

Youth Partnership

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



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Towards a better understanding of the impact of Covid-19 on the youth sector

Policy Brief 2

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Introduction

In 2021, the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership continued to monitor the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people and on the youth sector and to publish regular analysis and updates on the Covid-19 Knowledge Hub. In the framework of this project, it has carried out two surveys (one in spring 2021 and one in autumn 2021) to further develop and expand on the themes and issues that emerged from the 2020 monitoring on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the youth sector.

A policy brief resulting from the spring 2021 survey was published in the [Knowledge Hub latest updates and analysis](#) section.

While this first survey focused on how Covid-19 impacted on and was responded to by the youth sector over the period 2020-2021 and the estimated impact and response over the period 2021-2022 and the longer term, the second survey focused on specific themes which have emerged as significant policy issues resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

Correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) and members of the Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) were asked to give an informed and considered view in responding to questions regarding how these specific themes had been impacted by the pandemic and their relevance for emerging and future youth policy development.

The themes highlighted were:

- the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of young people
- the impact of digitalisation during the pandemic
- youth issues that should be prioritised under European recovery programmes
- looking forward to a post-pandemic reality.

Correspondents and researchers were requested to give, where possible, examples of emerging policy issues and innovative developments and approaches under the themes highlighted.

A survey with multiple-choice and open-ended questions was sent on 9 September 2021 to all EKCYC and PEYR correspondents, based on the four themes.

By 15 October 2021, 27 completed questionnaires had been received from 21 countries as follows: Belarus, Belgium (Flanders), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Sweden.

All the information and data included in the analysis and graphs derive solely from the responses to the questionnaire.

1. Impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of young people

Most correspondents indicated that the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of young people had been very strong or strong, with only a small minority describing it as neutral (Figure 1).

While most correspondents indicated that the impact on the mental health and well-being of youth workers, volunteers and youth leaders had also been very strong or strong, a number of correspondents described it as being neutral (with the pandemic having no significant impact) or weak (Figure 2).

Figure 1

What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of young people?

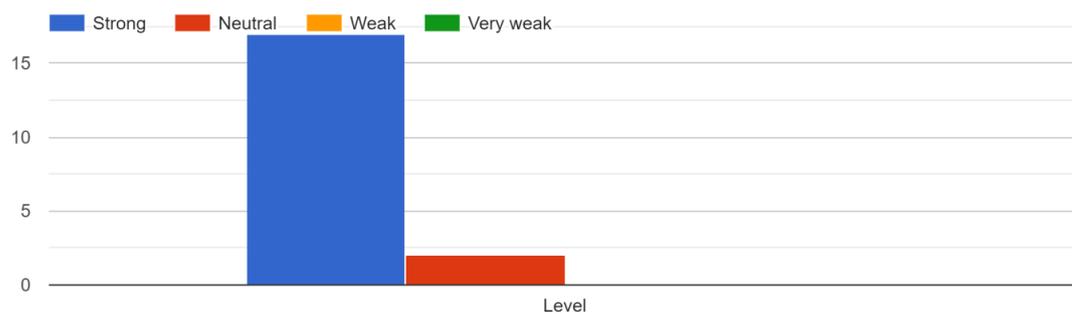
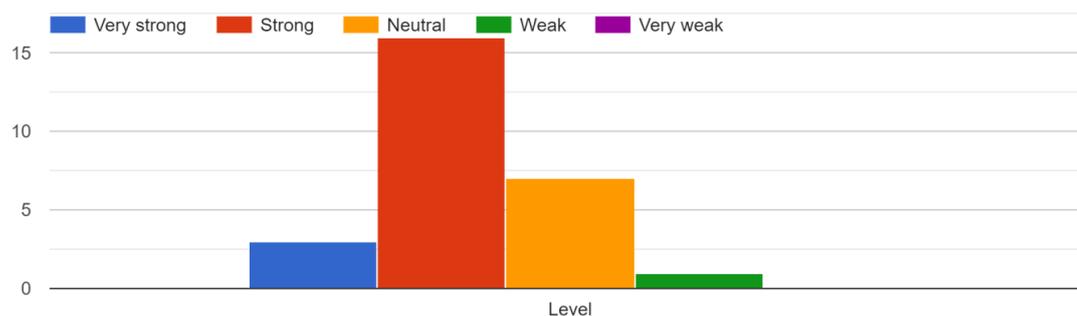


