

Youth Partnership

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



Report of the 2020 Youth Knowledge Forum and 2020 annual EKCYP-PEYR meeting

**European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy -
16th Annual Meeting of Correspondents**

Pool of European Youth Researchers - 10th Annual Meeting

Online 27-29 October 2020

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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.

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Four-point summary

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth organised a Youth Knowledge Forum in October 2020, in order to reaffirm its commitment to quality youth research and the importance of knowledge and evidence in the youth field, policy and practice. The Forum was preceded by the 16th Annual Meeting of the correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) and the 10th Annual Meeting of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR), as well as the joint meeting of the two groups. Key messages from the forum were:

1. Youth research is increasingly valued by youth policy makers in order to enable knowledge and evidence-based approaches to policy and practice, and has also gained prominence in other sectors, such as education.
2. The youth research sector requires development; youth research is not systematically supported across Europe and lacks investment and infrastructure. Development of national or regional networks may be valuable.
3. Youth researchers need to ensure their work is easily understandable and relevant to policy and practice. This involves communicating research results effectively, and being clear on the distinction between knowledge, evidence and consultation.
4. The COVID-19 context will be a significant part of the youth research landscape for the foreseeable future. There is a need to understand the short- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on young people and the sector and develop alternative research methods that can be used during social distancing measures.

1. Youth Knowledge Forum 2020: background

The partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth organised a Youth Knowledge Forum on 28 and 29 October 2020, preceded by the 16th Annual Meeting of the correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYP) and the 10th Annual Meeting of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) on 27 October.

The principle of knowledge and evidence gathering for youth policy and youth work practice has become increasingly important at European level, but also at national, regional and local levels. The Youth Knowledge Forum built on the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership's long-standing commitment to further youth research, and its experience in the knowledge gathering and think tank function related to young people's lives and implications for youth policy and youth work practice. Questions around knowledge in the field of youth have already been explored in regional contexts, through Youth Knowledge Forums in [Eastern Europe](#) (2018) and in [Southeast Europe](#) (in 2019), and related publications:

- [Youth Research: The Essentials](#) by Sladjana Petkovic, Alena Ignatovich, Marina Galstyan, 2019
- [Mapping the reality of research on youth in South-East European countries](#), by Dragan Mihajlović, 2019
- [Knowledge Translation: Bridging gaps between researchers and policy makers](#), 2019 by Maria Paola de Salvo
- [An agenda for strengthening investment in youth research in Eastern Europe and Caucasus countries](#), Report of the seminar, 2018
- [Background paper on youth research in Eastern Europe and Caucasus Countries](#), by Anna Ostrikoval and Yaryna Borenko, 2018
- [Youth research in SEE](#), by Marko Kovacic, 2018
- [Youth Research in the Nordic Region](#), by Ørjan Bergan, 2018

The 2020 Youth Knowledge Forum proposed to explore more extensively what knowledge means for youth policy, youth work practice and youth research in Europe. The Forum occurred within the context of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. This had effects both on the

event itself, requiring it to be digital, and on the content and nature of discussions requiring a focus on the impact of COVID-19 on the sector.

In this context, considering the findings from the previous events and research, and under the guidance of a Steering Group, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership therefore initiated a series of [online conversations, video and audio products](#) throughout 2020, as a part of the Youth Knowledge Forum, to reflect and develop strategies in the youth sector governance (involving policy, practice, research, young people and youth organisations) to further and strengthen the role and capacity of research on youth in Europe.

The aims of the Youth Knowledge Forum were to:

- Analyse the role currently played by youth research in supporting the development of youth policy and youth work, as well as the work of youth organisations, and ways to enhance their cooperation, also looking at good examples of practice
- explore the state of youth research in Europe, map its main actors at all levels and their realities.
- identify and assess the available sources of knowledge on youth, furthering the reflections of the two regional seminars on youth research organised in 2018 and 2019 by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership
- encourage the involvement of research in policy making and shaping youth work while reflecting on the type of knowledge needed for various audiences and how to strengthen structures producing knowledge on national and regional level.

