator of the Digital Youth Work Romania community at the Romanian National Agency Pool of Trainers, argues:

In terms of activity ownership [in face-to-face youth work], that was somehow 80% to youth workers and only 20% to young people. In the online settings, at least two elements should be mentioned: the quality of the activity: if it's a bad one, then in a second, young people will close the camera or would leave and also the activity should be well arranged to respond to the youth needs, even in terms of setting the timing, platforms, etc. The participant in the digital format could leave the session and the process in a second. Consequently, more competencies in terms of coaching and mentorship are also to be used.

These new sets of dynamics and challenges related to space and activity co-ownership require further examination.

## **6. Considerations**

Because of the evolving and dynamic nature of digital youth work, this analysis does not deal with all the limitations, but instead proposes some considerations for debate and future developments in digital youth work. This is an open list that is meant to be extended, edited, and contextualised by different stakeholders in the youth sector.

1. Understand the new power dynamics brought by technology

Technology and digital shift bring a third important, complex, and difficult-to-

understand actor to the digital youth work scene. It is no longer a young people-youth worker duo but a trio, with technology itself taking up space and setting new rules. Moreover, as a result of the new power dynamics, ownership in digital youth activities is changing compared to traditional youth work services – young people can easily take the lead and decide to step out/sign off when the delivered activities do not meet their expectations.

2. Acknowledge that some youth work formats need to be digital-free

Human relations are central to youth work. While digital technologies might aid some parts of human interactions (e.g. communication), they are not able to fully substitute them. While it is important to efficiently integrate technologies into youth work practice, it is crucial to cultivate and protect certain aspects of youth work practice.

3. Be aware that tech-solutionism and datafication also apply to the youth work sector

Just like formal education, non-formal education is impacted by the private sector's technology solutions. All stakeholders should be aware of both the empowering and disempowering influence of digital technologies on youth work (e.g. datafication, algorithmic profiling, surveillance). While it is impossible to steer away from commercially available tools and devices, the youth work sector might consider how/whether future digital youth work settings can address the new power dynamics between young people, technologies, and youth work (e.g. through critical digital literacy education or digital human rights awareness). The youth sector should consider the challenges and limits of digitalisation at all stages of the process and be aware that so-called "tech-solutionism" might, at times, undermine the values of youth work (e.g. meaningful communication). Moving forward, meaningful co-analysis and co-creation of new digital youth work tools could also be considered. Overall, there is a need for a more strategic and critical approach to the political process of digital transformation and its impact on human rights (e.g. freedom of expression and assembly, access to education, and many more).

4. Consider a holistic and intersectional approach to (digital) skills and needs in the youth sector

Digital youth work is a relatively new phenomenon that requires new skills, new forms of life-long learning, agile mindsets, flexibility, and emotional resilience. Digital skills training or support schemes should be framed within a holistic understanding of stakeholders' educational and emotional needs. Digital youth work comes with a set of new challenges as to how youth workers perceive their roles, skills, and responsibilities. New issues related to digital fatigue, feelings of inadequacy and shame related to not knowing enough about digital youth work and blending privacy boundaries (e.g. online youth work being facilitated from home-based computers) should be considered. Targeted support will be needed for different groups during their digital youth work journeys (e.g. mental health, digital skills support, information about latest digital youth trends and issues). Potential solutions should be flexible and continue to be co-developed in line with the evolving needs and trends.

5. Monitor emerging issues related to digital inequalities

There is a need for a sector-wide approach for a continuous analysis of how socio-economic and cultural factors intersect with digital participation. Digital inequalities have a detrimental impact on young people's and youth workers' (and other stakeholders') access to digital youth work spaces, activities, and resources. Limited digital access, limited accessibility of digital youth work resources and lack of access to digital devices might result in exclusion from youth work. It is essential to consider how these issues affect individuals and groups involved in youth work, youth work practices, and youth work values. There is also an urgent need to explore the impact and learning from the Covid-19 pandemic period on digital youth work. Future strategic approaches to digital youth work should consider how digital inequalities might impact on young people's transition into adulthood and their needs, interests, and aspirations. Equally important is a critical and ongoing analysis of how digital inequalities affect youth workers and youth organisations.