Figure 2

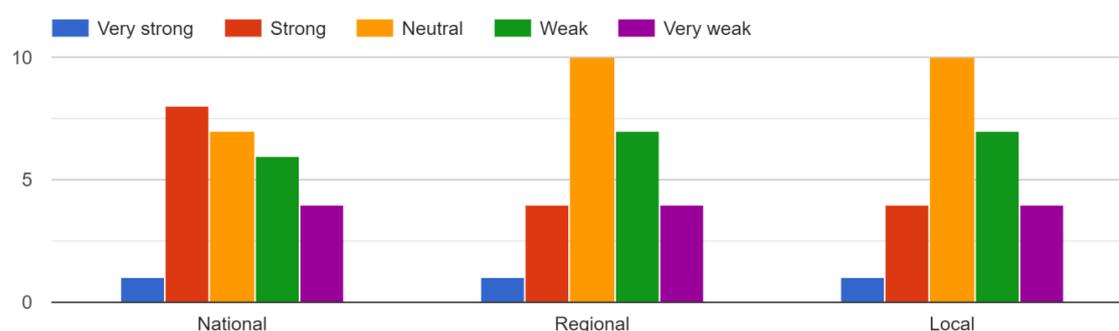
What has been the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of youth workers, volunteers and youth leaders?



Most correspondents categorised the effectiveness of the public sector in meeting the mental health needs of young people and youth workers/volunteers as being generally neutral (the pandemic having no significant impact), if tending to be more or less strong (at national level) or weak (at regional or local level). A number of correspondents categorised effectiveness as being very weak at all levels (Figure 3).

Figure 3

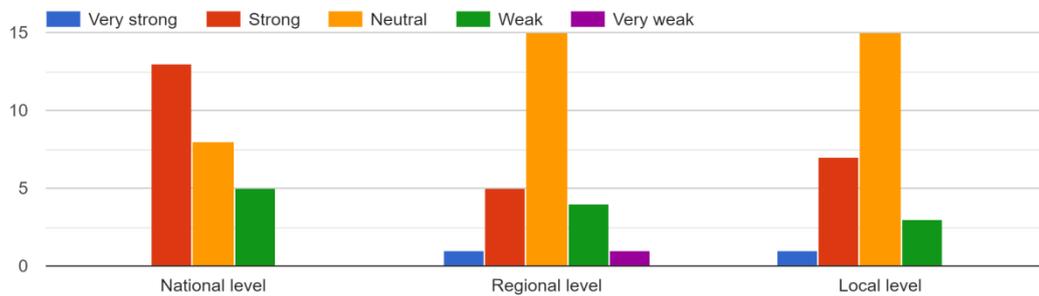
How effectively has the public sector, at national, regional or local level responded to meeting the mental health needs, and wellbeing of young people and youth workers/volunteers during the pandemic?



There was significant variation in how correspondents categorised the response of the NGO sector in meeting the mental health needs of young people and youth workers/volunteers. At a national level, the response was indicated as being strong or neutral, while at regional and local level it was indicated as being largely neutral (the pandemic having no significant impact) (Figure 4).

Figure 4

How effectively has the NGO sector, at national, regional or local level responded to meeting the mental health needs of young people and youth workers/volunteers during the pandemic?



Analysis

While all correspondents indicated the strong impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of young people, this was slightly less so in the case of youth workers. This may be indicative of the greater adverse impact of the pandemic on young people than on other age groups, excepting the elderly.

Many countries have conducted initial surveys or research on the impact of the pandemic on young people and all correspondents attest to the severity of its impact. Anxiety, stress, monotony and feelings of insecurity and uncertainty are reported. Some surveys indicate over a third or a half of young people having been badly affected in terms of mental health. The pandemic is described as having “a catalytic role for mental health problems” and resulting in “an increase in anxiety, fears, phobias and negative experiences” and leading to “sleep disorders, anxiety symptoms, and persistent symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress”, more young people in psychiatric care and increased consideration of suicide. Correspondents also point to the greater vulnerability of young people from low-income and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, young migrants, young women and young people experiencing homelessness.