2. Supporting activities

In order to raise awareness of the importance of knowledge for policy and practice ahead of the Forum, the Youth Knowledge Break (YKB) series and Inspirations were launched in June 2020. These took the form of longer webinars or pre-recorded short videos released periodically ahead of the Forum on the following topics:

- [An introduction to the series of events](#) with explanation of the Knowledge Forum objectives (why, what it is, how we plan to do it)
- [Youth Knowledge Break #1](#) - Webinar - The purpose of knowledge within the youth sector triangle
- [Youth Knowledge Break #2](#) - Inspiration - Youth Research: the essentials
- [Youth Knowledge Break #3](#) - Inspiration - The role of knowledge in the youth sector
- [Youth Knowledge Break #4](#) - Inspiration - Youth Policy evaluation
- [Youth Knowledge Break #5](#) - Inspiration - The role of research in policy making
- [Youth Knowledge Break #6](#) - Webinar - Exploring National Youth Knowledge Networks
- [Youth Knowledge Break #7](#) - Inspiration - Youth research and young people

As a part of the preparation for the Youth Knowledge Forum, the following research outputs were also developed:

- [Mapping research and knowledge actors across Europe](#): (who are the research persons/structures, what type of research is carried out in different countries, are there national structures to evaluate research findings and agree on a relevant research agenda?). What are the existing resources and who are the actors and their respective realities?
- [Step by step guide for engaging researchers](#): What are some of the things to consider when engaging researchers in various activities at the European, national and local levels? How can research support policy and practice, which methods can be used and what type of research best corresponds to various needs?

- [Structures and support for developing quality research in Europe](#): case studies and recommendations based on the mapping outcome. How does cooperation between policy, practice and research take place? The document presents some how-to guidelines and good examples of practice.
- [Communicating research outcomes](#): How-to guide to knowledge translation. This document gives guidelines on knowledge translation and management and how best to present research findings to various audiences.
- [EU Youth Dialogue learning point](#): A paper on the role of research in policy-making, drawn up by the researchers who supported several cycles of the EU Youth Dialogue.

3. Outcomes from the joint PEYR-EKCYP meeting

The joint PEYR-EKCYP 2020 meeting was opened by **Tanya Basarab** (Manager ad interim) and **Lana Pasic** (Research and Policy officer). They emphasised that the youth partnership had started 2020 with an ambitious work plan, which only became more ambitious with the onset of COVID-19 and the need to focus research efforts in that direction as well. The importance of EKCYP and PEYR in facilitating the implementation of the work plan was stressed. Members of both networks had contributed extensively to the outputs and activities of the youth partnership during the year, including work on two youth knowledge books, a [MOOC](#) on the essentials of youth work, three thematic studies, three [perspectives on youth](#) articles, two training toolkits and a variety of other activities which would not have been possible without the two networks. It was noted that although the current meeting represented the final meeting for the 2017-2020 PEYR mandate, 33 PEYR members remained active by the end of the mandate and the call for the new 2021 PEYR had been issued.

During the PEYR meeting this escalating intensity of the work was discussed with positive sentiment; members identified that PEYR had been an interesting learning opportunity for them that allowed them to expand. PEYR's work is now more interconnected and central to the Youth Partnership's work plan but PEYR members were increasingly working outside of their thematic specialism as a result of this. Some members of PEYR are cautious of this, but others welcome the potential for the increased co-operation. Over the course of its mandate PEYR has evolved to a position where its outputs were being more strongly used and were able to contribute to the evolving agendas in the youth sector.

A number of things are required to secure and improve the functioning of PEYR as it moves to the 2021 cohort:

- Improving communication: although communication between PEYR and the youth partnership is generally good and communication between PEYR members is also positive, there is room for improvement (e.g. regular online meetings).
- Orientation and even mentorship for new PEYR members: Orientation should stress that PEYR has an 'applied' role and is a pool of expertise to be accessed rather than an academic network.

- Undertaking new work collaboratively: mixing new PEYR members with established members when undertaking projects. Transparency in assigning projects is an important part of the communication and work.
- A continued focus on knowledge translation/communication and dissemination to ensure usage of research outputs, and particularly exploring online formats in the context
- An alumni network: Several members of PEYR who had chosen not to apply for the new PEYR call, in order to allow new members to benefit from this opportunity, requested a creation of an alumni network and the possibility for them to still be involved in research projects of the youth partnership.

The collaboration between PEYR and EKCYP members is variable with some countries working closely together. PEYR and EKCYP collaboration can be improved by:

- Developing more regular exchange between PEYR and EKCYP
- Regular meetings at national level
- Consolidated communication (e.g. monthly newsletter)
- Supplying lists of members by country.

EKCYP members considered the challenges of data collection particularly in a pandemic context. Despite this challenge, there was a general recognition that the role of data gathering and thematic contributions of EKCYP were valuable for European policy-making processes and the youth partnership made important steps in developing valuable publications drawing on the EKCYP contributions. Key points were:

- The pandemic has made data collection more difficult to undertake; many stakeholders, particularly NGOs, are more focused on the impact of COVID and were slow to respond.
- Both data collection and data validation are required, particularly as the surveys required input of many actors, sometimes beyond the youth field and they rather called for a country report than simply completing a questionnaire. This requires

extensive work as it is necessary to cross check answers with other stakeholders, such as Ministries for Youth - this sometimes made the online survey format (Google forms etc.) problematic to work with. The process of validations is particularly challenging in larger countries where there were more actors, variation and activity in general.

