

Youth Partnership

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



Impact of COVID-19 on young people and the youth sector – cross-country analysis based on a survey carried out in spring 2021

Policy Brief

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1. Introduction

In 2021, the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth (hereinafter, EU-CoE youth partnership) is conducting two surveys (one in spring and one in autumn) that will further develop and expand on the themes and issues that emerged from the 2020 survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the youth sector.

These surveys are conducted within the framework of EU-CofE's youth partnership's Knowledge Hub, which operates under a group of experts and is bringing together the findings, analyses and impacts that COVID-19 is having on the lives and futures of young people.

While the 2020 survey focused on the impact of and response to the initial lockdown, it is now evident that the impact of COVID-19 and the consequences will be long-term. Accordingly, EKCYP correspondents and PEYR members were asked to give an informed and considered view in responding to the questions on how COVID-19 and ongoing restrictions and prolonged lockdowns have impacted on and been responded to by the youth sector over:

- the past year (since March 2020) and
- the estimated impact and response over the coming year (2021-2022) and the longer term.

The aim is to get an interim view and assessment of the overall impact of the pandemic, how it has progressed and what the medium to long-term effects might be; how young people in different countries across Europe have been affected by the pandemic and the continuing restrictions and lockdowns; and how it has impacted on youth policy, funding for the youth sector, state and NGO operated programmes, youth work services and other supports for young people.

Correspondents and researchers were requested to give, where possible, examples and links of innovative developments and approaches, in place or planned, for tackling the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The survey was conducted between April and June 2021, and included the following headings:

- Communication with young people on the impact of COVID-19.
- Impact of COVID-19 on policy and funding.
- Impact of COVID-19 on state operated programmes, youth work services and other support for young people.
- Impact of COVID-19 on NGO sector programmes, youth work services and other support for young people.

Each heading had a combination of closed and open questions.

By 20th June 2021, 37 completed questionnaires had been received from 28 countries as follows: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium (Flemish), Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland,

Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, and Ukraine.

2. Communication with young people on the Impact of COVID-19

Over 40% of correspondents indicated that the state sector used a variety of means - webpages, social media, posters, leaflets, brochures, and television - to communicate with young people on rules and regulations, while the use of webpage (13.5%) and social media (10.8%) was also being significant.(Figure 1)

Over 50% of correspondents indicated that the state sector applied a variety of means to communicate with young people on access to programmes and service, while the use of webpage (16.2%) and social media (13.5%) was also significant. (Figure 2)

Figure 1.

Since the pandemic emerged, how has the state sector communicated with young people regarding COVID-19 rules and regulations?

37 responses

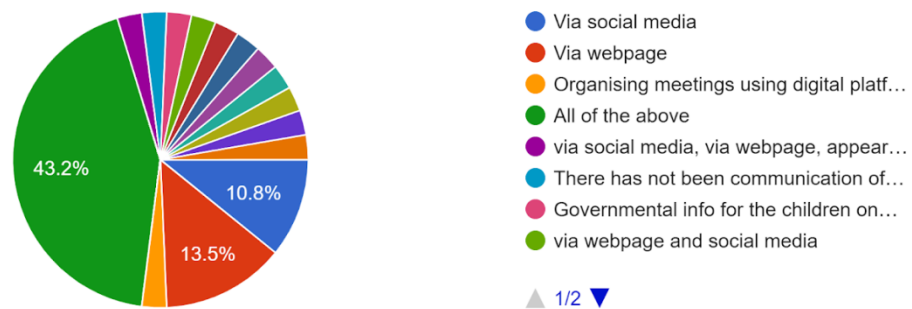
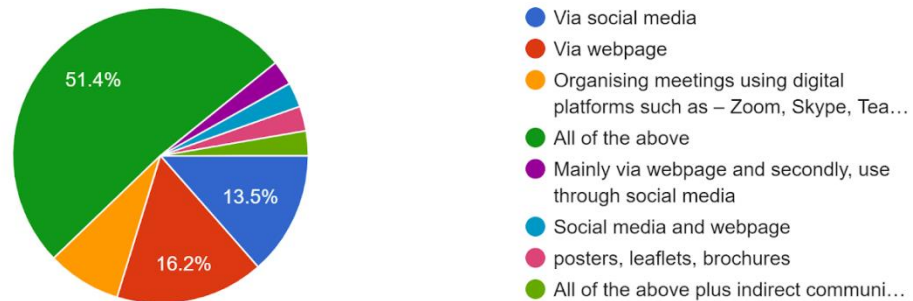


Figure 2.