While most correspondents categorised the effectiveness of the public sector in meeting the mental health needs of young people and youth workers/volunteers as being generally neutral – meaning that the sector had not played a significant role in this matter, they do cite instances where the public sector was more active, varying from country to country and between national, regional and local levels. At a national level, examples of online counselling, live discussions on social media, surveys on mental health, digital health campaigns, 24/7 online and telephone counselling for vulnerable young people, and student-organised campaigns providing practical advice for young people on how to cope with work and studying during the pandemic were reported. At local and municipal levels,

there were examples of counselling being offered to young people at risk of mental health problems, online support and advice, medical and psychological consultations for young people at risk, conferences on the mental health needs of young people and youth workers during and after the pandemic and projects on supporting young people experiencing homelessness.

There are also examples of co-operation initiatives of the public sector with UN bodies or with private foundations.

The significant variation in how correspondents categorised the response of the NGO sector in meeting mental health needs at national, regional and local levels may reflect the uneven level of mental healthcare provided and disparities between more urban and rural communities. NGOs provided information and counselling (chat/telephone/e-mail) for young people with disabilities, initiatives for young people and youth workers with mental health needs, counselling services for young people and related initiatives with support from the public sector, self-analysis diaries for young people, podcasts, discussion groups for youth workers, crisis psychological helplines and remote counselling for rural and isolated young people and psychosocial educational platforms to help those with mental health issues. There were also examples of co-operation between teachers, youth workers and health professionals to address the mental health needs of young people.

UN bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO, and private bodies and foundations were also pro-active and worked in co-operation with the public and NGO sectors, especially in eastern Europe, in conducting surveys and other initiatives to identify and address the mental health needs of young people.

Policy reflections

The main findings suggest that two significant issues emerged in terms of youth policy development and implementation.

First, correspondents emphasise that while the pandemic has severely impacted the mental health and well-being of young people, it has also exacerbated a long-standing, persistent problem with providing mental health support and services to them. While it might be argued that the end of the pandemic will remove the source and cause of mental distress, this is only true in part.

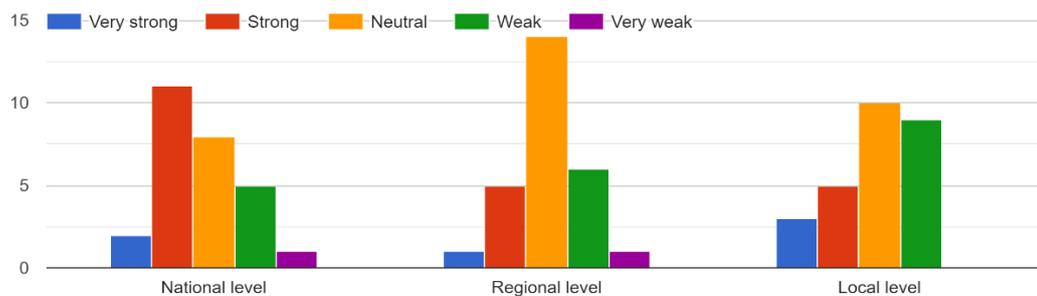
Second, the public sector was not adequately prepared at either a national, regional or local level for the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health and this was due, at least in part, to inadequate policy focus on their mental health needs.

2. Impact of Covid-19 on digitalisation during the pandemic

The survey explored the impact of Covid-19 on digitalisation and relevant processes on both young people and practitioners. The focus has been on digital capacity (access, tools, equipment), on the one hand, and on digital knowledge and training, on the other.

Figure 5

In terms of digital capacity (access, tools and equipment), how well prepared were youth workers, volunteers and youth leaders to meet the challenges...the pandemic at national, regional or local level?

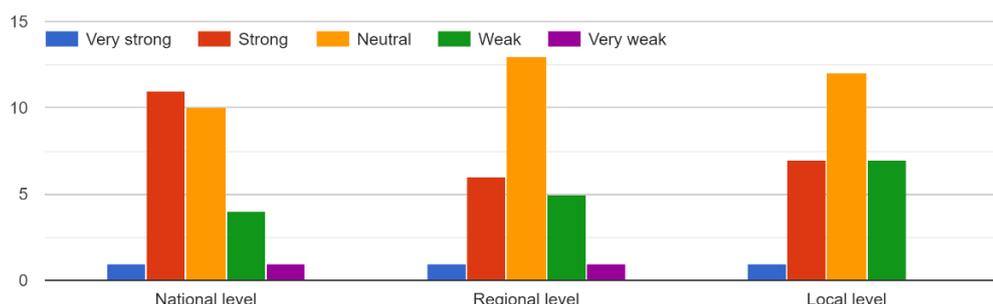


On a national level, digital capacity is perceived as mainly strong, while on a regional level Covid-19 had no significant impact on digitalisation.