- The network of correspondents had to answer three surveys on three different topics within a very short period of time, each requiring extensive research and checking of data and the google forms were not as easy to work with. Time pressure, resources to complete the surveys, and their complexity made the work quite challenging.
- Peer support, work in small groups and more frequent exchanges during data gathering processes should be further developed in 2021.

New topics that require research and knowledge gathering in 2021

- Mental health of young people (including situation and youth sector responses)
- Intergenerational solidarity and intergenerational inequality
- Unemployment, transition, future of work and new forms of precarity
- Developments in new conceptual approaches to participation, changes in youth voter turnout, democratic citizenship developments
- Shrinking space for youth civil society and youth rights
- Digitalisation - particularly youth sector implementation of digital practices, digital youth work and artificial intelligence
- Young people and climate change particularly in the context of refugees
- Youth policy
- Gender issues.

Reflecting on the relation between COVID-19 impact and responses to all the themes should be considered. Overall, there are a number of new topics arising in need of a research focus. Previous knowledge forums had identified topics such as radicalisation, monitoring the impact of youth work and development of youth research data and indicators as priority topics. Whilst these topics are still important work in these areas has been initiated and there are now new topics emerging that require focus.

4. Key messages and discussions from the forum

4.1 The role of knowledge and research in today's European youth policymaking

The [opening panel discussion](#) focused on the role of knowledge and research in today's European youth policymaking. The panel was composed of **Ms. Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot**, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, at the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission and **Matjaz Gruden**, Director of Democratic Participation at the Council of Europe. Both stressed the added value of the youth partnership and a knowledge-based approach to policy and practice, during challenging social situations.



COVID-19 has created a totally new reality for health, society, the economy and the youth sector, resulting in a need to learn and understand the changing context. It is particularly important to understand young people's mental health, challenges pursuing studies and sense of losing out, as well as the long-term risk for young people with fewer opportunities. It is also important to recognise that many of the new digital or hybrid modes of youth work delivery required new knowledge.

In this context, a knowledge-based approach to youth policy and practice is crucial. At the EU level, the Commission aims to complement members states' actions through the framework of the EU youth strategy, the new Erasmus youth chapter and the new multi-annual

framework. The youth strategy focuses on youth participation, social and civic engagement and this work cannot happen without a knowledge-based approach. This knowledge is developed either by consulting with young people themselves, or from the knowledge of people working in the sector and through research. In addition, it is important for the EU to set youth policy developments in a cross-sectorial approach including links to the European Education Area and Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027). The Council of Europe is also increasingly aiming to bring youth perspectives to a wide variety of policy areas where the contribution of young people was not only valuable but essential. Key policy topics for this work include education, growing mistrust of democratic institutions, and artificial intelligence.

But in order for this kind of cross sectorial work to be recognised, it has to be articulated in a way that is compelling, effective, and cannot be ignored - in order to have that articulation the role of research and knowledge is important. There is therefore a need for youth research to step beyond just youth policy and speak to wider policy areas. Research and knowledge are important in modern society, particularly as the concept of rationality is undergoing a frontline assault; evidence-based policies are one of the things that help move society from ignorance to enlightenment. Research, like any field, has its own protocols, forms and process - but there is always a risk that research is not communicated effectively. In context of the growing mistrust and attempts to demean knowledge and research in our societies there is a need for researchers to keep focus on the objective of our work - to improve the lives of the people in our societies. Focusing on this ensures the relevance of youth research.