Since the pandemic emerged, how has the state sector communicated with young people regarding access to programmes and services?

37 responses



Almost 65% of correspondents indicated that the NGO sector used a variety of means to communicate with young people on rules and regulations while social media was used by almost 25%. (Figure 3)

Over 70% of correspondents indicated that the NGO sector applied a variety of means to communicate with young people on access to programmes and services, while the use of social media (24.3%) was also significant. (Figure 4)

Figure 3.

Since the pandemic emerged, how has the NGO sector communicated with young people regarding COVID-19 rules and regulations?

37 responses

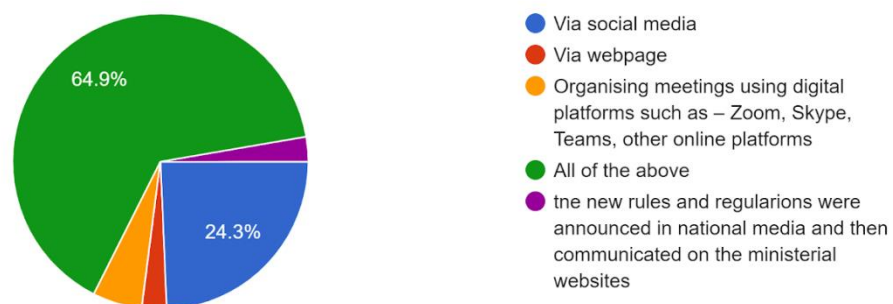
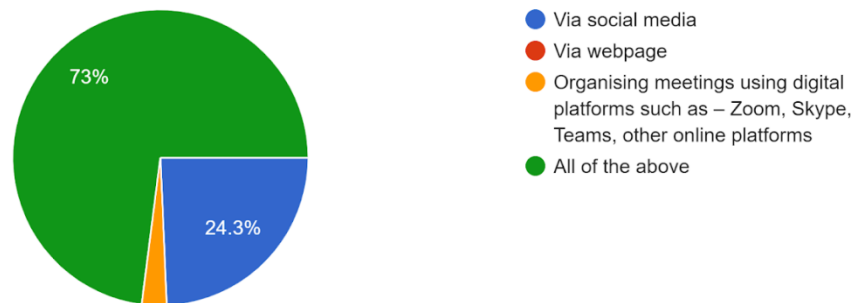


Figure 4.

Since the pandemic emerged, how has the NGO sector communicated with young people regarding the access to programmes and services?

37 responses



Non-formal education and training, mental health and wellbeing, digital skills and social services were identified by correspondents as the main areas covered by the state sector in communicating with young people, while physical health, employment, social inclusion and media literacy were also highlighted. (Figure 5)

Non-formal education and training and mental health and wellbeing, were identified by correspondents as the predominant areas covered by the NGO sector in communicating with young people, while digital skills, civic engagement and to a lesser extent social inclusion, physical health, and media literacy were also highlighted. (Figure 6)

Figure 5.