On a local level, the impact of Covid-19 on digital capacity has been seen primarily as neutral (the pandemic had no significant impact). However, there is a visible difference compared to regional level – here, digital capacity is being perceived as weak almost by the same number of responses that point to neutral.

Figure 6

In terms of digital capacity (access, tools and equipment), how well prepared were young people to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic at national, regional or local level?



Analysis

When it comes to young people’s digital capacity on a national level, they seem to be strongly prepared to meet challenges posed by pandemic. On the other hand, on both regional and local levels, the responses suggest that Covid-19’s impact on the digital capacity of young people is neutral (the pandemic having no significant impact). This can be perceived as either a lack of information-sharing, a lack of data on both levels when it comes to the digital capacity of young people or as being rather optimistic about digital capacity and opportunities to expand this among young people.

However, it is not possible to overlook some examples where the digital capacity of both practitioners and young people has been seen as rather weak or very weak, with the following challenges highlighted.

- Youth workers/youth leaders and volunteers faced difficulties and spent time finding the proper digital tools and purchasing licenses and equipment. These challenges were more evident at a local level.
- This is also the case with young people, especially at a local level – they had to move rapidly to distant/online education; lack of equipment was identified as one of the major issues.
- Some responses point to problems associated with digitalisation, such as limited access to the internet and/or equipment, while highlighting that there are differences depending on geographic location and limited financial resources.
- Young people from minority backgrounds, such as Roma and Travellers,¹ and those with low socio-economic status have had significant difficulties in terms of access, tools and equipment.

1. The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated

- Digital fatigue has been highlighted on several occasions, as has a lack of social interaction.
- Some answers point to a lack of research and knowledge sharing on digital capacity of both young people and practitioners at national level.
- Financial resources have been mainly highlighted in addition to lack of equipment – with obvious differences perceived on a local level compared to the national one.

On the other hand, some positive examples were given in favour of the digital capacity of young people and practitioners being strong.

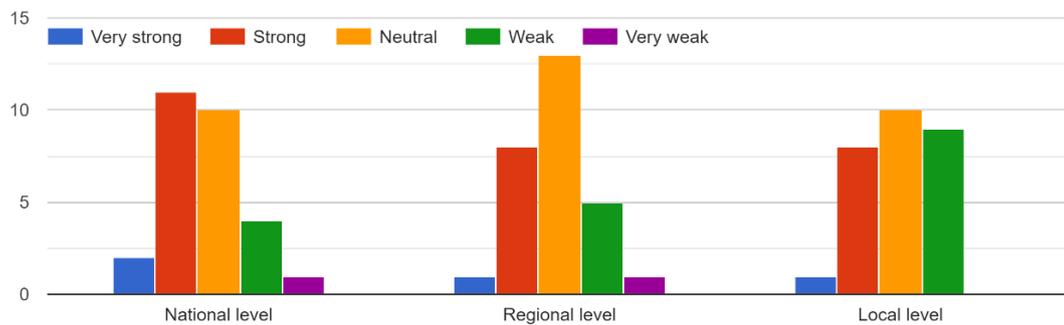
- In some countries, youth workers, volunteers and students showed great initiative and creativity and provided assistance to both government institutions and non-governmental organisations in developing digitalisation process. The sustainability of engagement is seen as a challenge due to the prolonged pandemic.
- In some countries, the overall digital capacity is seen as relatively high. Therefore, the overall preparedness of youth workers and young people is also high and, e.g. youth centres were able to use digital platforms as digital meeting points with young people a few weeks after the pandemic started.
- Financial support has been highlighted in other countries, for example schools that lacked connectivity and proper budgets for digitalisation have received support from various internet providers and donors.
- National youth organisations were able to quickly provide access to online activities for young people.

The examples above portray a mixed picture of how countries have been affected when it comes to the influence of the pandemic on digitalisation, which was initially highlighted as a major area in the spring survey. To understand the effect of the pandemic on digitalisation, the survey has also explored perceptions of digital knowledge and training among practitioners and young people.

Figure 7

under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

In terms of digital knowledge and training, how well prepared were youth workers, volunteers and youth leaders to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic at national, regional or local level?