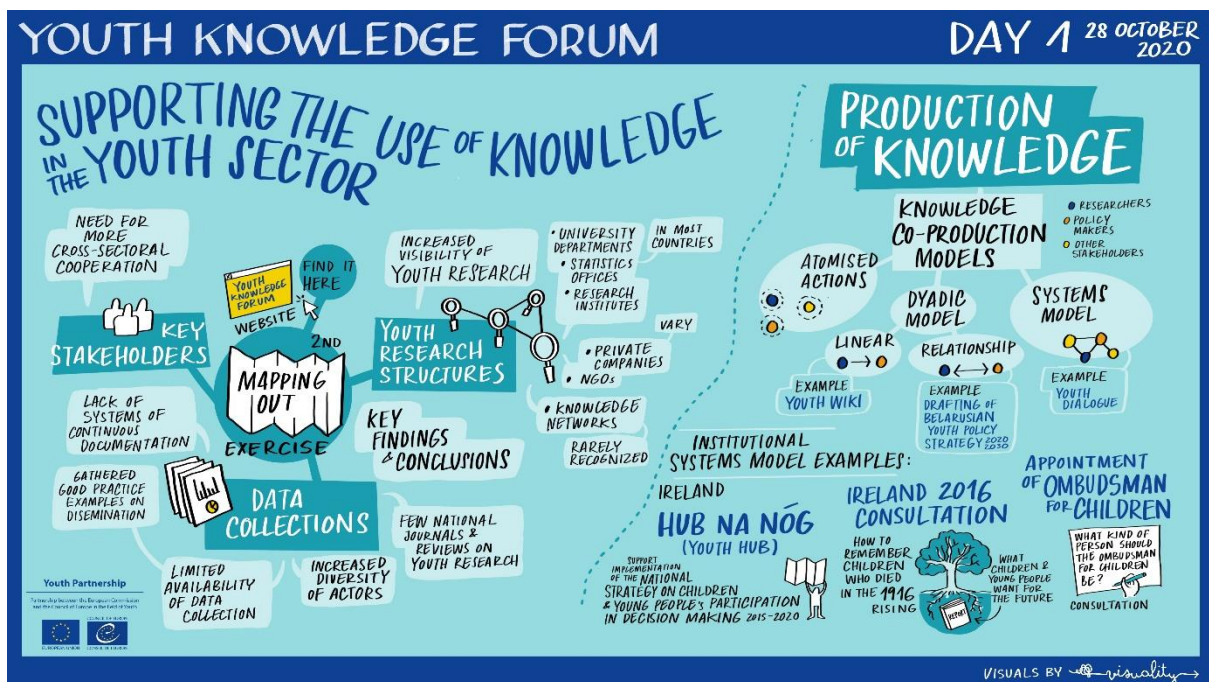
The panel discussion emphasised the findings of previous knowledge forums which highlighted the value of youth research to policy makers and the need to support evidence-based policy making and the development of research networks in the regions.

4.2 Developing and supporting the use of knowledge in the youth sector

On the first day of the forum, there were two sessions on the agenda which explored how knowledge and knowledge-based approaches could be better supported in the youth sector.

The first of these sessions considered the [initial results of the project mapping national youth knowledge networks](#), presented by **Sladjana Petkovic** (PEYR) and **Alena Ignatovitch** (PEYR). The initial conclusion of the study, which aimed to map youth knowledge networks in all European Cultural Convention Signatory countries¹ highlighted a number of conclusions:

- A variety of actors and structures are involved in enhancing better knowledge on youth in Europe
- Some structures (University departments, statistics offices, government funded or research institutes and other public responsible for youth research) exist in the majority of countries addressed
- Other structures (private companies and non-governmental organisations) vary in types, but their role in youth knowledge gathering still needs to be clarified or improved
- Knowledge networks are rarely recognised and formally supported at the national level, although youth researchers have gained significant visibility in certain countries.



¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/018>

The following gaps and needs of the sector were highlighted:

- Cross-sectoral cooperation and institutionalised dialogue between all the actors of the “youth triangle”
- A centralised, integrated and regularly updated statistical system on youth is needed
- There is a limited availability of knowledge and data sources/ collection at country level
- A system of continuous documentation or study on youth work is lacking
- Priority areas of youth research at the national levels are still aligned with the policy domains of the previous EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

Dragan Stanojevic (PEYR) [gave an outline](#) of several theoretical models of relationships between researcher/knowledge producers and policy makers.

- *Linear model* - Where researchers produce data and policy makers use it (e.g. the Youth Wiki)
- *The relationship model* - Where researchers and policymakers collaborate (e.g. Drafting of the Belarusian Youth Policy Strategy for 2020-2030)
- *System model* - Where researchers policy makers and other actors collaborate (e.g. EU Youth Dialogue)
- *The institutional system model* - where ongoing collaboration within the triangle is embedded into institutional processes.

Sandra Roe (PEYR) complemented the presentation by [outlining an example](#) of the institutional system model through the work of [Hub na nÓg](#) (Youth Hub), a national centre of excellence and co-ordination on giving children and young people a voice in decision-making in Ireland.

During the second section the practical realities of linking youth research with policy and practice were further considered: the topics of *communicating youth research* and *engaging researchers* were explored. Considering the issue of engaging youth researchers, **Adina**

Serban (PEYR) and **Irina Lonean** (Center for Sustainable Community Development) presented a guide prepared for the Youth Knowledge Forum on this topic. In a parallel process **Dan Moxon** (PEYR) and **Maria Paola de Salvo** (Easy Telling) presented a second guide prepared for the Forum on knowledge translation and communicating youth research.