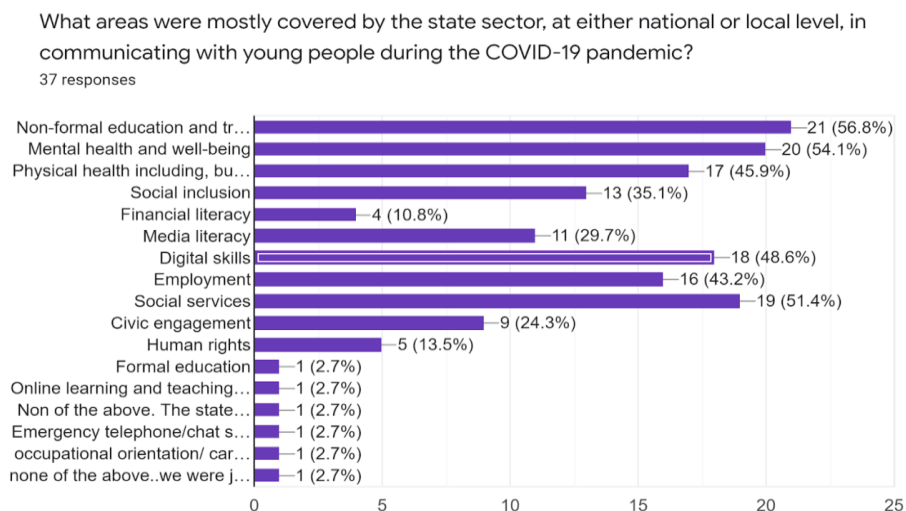
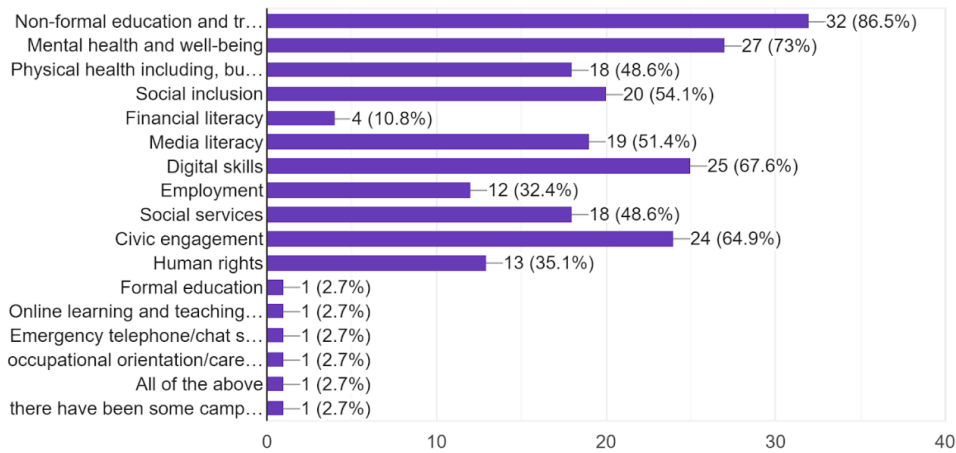


Figure 6.

What areas were mostly covered by the NGO sector, at either national or local level, in communicating with young people during the COVID-19 pandemic?

37 responses



The state sector focused on collection information and feedback from young people at either national and or national/local level bur less so at local level only. However, over 30% of correspondents indicated that the state sector had not sought such information or feedback. (Figure 7)

The NGO sector had a more balanced approach in collecting information and feedback from young people at national and local level or both and was more active in seeking information and feedback. (Figure 8)

Figure 7.

Has the state sector collected information and feedback from young people on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives at:

37 responses

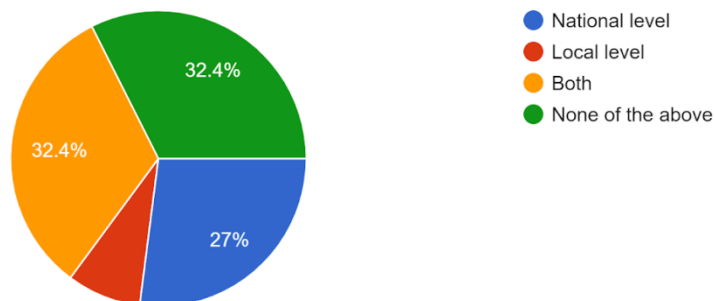
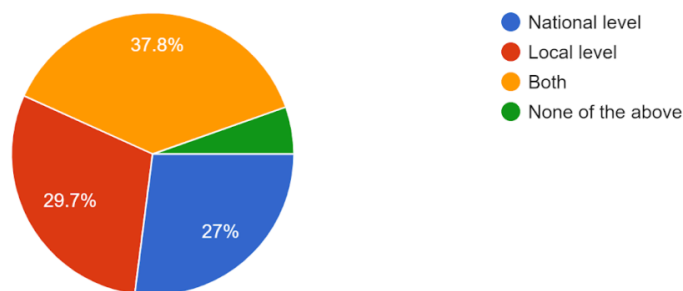


Figure 8.