6. Consider new forms of interdisciplinarity in digital youth work and its definition

Digital youth work is a dynamic and rapidly evolving practice co-created by many different actors. Digital youth work is affected by people, technologies, media, culture, and many other aspects. Because of its complex and unpredictable nature, it might be

useful to consider who should be defined as digital youth workers and to what extent such a definition might lead to a better understanding of digital youth work's limitations. As there is limited knowledge on youth workers' digital educational and career paths, it might be useful to carry out research in this area to understand how new forms of interdisciplinary teams can enrich the definition of digital youth work. Digital youth work should go beyond the use of digital technologies in youth work and provide a new domain with a holistic view of young people's lives in the digital era.

7. Embrace digital youth work's limitations and ambiguity and steer away from restrictive ideas of positive impact

As this study illustrates, there are many limitations to digital youth work in terms of its design and facilitation. Digital youth work is an emerging practice, and it is, therefore, important to be able to experiment, test, and allow failing. The need to get digital youth work "right" might have a negative impact on youth workers' perception of their own skills and the quality of their practice. In 2019, Pawluczuk reported that some young people and youth workers felt voiceless and disempowered in the context of digital youth work evaluation. It was evident that young people complete evaluation for two reasons: (1) to provide evidence of positive impact (e.g. stories about their skills improved as a result of their participation); (2) to please digital youth workers and to sustain funding for their youth clubs. Similar pressure was felt by youth workers. Within the existing evaluation power structure and at a time of youth work funding cuts, young people and youth workers felt they had to do the right thing – report positive impact. To provide desirable, positive feedback, young people might lie or withhold information about their negative digital experiences.

To ensure that digital youth work becomes responsive to ongoing digitalisation, it is essential to continue to learn about its failures and limitations. Failure is still part of learning and might generate improvement in a dynamic context, when young people's needs, interests and aspirations are constantly changing. In line with the 21st century skills agenda and the EU Digital Transformation Plan, youth workers and youth organisations should enjoy resources and support to explore and share their projects' insights about what went well and what did not work. Only genuine analysis and



conversations can respond to the challenges facing the youth sector in Europe in the years to come.

#### 8. Considering provision of digital devices and online access

For digital youth work to become an inclusive (and not exclusive) practice, it is essential to consider how and whether existing digital infrastructure affects one's digital inclusion/exclusion. Digital access and infrastructure are crucial for young people, youth workers and youth organisations. Similarly, to internet connectivity efforts in formal education, non-formal education should be taken seriously both on the strategic and local levels. Access to and participation in digital youth work programmes requires reliable access to the internet and digital devices. Novel ways of providing young people with digital access materialised during the pandemic (e.g. laptop recycling schemes). While it is important to learn from the crisis response to digital inequalities, any future solutions should aim to be holistic, sustainable and address the needs of all of those involved in digital youth work. Above all, more research is needed to understand and address their unique accessibility needs.

### **7. Conclusions and future work**

The aim of this paper was to examine the potential limits of digital youth work. The discussion presented here explored the practical implementation of digital youth work as well as the underpinning philosophy and values of youth work. The discussion was grounded in existing research on digital youth work in addition to available testimonies of youth workers in Europe based on their experience of delivering youth work services and activities online.

This article offers new insights into some of the challenges and limitations in how digital technologies have been implemented into youth work. The following five areas of limitations were examined:

- (1) digital technologies, mental health, and feelings of disconnectedness
- (2) big tech and artificial intelligence v. meaningful communication and youth empowerment
- (3) digital inequalities

- (4) strategic digitalisation of youth work
- (5) space in digital youth work.

Moving forward, this study proposes some considerations for debate and future developments in digital youth work. These include:

- (1) acknowledging that some youth work formats need to be digital-free
- (2) being aware that “tech-solutionism” and datafication also apply to the youth work sector
- (3) considering a holistic and intersectional approach to (digital) skills and needs in the youth sector
- (4) considering new forms of interdisciplinarity in digital youth work and its definition
- (5) embracing digital youth work’s limitations and ambiguity and steer away from restrictive ideas of positive impact
- (6) considering provision of digital devices and online access.