During the subsequent discussions, the importance of acknowledging that the relationship between policy making and research was complex was stressed. Whilst it is desirable for researchers to be involved across the policy making cycle, the need to recognise that policy making does not always follow a simple predictable cycle is important. Furthermore, research should improve the lives of young people and communicate with young people rather than focus strictly on the needs of policy makers and practitioners.

Communicating research findings and data in a way that is simple and accessible to both policymakers and practitioners is important. There is a value to condensing and simplifying research reports. However, this requires a lot of trust from policy makers in youth researchers. To enable this, youth researchers should not be seen to be political, or to have a political voice within policy processes. It can be argued that this means there is a need for research to be seen as objective - but the idea of fully objective research is disputed within social science. Overall, there is a need to show greater distinction between empirical studies and 'evidence' produced in the scientific method and knowledge-based studies following qualitative analysis traditions. Both positions were valuable to policy making.

The challenge of developing a long-term career as a youth researcher focused on policy and practice was further highlighted. It was stressed that University institutions often did not value or give status to youth research and to policy/practice focused youth research. This meant that researchers focused on these areas found it difficult to develop careers and stay within the field, often needing to rely on commissions from policy institutions. Overall, it was stressed there was a need for further development and recognition of the youth researcher role. Reliance on policy institutions for youth research funding also created other challenges for youth researchers and youth policy. Firstly, institutions often did not like to receive negative messages about policies or programmes from research, so it was sometimes difficult to criticise or produce negative findings. Secondly that it meant the evidence and research

produced was led by policy needs, rather than policy being led by evidence and empirical social study.

Overall, the discussion at the 2020 Youth knowledge Forum emphasised messages from previous forums, namely;

- The importance of providing policymakers, researchers and practitioners from the region with opportunity for dialogue, refining common vocabulary and language. This is linked to the need to foster effective communication among main actors in the youth field by looking at recent developments in communicating youth research.
- The value of investing and developing in youth research networks and youth policy monitoring. Youth research is generally in a mixed state of development; in some countries it is substantially more developed and invested in than in others.

4.3 New times, new methods

The second day of the Knowledge Forum considered the youth research methodologies and the context of COVID-19 in relation to youth research.

The day was opened with an [animated video](#) which stressed the ways in which young people relate to research and data. The video emphasised that young people's lives are recorded at unprecedented levels. Administrative data is collected from birth, it is more and more linked, automated and machine readable - this data is analysed, sold and used by many actors. For young people being a digital citizen means being informed about data, being able to delete data, and being able to use data for personal benefits, and there is a need to enable young people to take charge of their own data, rather than to exist solely as subjects about whom data is gathered.

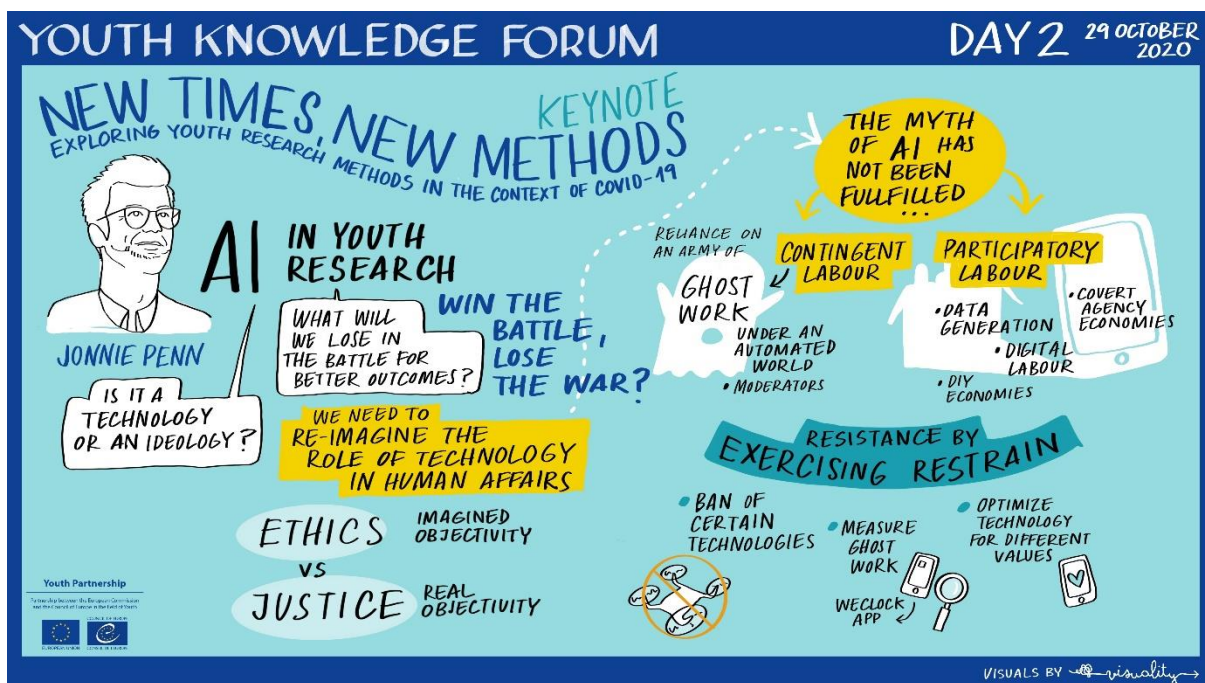
The video went on to identify the potential of participatory youth research which can enable young people to take charge of the research data generated about them. It emphasised that young people can be critical users of youth research, and partners who co-design youth research. This can mean that young people could be involved in planning research, carrying out research and shaping results.