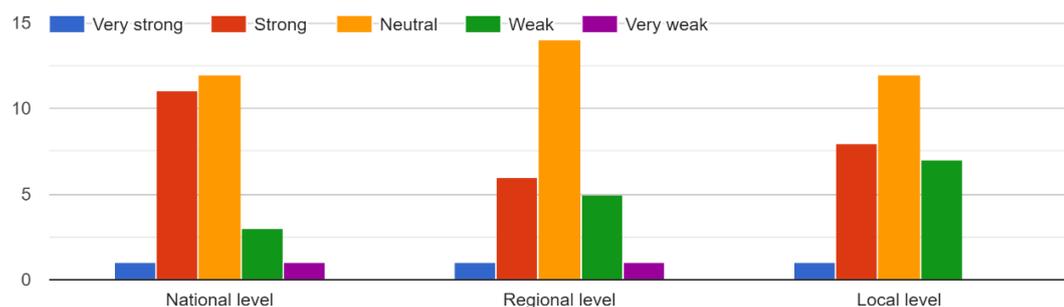


Practitioners were strongly prepared to meet challenges related to digital knowledge and training at a national level. On regional and local levels, the impact of Covid-19 was seen as neutral or having no significant impact.

Examples below will hopefully clarify the difference when it comes to digital knowledge and training on a local level compared to the national one.

Figure 8

In terms of digital knowledge and training, how well prepared were young people to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic at national, regional or local level?



Analysis

In terms of digital knowledge and training, the impact of Covid-19 on the level of preparedness of young people on all three levels – national, regional and local – is seen as neutral (the pandemic having no significant impact). This may be the case with the lack of

research on Covid-19's influence on digitalisation process and its effect on both young people and practitioners, as highlighted in some of the answers.

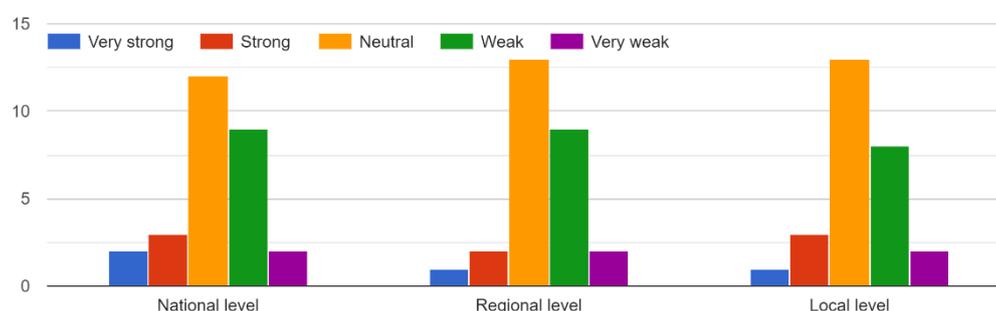
Some examples highlight the following when it comes to impact of Covid-19 on digital knowledge and training opportunities.

- Social media was used to enhance digital knowledge and to provide training opportunities on several occasions during the pandemic.
- Volunteer activities with a creative online aspect engaged more young people and practitioners in experiencing the digital world.
- Online safety was identified as a major concern in developing digital knowledge and training.
- Organisations at a local level were more flexible in adapting and finding solutions to deploy digital learning and training programmes.
- Some answers point to the need to raise awareness on the benefits of using digital tools through knowledge development and training, as these are not always positively seen.
- Youth practitioners and young people are enthusiastic in using digital tools, but they need to be sustainably engaged in training and knowledge development.
- Youth centres were more creative and flexible in enhancing knowledge sharing and digital skills development among young people.
- Vulnerable groups (those marginalised, with disabilities, and Roma and Travellers) are highlighted in this and previous sections as highly affected by the lack of sustained engagement in digital skills development and training programmes.

In addition to the impact of Covid-19 on digitalisation processes, knowledge development and sharing across the youth sector and the level of engagement and effect it had among young people, the survey explored the effectiveness of public sector in providing support.

Figure 9

How effective was the public sector, at national, regional or local level, in providing for capacity building and training for digitalization in the youth sector during the pandemic?



Responses highlight that Covid-19 had no impact on the level of effectiveness of the public sector in providing capacity building and training for digitalisation of the youth sector. This is the case on all three levels – local, national and regional.

Some correspondents point to the weak level of public sector assistance in the development of digitalisation and learning, as well as a lack of training opportunities for the youth sector. Some of the reasons for the perceptions noted can be seen in the following examples.