Has the NGO sector collected information and feedback from young people on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives at:

37 responses



In giving information and feedback, young people identified lack of digital skills, delays and lack of communication from the state sector and insufficient human resources as the most significant issues. (Figure 9)

Almost 60% of correspondents indicated sharing of information and feedback between the state and the NGO sectors. However, the NGO sector was more proactive in sharing information and feedback while failure to share information and feedback is also notable at over 10%. (Figure 10)

Figure 9.

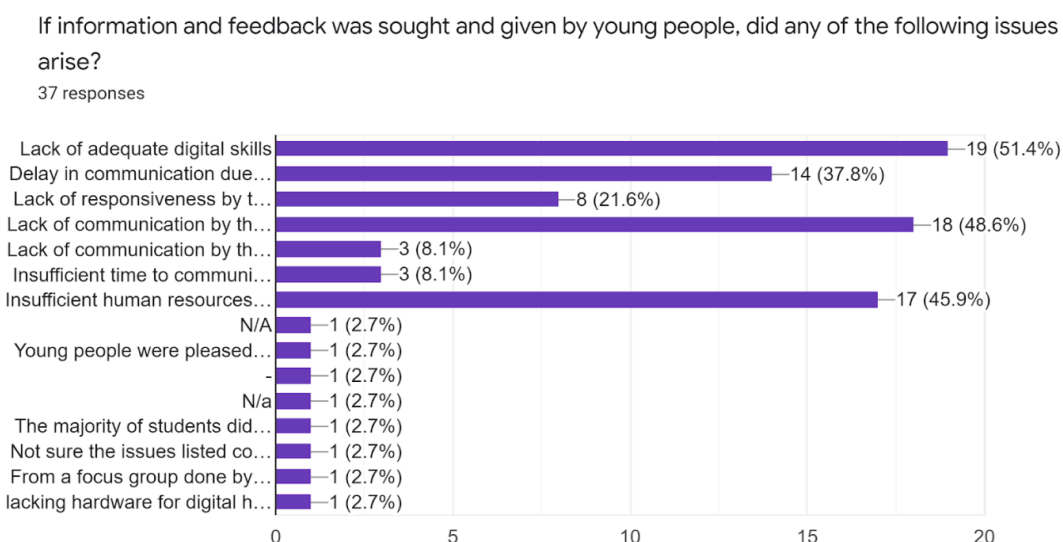
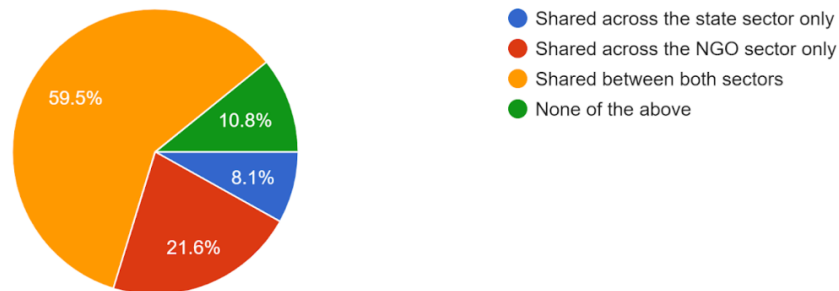


Figure 10.

If information and feedback were sought and given by young people, was this shared with both the state and NGO sectors?

37 responses



2.1. Analysis

Both the state and NGO sectors used common approaches in communicating with young people, however, there are some noticeable differences in terms of method and content. While the state sector used a variety of means to communicate with young people, there was a focus on one-way communication - webpages, posters, leaflets, brochures, and television. In contrast, the NGO sector appears to have made greater use of social media and a more interactive approach. In general, there appears to have been relatively little use of more interactive digital platforms, such as Zoom and Skype, in communicating with young people.

Non-formal education and training, mental health and wellbeing, and digital skills were the main areas covered by both the state and NGO sectors in communicating with young people. Non-formal education and training and mental health and wellbeing, as well as civic engagement were of greater concern for the NGO sector, while employment and physical health were highlighted by the state sector. The issue of human rights does not emerge as a significant issue.

When it came to seeking information and feedback from young people on the impact of the pandemic, the NGO sector appears more proactive than the state sector. While both sectors sought information at both national and local level, the NGO sector had a more balanced approach. Over 30% of correspondents indicated that the state sector had not sought information or feedback at either national or local level. The NGO sector was also more proactive in sharing information and feedback.