Dr Humera Iqbal (University College London) [presented](#) the FACT-19 Families and Communities in the time of COVID-19 study. Qualitative research, such as the digital ethnographic methods on which this study was based provides a valuable approach to research youth and learning about the social world. Qualitative methods can be contrasted with quantitative research. Qualitative approaches can be built around interviews, photo observations, diaries and ethnographies. They can also be combined with quantitative research as part of mixed methods studies.



As an example of digital qualitative work, Dr Iqbal illustrated how the FACT-19 study had operated as a longitudinal digital ethnography consisting of online diary keeping and interviews with participants over an extended period of time. It aimed to understand the impact of the pandemic on everyday lives and understand people's responses to rules and regulations related to the pandemic. The study involved 38 families from the UK. During discussion several of the YKF participants whose experiences were more limited to statistical analysis were keen to understand the challenges of working ethically with qualitative methods. A particular topic of discussion was storage and protection of personal data in the context of GDPR. The full paper from this presentation [“Researching Youth: New Methods in Changing Times”](#) is available on the youth partnership’s website.”

Dr Jonnie Penn (University of Cambridge) further explored the topic of research in the new context, by presenting his research on [Artificial intelligence and Youth](#). The field of data feminism had begun to challenge the idea that data and analysis of data was an objective practice. As a result, artificial intelligence needed to be understood as a political and social ideology rather than a 'basket of algorithms'. The core ideology of AI - that a small technical elite can and should design large scale systems for processing data to replace human roles and parts of humanity - is increasingly coming under criticism. Many AI systems store technical and intellectual debt in their coding which was likely to burden future generations, and also relied on unpaid or unseen labour to operate. There is a need not only for research into this topic, but for the development of software and tools that were designed to give users and young people control of their data. The role of power and use of data at the global scale is important to take into account within this. His paper from the Forum can be [found here](#).



4.4 COVID-19 Knowledge Hub on youth sector impact and response

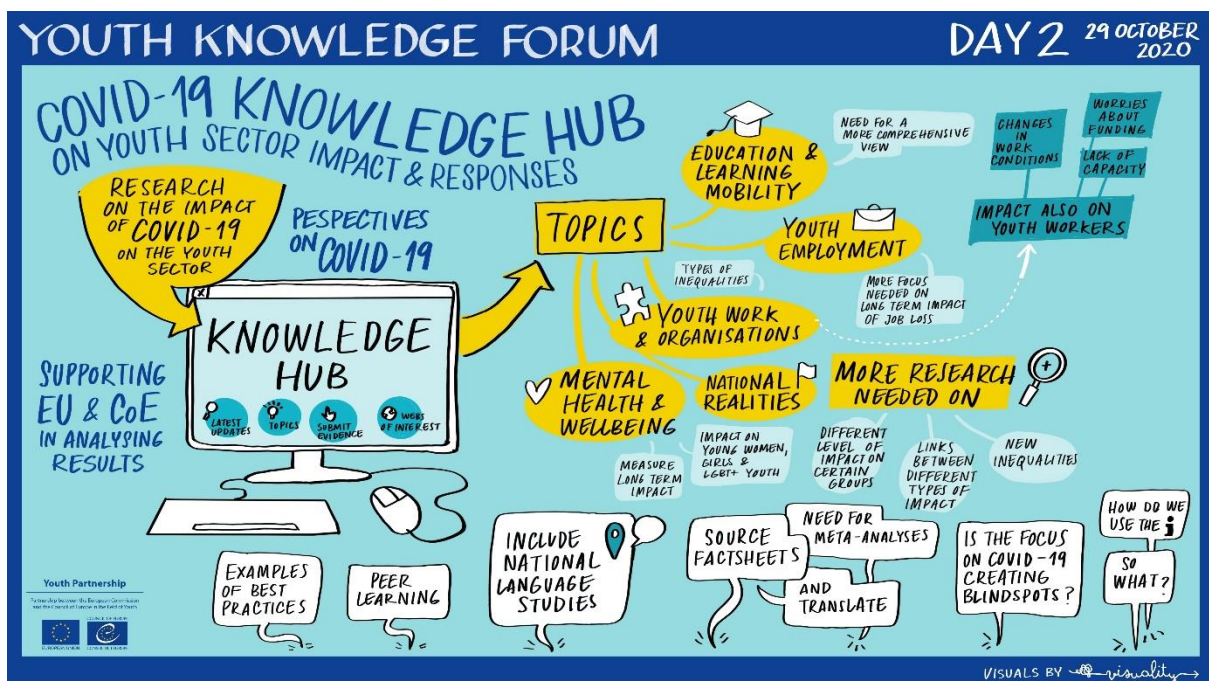
Recognising that COVID-19 had generated a need for rapid conduct and dissemination of research into the impact of COVID-19 on young people and the youth sector, the youth partnership had initiated [The COVID-19 Youth knowledge Hub](#). The hub acts as a reference source for research vs knowledge development on the issue. It highlights research and