Digital youth work is a diverse and continually evolving practice and field of research. Additional research is required to better understand digital youth work. To this end, researchers might consider exploring the topics covered in this article and the identified research gaps related to the interdisciplinary and intersectional nature of digital youth work; competencies and career development in digital youth work; digital youth work’s sustainability; (digital) youth workers’ well-being, mental health and burn-outs due to digitalisation of youth work; digital inequalities in youth work; the recognition of digital youth work practice; application of digital youth work activities in specific contexts (such as working with mixed-ability groups); and many more. Both quantitative and qualitative data are needed to make a strategic case for (digital) youth work and its critical role in the digital transformation process across Europe.

It is also recommended that youth policy makers continually engage with digital youth work and search for new ways to respond to its challenges in holistic and agile ways. Any policy-making solutions should be managed in a co-creative manner, whereby all engaged in and affected by digitalisation of youth work are involved. It is also recommended that youth

policies consider the unpredictable nature of digital technologies (and, thus, digital youth work) and steer away from rigid ideas of youth work methods, tools and/or impact. Most importantly, it is crucial to provide youth organisations, youth workers and young people with ongoing support to help them to thrive through (digital) youth work.

## 8. References

Alper, M., Katz, V. S., & Clark, L. S. (2016), Researching children, intersectionality, and diversity in the digital age. *Journal of Children and Media*, 10(1), 107-114.

Ayllón, S. (2021), Digitally deprived children in Europe, available at: [https://www.ecitizen.hk/static/media/DC\\_plus\\_2b.6e0837f0.pdf](https://www.ecitizen.hk/static/media/DC_plus_2b.6e0837f0.pdf), accessed 15 January 2022.

Basarab, T. & O'Donovan, J. (2020), Youth Work Essentials. Council of Europe, available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/057520-Youth-Work-Essentials-WEB.pdf/a3b32e6c-3c86-d317-7dab-c79b54eb2b92> , accessed 5 January 2022.

Böhler, J. et al. (2020). Effects and Outcomes of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme from the Perspective of Project Participants and Project Leaders. Generation and Educational Science Institute. Vienna, available at: [https://www.researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RAY-MON\\_Research-Report\\_20200401.pdf](https://www.researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RAY-MON_Research-Report_20200401.pdf), accessed 15 January 2022.

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Digital Youth Work (2019).

Council of the European Union (2017), Council conclusions on smart youth work, available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XG1207\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XG1207(01)), accessed 25 November 2021.

Council of the European Union (2019), Council Conclusions on digital youth work, available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13935-2019-INIT/en/pdf> , accessed 20 November 2021.

Data.europa.eu, Digital skills, available at: <https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/19704280-bundesamt-fur-statistik-bfs?locale=en>, accessed 15 January 2022.

diPaola, M. (2021) A modest proposal Is it time to develop digital and smart youth work strategies? A youth worker's perspective, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63918992/POY-Digital-youth-work.pdf/dfd0b140-4c5d-8511-f642-81c654878a9e>, accessed 13 November 2021.

ECDL Foundation (2015). The fallacy of the “digital native”: why young people need to develop their digital skills, position paper.

EU-Council of Europe youth partnership, Expert group on researching education and career paths of youth workers, <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/expert-group-researching-education-career-paths-youth-workers> , accessed 25 November 2021.

EU-Council of Europe youth partnership (2014), “Mapping of barriers to social inclusion for young people in vulnerable situations: finding a place in modern Europe”, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mapping-on-barriers-to-social-inclusion> , accessed 20 November 2021.

EU-Council of Europe youth partnership (2015), “Symposium on Youth Participation in a digitalised world”, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/digitalised-world> , accessed 23 November 2021.

EU-Council of Europe youth partnership (2018), “Symposium: Connecting the dots: young people, social inclusion and digitalisation”, Policy brief, Tallinn, 26-28 June 2018, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262517/Reflection+paper+final.pdf/41dde555-5701-7822-25d4-ae27b5561d92> , accessed 3 November 2021.