- Public institutions focused on responding to the health crisis.
- The public sector itself needed training on and capacity building for digitalisation.
- Schools, universities and teachers were the ones that first initiated change and action on this matter.
- Although there has been some level of assistance, strong disparities emerged on access to digital tools and services.

Despite the grim picture on the level of public sector engagement in mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on young people, by assisting the development and implementation of successful digitalisation, some positive examples are worth noting.

- In Cyprus, equipment and licences for digital tools were funded for projects that were approved through the national funding schemes Recover20 and Youth Initiatives.
- In Georgia, in 2020, the Youth Agency grant programme supported several projects aimed at raising digital competences among young people.
- In Estonia, on the national level an open call on youth initiative projects focused on projects raising youth digital competences. In addition, the national youth information platform Teeviit offers young people training on digital competences in different formats.
- In Romania, at the end of 2020, the Ministry of Youth and Sport allocated additional budget to equip 33 Youth Counselling Centres with a computer and a printer. The Ministry of Youth and Sport also ran two sets of trainings for youth workers on how

to work with young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The activities took place online and partly covered digital learning.

- In Malta, the National Youth Agency, in collaboration with Agenzija Support, provided online sessions for young people with disabilities to create more awareness on the secure use of internet access.

Policy reflections

The impact of Covid-19 on the digitalisation of the youth sector, in addition to digital access and knowledge development among practitioners and young people, is still challenging. With the prolongation of the pandemic and with efforts being channelled towards resolving initial challenges, the sustainability, further development and sharing of digital knowledge, technical capacity and expertise is highlighted by many correspondents. Ultimately, Covid-19 has exacerbated some challenges, while planting a seed of innovation and flexibility on different levels across the youth sector. Young people are seen as a priority and should be enabled to equally benefit from and contribute to digitalisation processes at all levels.

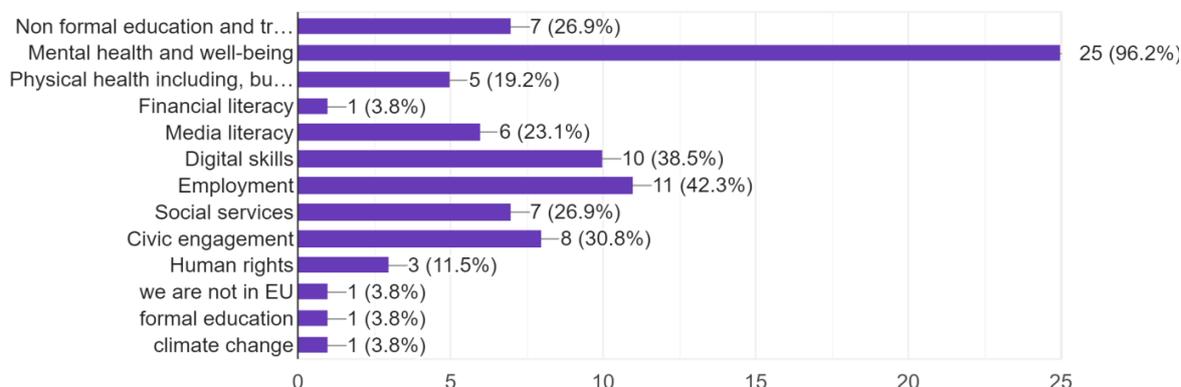
3. Youth issues that should be prioritised under European recovery programmes

In terms of youth issues that should be prioritised under European recovery programmes, the outstanding issue cited by virtually all correspondents was mental health and well-being. Other significant priorities identified are employment, digital skills, civic engagement, social services and non-formal education and training. (Figure 10)

Figure 10

In the event of additional financial resources being made available to the youth sector, which three of the following areas do you think should be prioritised for an investment?

26 responses



Analysis

Mental health and well-being are identified by correspondents as the single most important issue for young people that needs to be addressed by European recovery programmes.

The other priority areas can be characterised as two-dimensional and mutually supportive and focus on addressing the economic and social consequences of the pandemic that have impacted young people in particular.

One of these dimensions focuses on employment prospects and opportunities and up-skilling, particularly of digital skills. Correspondents also pointed to the need to focus on young people excluded from the labour market and for tailored integration pathways to employment.