knowledge gathering initiatives that look at the two sides of the pandemic impact: challenges for the youth sector and positive initiatives. The hub was launched and presented at the Youth Knowledge Forum, with a presentation of some key emerging messages from the available research. These were:

- The most common topics of research linked to COVID-19 and the youth sector were education and learning mobility, unemployment and mental health and wellbeing.
- The short term and long-term impact of COVID-19 on education needs to be explored from different perspectives, including school leadership, legislation to support decision making and the management of in-school and distance learning environments for all learners.
- Due to the immediacy of the situation, studies have not yet focused on how COVID-19 will affect the professional careers of youth in the medium and long term.
- Research is needed in order to understand the patterns of inequalities - whilst many studies highlight the impact of COVID-19 on inequality it is not always clear which groups of young people have been affected most and why.
- There is a gap in understanding of the long-term impact and consequences of COVID-19 on young people's mental health.

Overall, it was highlighted that more research is needed to better qualify the nature and content of the impact of COVID-19, particularly to understand;

- Why some groups have been more affected than others
- How different types of impact interlink
- Which new inequalities may be emerging and which inequalities may be exacerbated.



Manfred Zenter (PEYR/EKCYP) presented the summary analysis of an ECKYP survey [Towards a better understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on the youth sector](#). The study highlighted that, in general, state funding of the youth sector appeared to remain relatively consistent during lockdown but that there was evidence of funding being cut, cancelled or delayed at local level, and concerns that social distancing may lead to greater financial pressure on the youth sector. A particular area affected was the employment of professional youth workers who had been required to adopt new digital practices rapidly, often without experience or in some cases had their working hours cut. This was necessary as COVID-19 had largely prevented the delivery of programmes which required young people to physically meet, however it presented an issue as many youth workers were not skilled in the use of digital tools. Manfred highlighted that the impact had been stronger on NGOs than on the youth work delivered through state bodies.

Adina Șerban (PEYR) presented the results of a Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) [survey on the impact of COVID-19 on youth organisations, youth initiatives and youth networks](#). This work, which surveyed 48 youth organisations from across Europe identified that *all* respondents had been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Impacts included project delays, outreach and visibility decreases and loss of financial support. Almost all projects reported by survey respondents had been cancelled - including volunteering, monthly programmes and closure of youth centres. This related to the loss of ability to bring young people together physically;

in some cases, youth organisations had closed physical spaces in order not to pay rent. The research further identified that there was a need for European institutions to:

- Grant access to digital tools and provide further support for digital youth work
- Be more flexible with mobility grants
- Create emergency support measures for youth organisations, such as support lines and emergency grants as well as direct assistance to youth workers working on freelance basis.

Ms Şerban identified three clear messages from the research, first the need for support at local/regional level, second the need to address the digital gap and thirdly the need for sustainability support for youth NGOs.

The presentations were followed by a discussion among participants regarding the relative importance of focusing on short- and long-term impact. The importance of policy which responded to both the immediate situations and the long-term impact of COVID-19 was stressed. This was particularly considered in the context of understanding patterns of inequality amongst young people and how the short- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on this might be mitigated.

4.5 Youth Knowledge in European Youth Policy Making

Miriam Teuma, co-Chair of the Councils of Europe's Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) and European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and **Mila Lukic** of the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) closed the Forum by reflecting on the role of knowledge in the youth field.