European Commission (2018), Developing digital youth work: policy recommendations, training needs and good practice examples, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/fbc18822-07cb-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1> , accessed 3 November 2021.

European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work, available at: <https://www.digitalyouthwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/european-guidelines-for-digital-youth-work-web.pdf>, accessed 11 November 2021.

European Parliament (2021), Youth in Europe: Effects of COVID-19 on their economic and social situation, available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662942/IPOL\\_STU\(2021\)662942\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/662942/IPOL_STU(2021)662942_EN.pdf), accessed 10 December 2021.

European Youth Forum (2021), Beyond Lockdown: the 'pandemic scar on young people', available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/European%20Youth%20Forum%20Report%20v1.2.pdf>, accessed 26 November 2021.

Eurostat, Being young in Europe today, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today), accessed 14 January 2022.

Girl Effect and the Vodafone Foundation (2018), Real girls, real lives, connected A global study of girls' access and usage of mobile, told through 3000 voices, available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8d51837c9327d89d936a30/t/5beaa1700e2e72ed39d21c5b/1542103477055/GE\\_VO\\_Full\\_Report\\_Digital.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b8d51837c9327d89d936a30/t/5beaa1700e2e72ed39d21c5b/1542103477055/GE_VO_Full_Report_Digital.pdf), accessed 9 January 2022.

Gonçalves, H. (2021), Why it is important to reflect on inclusion & diversity in digital youth work. SALTO, available at <https://digitalinclusion.salto-youth.net/why/>, accessed 4 January 2022.

Harvey, C. (2016), Using ICT, digital and social media in youth work. National Youth Council of Ireland 2016. Dublin: National Youth Council of Ireland.

Karsten, A. (2020), Learning from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on youth work in Europe. Resources paper for the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Youth Work Convention, available at: [https://www.eywc2020.eu/downloads/doctrine/WebforumVeranstaltungenWebsiteBundle:Media-file-49/EYWC\\_RAY%20Resource%20Paper\\_Final%20Version\\_20201122.pdf](https://www.eywc2020.eu/downloads/doctrine/WebforumVeranstaltungenWebsiteBundle:Media-file-49/EYWC_RAY%20Resource%20Paper_Final%20Version_20201122.pdf), accessed 3 November 2021.

Kaurin, D. (2020), Space and imagination: rethinking refugees' digital access, available at: [https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Space-and-imagination-rethinking-refugees%E2%80%99-digital-access\\_WEB042020.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Space-and-imagination-rethinking-refugees%E2%80%99-digital-access_WEB042020.pdf), 15 January 2022.

Kiviniemi, J., & Tuominen, S. (Eds.). (2017), Digital youth work—The Finnish perspective. Helsinki: Verke, available at: [https://www.verke.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Digital-youth-work-a-Finnishperspective\\_web.pdf](https://www.verke.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Digital-youth-work-a-Finnishperspective_web.pdf), accessed 3 November 2021.

McLoughlin, S. (2018) Connecting the dots: young people, social inclusion and digitalisation, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262517/REPORT-061118.pdf/d9498017-42f7-0687-5550-e78b4f4172c3>, accessed 25 November 2021.

Melvin, J (2018) Digital tools, spaces and places - mediators of youth work practice, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/coyote-magazine/digital-tools-spaces-and-places>, accessed 2 December 2021.

OECD (2017), PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>, accessed 4 December 2021.

OECD (2018) , Children & Young People's Mental Health in the Digital Age Shaping the Future, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/Children-and-Young-People-Mental-Health-in-the-Digital-Age.pdf>, accessed 4 December 2021.

Pantea, M.C, Makharadze, T. (2021) Towards a better understanding of COVID-19 impact on young people and on the youth sector in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, available at: [https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/72351197/Revised\\_Covid+impact+EECA.pdf/9cf17487-f37d-30cd-99e6-c4f3300d21f1](https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/72351197/Revised_Covid+impact+EECA.pdf/9cf17487-f37d-30cd-99e6-c4f3300d21f1), accessed 5 December 2021.