The second dimension is social and educational, with a focus on civic engagement, social services and non-formal education and training. Correspondents stressed the importance of strengthening social infrastructure and the range of social and community services, including mental health services, available to young people and the need to minimise the gap between less well-off young people and those more privileged, which has been further exacerbated by the pandemic.

4. Looking forward – post-pandemic reality

The survey explored perceptions of the influence of the pandemic over the next 12 to 18 months, and what a post-pandemic reality could look like. If the pandemic continues, significant inputs have been provided for a strong case for policy and practice changes across the youth sector. Hence, the survey explored the following three dimensions for the next 12-18 months:

- the top three emerging needs of young people;
- the top three emerging needs of the youth sector/youth organisations/NGOs working with young people;
- the top three most significant policy changes to be considered.

In addition, correspondents were asked to provide a brief input on what actions, programmes or measures are planned for the next 12-18 months to reduce or overcome the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives of young people.

Correspondents provided rich examples of good collaboration in their countries that have the likely potential to strengthen social capital and create an enabling environment for youth to thrive in the next 12-18 months.

The following three areas prevail among answers on the top needs: employment, mental health support and opportunities for civic engagement.

Several responses also included access to financial support and media literacy.

A few correspondents point to the need to invest in the youth work sector as a primary supporter of young people, highlighting the importance of both financial and capacity-building support to create quality programmes that can respond to the needs of young people, as complementary as possible to formal education.

In portraying the top three rising needs of the youth sector/youth organisations/NGOs working with young people for the next 12 to 18 months, correspondents offered a variety of insights:

- financial support to enable sustainability and broader coverage of programmes, as well as the opportunity to build and enhance digital capacities;
- creating stronger ties between local, national and regional programmes and providing support to capacity building to making this possible;
- keeping and broadening human resources in a shrinking youth sector space is a challenge;
- enriching links with schools and creating a model of school-based youth work, as well as investing human and financial resources in knowledge sharing and practice development to create stronger ties between these two sectors.

In addition to these areas most frequently mentioned, a few answers highlight the need to provide support to the youth sector on healthcare of young people and their active participation.

Most correspondents agree that the top three most significant policy changes to be considered in the next 12-18 months are:

- revising policies in education and including the aspect of digital skills development and online access;
- revising policies on mental health and creating new ones that take into account not only psychological effects, but also those that the pandemic has on employment, civic participation and social inclusion that affect the mental health and well-being of young people;
- revising policies on financial support and capacity building to the youth sector, with a focus on inclusive and participatory practice.

Correspondents also highlight the importance of cross-sectoral approaches and strengthening the evidence base that will link local, national and regional aspects of both the youth sector and young people's needs.

To mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people, correspondents provided insight into actions, programmes and measures planned for the next 12-18 months. Some of these include:

- in the areas of employability and employment – schemes for vocational training and/or employment of young people, especially young people in NEET situations; programmes for the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills; innovation grants;
- in the area of digital skills development – educational programmes on new technologies, technical support, providing devices or financial support to obtain these;
- in the area of mental health – programmes to support mental health and well-being, with a primary focus on reducing the impact of the pandemic's effects, e.g. counselling;
- in the areas of formal education – support to prevent drop-out and fatigue that emerged during the pandemic; enhancing digital access to remote learning; creating interlinked programmes that combine face-to-face and online engagement.

A few correspondents also highlight the revision of existing internal strategies for empowerment of young people and enhancing their participation, including outreach activities.

Finally, correspondents provided several examples of good policy and collaborative efforts in their respective countries that have the potential to strengthen social capital and create

an enabling environment for young people to thrive in the coming 12 to 18 months. Some of these examples include:

- a cross-sectoral youth working group in Cyprus, set up in the frame of the National Youth Strategy and consisting of representatives from the Youth Board of Cyprus, ministries, semi-governmental organisations, and the Commissioners, with the aim to ensure a cross-sectoral approach;
- in Georgia, the Youth Agency's support for youth-led organisations via an annual grant competition for regional youth organisations and initiative groups with two thematic directions: to finance projects submitted by young people and to create sustainable, real and/or virtual social youth spaces with long-term results;
- in Bosnia and Herzegovina, youth NGOs being gathered around the idea of uniting all youth spaces, youth clubs and youth centres under one umbrella organisation. The three youth councils representing young people from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina have signed a co-operation agreement and are now synchronising most of their actions;
- the positioning of the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) in Montenegro in providing well-being, mobility and non-formal education and information to youth in collaboration with the business sector, which is seen as promising;
- in Moldova, online and offline sessions that support young people in the pandemic, like the online tool called How are you feeling today? for enhancing mental health, has been made available, with an emphasis on need for these tools to be expanded on both regional and local levels by professional training of specialists.