With regard to the connection between youth research and youth policy or practice, the triangle between policy, research and practice is not equal and there were often many distortions in it - for instance it is policy makers that hold the money and political power. It is important to remember that perceptions of different parties across the triangle might be different from the party's own expectation of themselves. There are many competing interests within the triangle and differing expectations between actors, therefore coordination and patience are required for effective work.

The youth sector often fails to distinguish between the different types of knowledge and evidence and using the terms uncritically. It is guilty sometimes of calling too many things evidence, failing to distinguish between consultation and academic research. Within the youth sector we need knowledge-based youth policy, but this is not the same as evidence-based youth policy. Much of the work undertaken under the banner of research is about developing knowledge rather than evidence, and there is a need to unravel the differences between these terms and ideas. This requires professionalism and discipline in being clear on the difference between different approaches as well as not rushing to treat them as the same.

The current pandemic had put thousands of young people at danger, particularly those from marginalised groups. The youth sector needed to adapt quickly to this and exchanges between the youth sector actors in Europe were crucial to enabling this to happen. Youth research can enable young people to be at the heart of creating, applying and evaluating knowledge. Public and civic stakeholders must not disregard the value of knowledge-based approaches to policy and there are synergies between research and engagement/participation. Research can play a role in gathering inputs and perspectives from young people in order to ensure that policy perspectives align with the needs of young people. Research can also be used to help support young people and sustain young people and sustain youth organisations across Europe.

5. Conclusions

The 2020 Youth Knowledge Forum emphasised the growing value and use of youth research by policy makers, and an all-round broad support for continued use of knowledge and evidence-based approaches to policy and practice. It was clear that on the policy side there is continued political support for the use of research and development of youth research generally.

However, at the same time, the youth research sector itself is still in development. It is clear that youth research is not systematically supported across Europe and there are many areas and countries where local and national infrastructure does not exist. In addition, the Forum discussion highlighted that there is more need for youth researchers themselves to have greater understanding of how they communicate and engage with policy and practice, whilst not seeking to go too far and become political actors.

Alongside all of this, there is a clear need for the youth researchers to show greater awareness of what is meant by terms like 'evidence' and 'knowledge'. A higher standard of discussion and professionalism is required to help distinguish between the different types and forms of knowledge production that occur within the sector. Linked to this, the importance of youth researchers making their work easily understandable and relevant to policy and practice was discussed.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to influence a significant part of the youth research landscape for the foreseeable future. There is a need to understand the short- and long-term impact of COVID-19 on both the youth sector and young people, particularly paying attention to inequality and social exclusion. Whilst physical distancing measures remain to be a norm, there is a need to find continued ways of both delivering youth programmes and policies and conducting youth research.

Appendix I: Agenda

27 October	27 October 2020 Joint EKCYP-PEYR Meeting	
9:15-10:15	Joint opening – Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight of youth partnership activities in 2020 ● Group discussions - cooperation of EKCYP and PEYR ● Harvesting the ideas – plenary 	
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	EKCYP 16th Annual Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assigning new support peers and exchange in small groups ● Evaluation of this year’s work (process and results) ● Reflections on data collection and quality of data 	PEYR 10th Annual Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presenting the work of PEYR 2017- 2020 ● Evaluating the work of PEYR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How PEYR functions – research policy-practice connection Internal communication and information sharing ● New PEYR 2021
11:30-11:45	Break	
11:45-12:30	Draft work plan 2021 and joint activities presentation and reflection in groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topics and upcoming trends: European and national ● Conclusions 	
12:30-	Optional informal closing drinks	

28 October	Youth Knowledge Forum - Day 1
9:15-9:30	Connection and Welcome from the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership
9:30-10:30	Opening panel discussion – Role of knowledge and research in today’s European youth policymaking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director for Youth, Education and Erasmus+, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport, European Commission ● Matjaz Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe
10:30-10:40	Break
10:40-11:20	Supporting the use of knowledge in the youth sector 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mapping national youth knowledge networks ● Examples and case studies of national knowledge networks
11:20-11:30	Break
11:30-12:30	Supporting the use of knowledge in the youth sector 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to engage researchers ● Communicating research results
12:30-12:50	Closing of day 1

29 October	Youth Knowledge Forum - Day 2
9:30-9:40	Welcome from the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership
9:40-10:50	New times, new methods: Exploring youth research methods in the context of COVID-19
10:50-11:00	Break
11:00-12:15	COVID-19 Knowledge Hub on youth sector impact and responses:

	Launching the COVID-19 Knowledge Hub
12:15-12:25	Break
12:25-13:00	Youth Knowledge in European Youth Policy Making: Perspective of policymakers and youth organisations
13.00	Closing of the Youth Knowledge Forum