Pawluczuk, A. (2019), Youth digital culture co-creation: measuring social impact in Scotland (Doctoral dissertation, Edinburgh Napier University), available at <https://www.napier.ac.uk/~media/worktribe/output-2404195/youth-digital-culture-co-creation-measuring-social-impact-in-scotland.pdf>, accessed 5 December 2021.

Pawluczuk, A. (2020). Digital youth inclusion and the big data divide: examining the Scottish perspective. *Internet Policy Review*, 9(2). DOI: 10.14763/2020.2.1480,

Pawluczuk, A. (2021), European Digital Youth Work and the Covid-19 pandemic. SALTO Participation and Information, available at: <https://participationpool.eu/resource/european-digital-youth-work-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-whats-next/>, accessed 5 December 2021.

Pawluczuk, A., Hall, H., Webster, G., & Smith, C. (2019), Digital youth work: youth workers' balancing act between digital innovation and digital literacy insecurity.

Pawluczuk, A., Webster, G., Smith, C., & Hall, H. (2019). The social impact of digital youth work: what are We looking for?. *Media and Communication*, 7(2), 59-68.

Penn, J. (2020) AI and Youth 2020: Win the Battle, Lose the War?, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63918992/AI-Youth-2020-WIN-BATTLE-LOSE-WAR.pdf/488287b6-9def-c460-d199-c2d3e43915e4>, accessed 20 November 2021.

Potočník, D. 2021, Review of the Access to Rights Recommendation. Art.I.1. Council of Europe, available at: [https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261689/2021-Review-documents\\_access-to-rights\\_discrimination.pdf/b1d46a06-7707-3230-954e-97f62ac45475](https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261689/2021-Review-documents_access-to-rights_discrimination.pdf/b1d46a06-7707-3230-954e-97f62ac45475), accessed 6 December 2021.

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda (2020).

Salto Inclusion (2021), Inclusion and Diversity in Digital youth work, available at: <https://digitalinclusion.salto-youth.net/>, accessed 13 November 2021.

Salto Participation and Information (2021), European Digital Youth Work and the Covid-19 pandemic: What's next?, <https://participationpool.eu/resource/european-digital-youth-work-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-whats-next/>, accessed 22 November 2021.

Schild, H., Connolly, N., Labadie, F., Vanhee, J., & Williamson, H. (2017). Thinking seriously about youth work: and how to prepare people to do it (Vol. 20), Council of Europe.

Șerban, A.M., Braziene, R. (2021) Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/106317733/Rural-youth-study.pdf/1fde9ee6-48ce-a2f7-2985-124b44ae46e7>, accessed 15 November 2021.

Siruala, L. (2021) YOUTH WORK AND TECHLASH What are the new challenges of digitalisation for young people?, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63918992/Techlash+LS+12-11-2020+LP.pdf/2be05469-3970-8ff8-dc2a-d8ba9eb39156>, accessed 25 November 2021.

Ștefan, V., Șerban, A.M (2020) Youth inclusion, digital solutions and the global pandemic, available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/63918992/POY%2520EYE%2520Digital%2520platforms%2520covid%252026%2520May%25202020.pdf/ebef686d-c741-9e35-e2c1-96fb299eb759>, accessed 13 November 2021.

UNICEF (2017), How does the time children spend using digital technology impact their mental well-being, social relationships and physical activity? An evidence-focused literature review, available at: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Children-digital-technology-wellbeing.pdf>, accessed 4 December 2021.

Verke and EYWC (2019), Digitalisation and youth work, available at: <https://entk.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Digitalisation-and-youth-work.pdf>, accessed 3 November 2021.

Wells et al. (2021), Facebook knows Instagram is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show, available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739>, accessed 15 January 2022.

Youth Link Scotland (2020), Digital Youth Work Report, available at: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/2332/digital-youth-work-research-report-2020.pdf>, accessed 6 December 2021.

Youth Link Scotland (2020), The Impact of LGBT Youth Scotland's Digital Youth Work on Young People, available at: <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/2332/digital-youth-work-research-report-2020.pdf>, accessed 25 November 2021.



Youth Link Scotland, Ethics in Digital youth work, available at: <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/3533/ethics-in-digital-youth-work.pdf> , accessed 9 November 2021.