These are some concrete examples, in addition to the need to enhance implementation of national youth strategies across different countries and enabling synergy at local, national and regional level for better support to young people during the pandemic and beyond.

Correspondents showcased the need to focus the efforts and attention of public and private stakeholders, the civil society sector and the media on the few areas highlighted above. Although it is still difficult to predict how long the pandemic will last, the impression from the survey results is that cross-sectoral approaches and a collaborative effort are needed to overcome multiple challenges that the pandemic brought to young people and to the youth sector.

Conclusion

Both the survey of autumn 2020 and the survey of spring 2021 on the impact of Covid-19 were conducted when most of Europe had experienced and was slowly emerging from lockdown, but where the threat posed by the pandemic was still active. Consequently, the responses to both surveys tend to reflect and reinforce each other.

The survey conducted in autumn 2021 sought to explore the significant themes and issues that emerged from the two previous surveys, while also seeking to explore future policy directions.

The three surveys covered the following thematic areas:

- communication with young people
- funding and policy issues
- impact on and response of state programmes and services
- impact on and response of NGO programmes and services
- impact on the mental health and well-being of young people
- the digital response and impact of Covid-19 on digitalisation
- future policy directions and the European perspective.

From the onset of the pandemic, official communications have been targeted at the population in general and seen generally as one-way and directive. There were issues with the quality and clarity of official communication and mixed messaging resulting from a lack of co-ordination among different stakeholders. While the NGO sector sought a more interactive and innovative approach in supporting young people, shortcomings in sharing information and feedback and opening up dialogue using digital media were lacking.

Lack of information-sharing among stakeholders, impacted by a lack of use of available digital tools and coupled with digital fatigue, made it difficult to engage young people to receive their input across different areas throughout the pandemic. These include areas discussed in the surveys, from employment and mental health to civic engagement and environmental issues.

In general, state funding for the youth sector appears to have remained relatively consistent during the pandemic and youth policy remained largely unaffected, though there is evidence of some strains on both. This may be due in part to the fact that the effect of the pandemic was not clear in the spring of 2020 and by spring 2021 the impact of the vaccination process was visible and important to consider. However, these strains are most evident on the demand, rather than the supply, end: the problems related more to expenditure than allocation. Consequently, those countries with a well-established and well-

funded youth sector were better positioned than those countries that are largely dependent on European project-based funding, unable to expand because of the pandemic.

However, even countries with significantly stable youth-sector funding were challenged in identifying the key areas to focus on that would benefit young people the most throughout the pandemic. In addition, the expansion of programme areas or the design and implementation of novel projects has been mostly paused due to challenges imposed on human resources, outreach activities and sometimes even lack of time to plan.

The need for social distancing since the onset of the pandemic and the resulting social isolation of young people emerges as the most important factor in curtailing their physical access to programmes and services. This had two main consequences: deterioration in mental health and well-being and over-reliance on digitalisation. The mental health of young people and relevant programmes and services are highlighted across all three surveys as a key priority to consider now and in the future.

While it might be argued that the end of the pandemic will remove the source and cause of mental distress, this is only true in part. The state sector was not adequately prepared at either national, regional nor local level for the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health and this was due, at least in part, to inadequate policy focus on their mental health needs. Public and civil society sectors will need to use all opportunities to address the employment of young people, social protection, health, civic engagement and participation challenges, among others.

Mental health and well-being are identified by correspondents as the most important priority to be addressed by European recovery programmes. The other areas include economic and social consequences of the pandemic on young people.

While the Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the digital divide and the public and private sectors focussed primarily on tackling the health crisis, both policy responses and projects initiated by the NGO sector did strengthen digitalisation. Challenges at all levels – local, regional and national remain - particularly when it comes to enhancing the digital capacity of young people, practitioners, and stakeholders, in addition to improving infrastructure.

Many countries have conducted initial surveys or research on the impact of the pandemic on young people; all attest to the severity of its impact, particularly on young people from low-income and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, young migrants, young women and young people experiencing homelessness.

Finally, several correspondents highlight the intersectional nature of the challenges to keep in mind when developing responses to the impact of Covid-19 on young people and the youth sector.