Correspondents refer to "gaps in communication with young people", to communication between the state and NGO sectors as being "very limited and sporadic", of the state sector being "very inefficient in communicating with young people" and in some instances of adopting a "highly politicized" and "not youth friendly" approach and of young people being "dissatisfied with communications" from representatives of the public sector and policy makers.

One of the most common criticisms voiced was that the state did not communicate directly with young people. Communication with young people "mainly went in one direction addressing them as recipients of instructive information....but there were hardly any dialogical formats used".

Correspondents also referred to initiatives, campaigns, research reports, studies and surveys to enhance communications with young people, but in many cases they appear "sporadic" and coming more from the NGO sector or informal groups of young people.

Reference is also made to the pandemic having a "far-reaching impact" on young people's lives, of some being subjected to "increased violence, threats, abuse or neglect" and of others feeling less safe than before its onset.

Main findings suggest that in terms of youth policy development and implementation, two significant issues emerged from the responses.

First, there is an apparent need for greater cooperation and coordination between the state and NGO sectors in communicating with, informing and seeking feedback from young people. Such an approach could avoid mixed messaging and promote a more positive response from young people.

Second, communicating with, informing, and seeking feedback from young people needs to be more interactive. One-way communication needs to be replaced by dialogue and information and feedback needs to be more widely shared by the state and NGO sectors and young people.

3. Impact of COVID-19 on policy and funding

Research explored the impact of the COVID-19 on state funding of the youth sector and the trends that resonated; if there were policy changes introduced and the impact they had on both areas of work across the youth sector and on a specific groups of beneficiaries. Additionally, the examples of funding and policy changes on both local and national levels were examined, including examples of innovative developments that are either put in place or planned in the next 12 months.

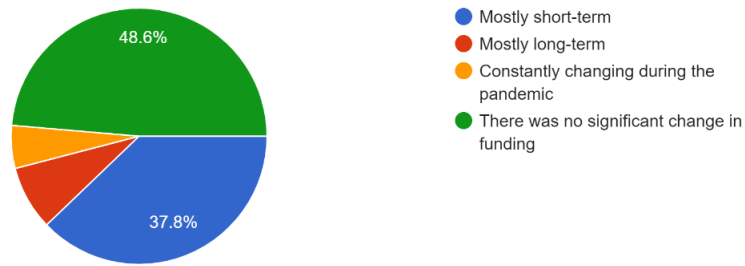
3.1. State funding and youth sector during COVID-19

Although 48.6% respondents suggest that the existing state funding of the youth sector remained at the same level in the past year, over 1/3 of respondents or 38% of them witnessed short-term changes in the state funding of the youth sector.

Additionally, the change in long-term funding can't be overlooked, as it represents 8% of the survey respondents representing Belarus, Estonia and Finland. (Figure 11)

Figure 11.

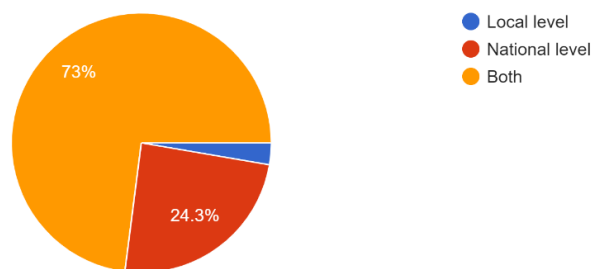
Do you consider that state funding for the youth sector during the COVID-19 pandemic has been:
37 responses



The changes in state funding of the youth sector are reflected on both local and national surveys, as per 73% of the respondents from 37 countries. (Figure 12)

Figure 12.

Considering the previous question, would you say that this is a trend at:
37 responses



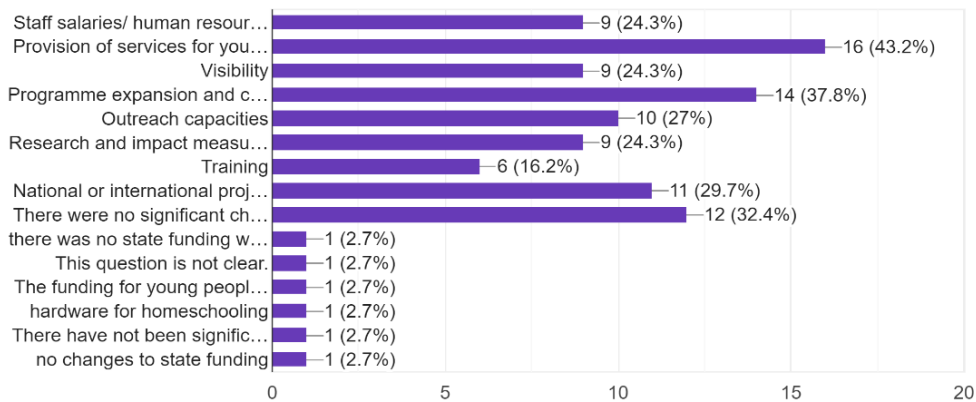
Impact of the state funding on the different aspects within youth sector is reflected in the Figure 13. Over 30% of the respondents witness no significant changes across different areas in youth sector as a result of changes in state funding during COVID-19 pandemic. However, 43.2% respondents suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic alongside state funding of the youth sector impacted provision of services for young people and 38% of respondents highlight the impact it has on youth programmes expansion and coverage.

Respondents also witness the impact of the state funding on staff salaries and human resources, so as national and international project capacities, and outreach.

Figure 13.

Considering the previous questions, what areas were affected the most when it comes to state funding:

37 responses



Although the light is shed on changes across different areas within youth sector, when it comes to impact of the state funding during COVID-19 pandemic, over 50% of respondents agree that young people were mostly affected by these changes. (Figure 14)

In addition, 30% of respondent agree that both stakeholders' capacities and programmes have been highly impacted. This has most likely contributed to the direct impact on young people as their beneficiaries.

Less than 30% of respondents consider that there were no aspects of the youth sector impacted by eventual changes in state funding of the youth sector during COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 14.

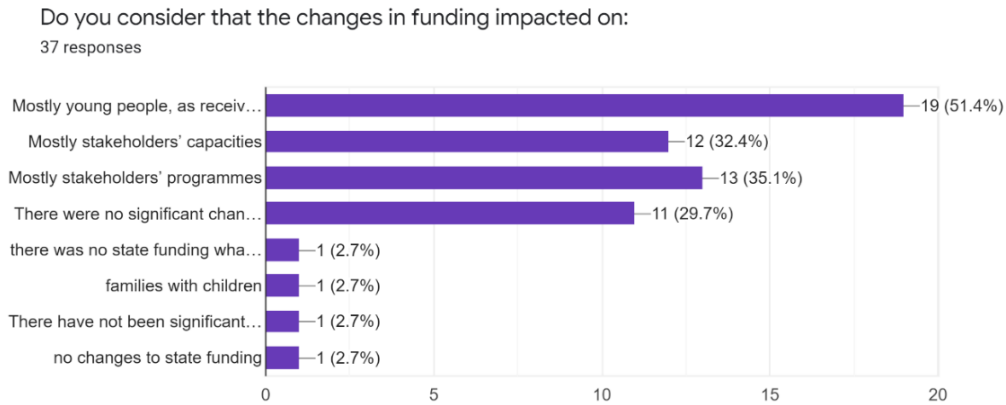
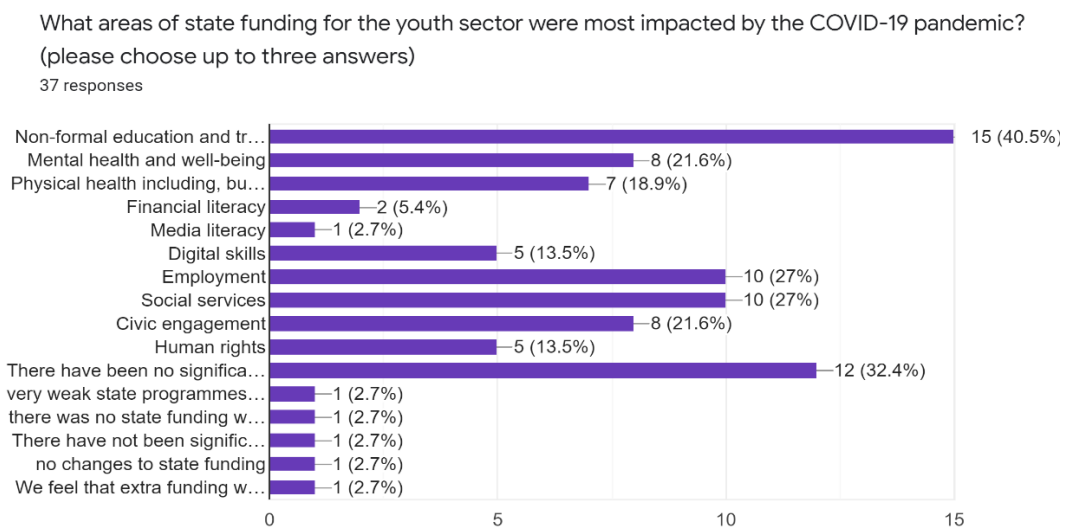


Figure 15 shows that the three major areas of state funding across youth sector, have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Non formal education and training, as per 40.5% of respondents.
- Employment, as per 27% of respondents.
- Social services, as per 27% of respondents.

In addition, 22% respondents suggest that mental health and well-being is an area impacted by the state funding of the youth sector during COVID-19 pandemic, followed by physical health including, but not limited to outdoor activities (as per 19% of the respondents). (Figure 15)

Figure 15.



3.2. Policy changes and youth sector during COVID-19

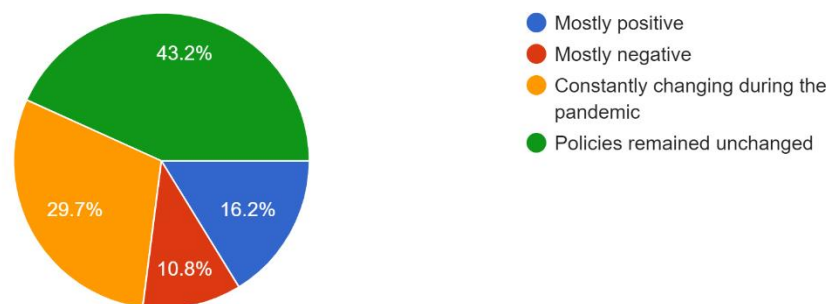
Almost half of the respondents (43%) witness no policy changes that affected the youth sector during COVID-19 pandemic. However, 30% of respondents witnessed constant change in policy across countries such as Romania, Croatia, Austria, Italy, Serbia, Poland, Azerbaijan North Macedonia to Ukraine and Belgium.

Among those countries that witnessed change in policy – there is a slightly higher proportion of these being perceived as positive among 16% of respondents, compared to those seen as negative, as per 10% of the respondents.

Figure 16.

Do you consider that significant policy changes, if introduced, were?

37 responses

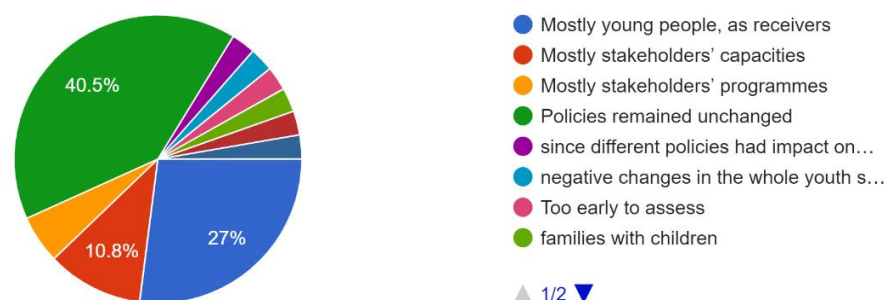


These changes in policy across youth sector, have seen to have highest impact on families with children as per 41% of respondents. Around 27% respondents stated that young people as receivers are highly impacted. Finally, 11% of respondents suggest that the highest impact of policy changes is reflected in stakeholder’s capacities. (Figure 17)

Figure 17.

Do you consider that the policy changes introduced impacted on?

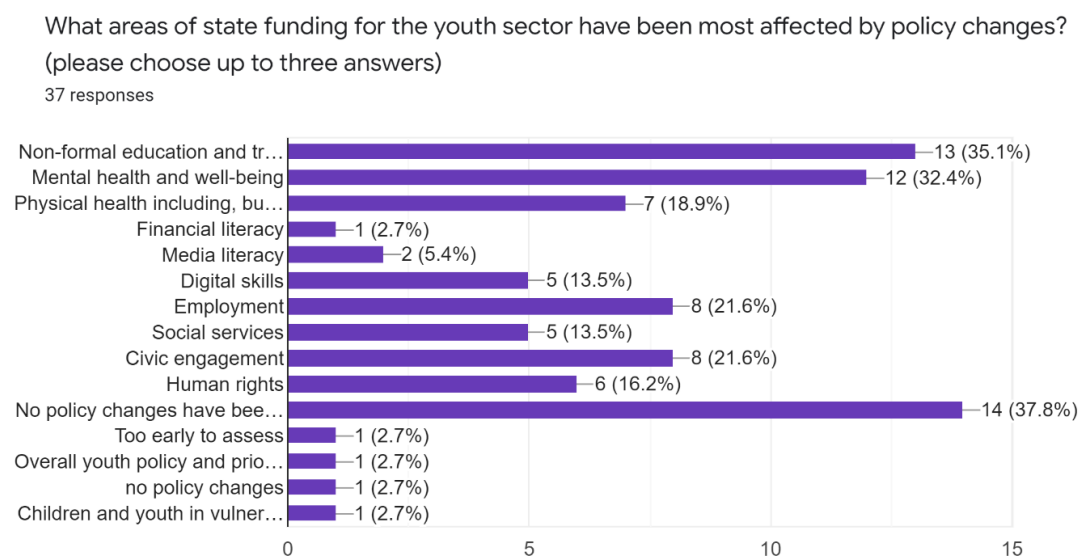
37 responses



When it comes to areas of work across youth sector, funded by state, that are being perceived as influenced by the policy changes – non formal education and training are being mostly affected, based on 35% responses.

Based on 32% of responses, mental health and wellbeing, funded by state, are perceived as impacted by policy changes. In addition, 19% of respondents suggest that the area of physical health, including but not limited to outdoors is impacted by the policy changes when it comes to state funding of the youth sector.

Figure 18.



3.3. Analysis

Although respondents agree that COVID-19 impact on state funding of the youth sector, and the changes in policies are visible to an extent in the areas discussed above, there is a consensus that no specific policies were introduced, that would support navigating the impact of pandemic on both the youth sector and its beneficiaries. Some respondents are hopeful that these will be introduced during 2021.

What stands out are the interesting examples, seen as sole area that has been innovated and adapted to the new reality, per respondent's views. These include examples where innovative developments are already in place and where both changes in policy and funding during COVID-19 have had a significant impact.

Croatian Science Foundation launched a call for scientific organizations on recovery from the COVID-19 which was an adequate and timely policy decision.

In Malta, Ministry of Health has introduced, what are seen as important and innovative policies and guidelines during COVID-19 to mitigate its impact, e.g. Guidelines on Healthy Eating during Quarantine, Guidance to Stay Physically Active, Mental Well Being Guidance

for Pregnant Mothers Covid-19 and Breastfeeding Guidance for People Living with Diabetes.

In Czech Republic, Department of Child and Youth Development prepared a call for non-governmental and non-profit organizations, universities, and leisure centres. focused on the implementation of summer camps aimed at reducing the negative impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on children aged 6 to 15.

In Cyprus, the results of the Youth Barometer survey that examined the impact of the pandemic on young people's life will further inform policy makers.

In Belgium the profession of youth welfare worker was recognised as an essential profession by the National Safety Council since April 2020.

In Finland the municipalities have significantly developed digital youth work and detached youth work during pandemic. This has been possible because the existing resources have been reallocated.

On the other hand, majority of respondents consider that there is still much to do when it comes to policy and state funding, to help navigate the COVID-19 impact, so as to set the stone for the future of the youth sector that will change as a result of corona crisis. Some of these recommendations include:

Taking the vulnerable youth into account when deciding on new measures within policy changes.

Supporting the economic empowerment of young people and their active participation in public life and democratic processes and to enhance their wellbeing and recovery in a post COVID-19 period, especially, at the local level.

Increasing the funding on the local level to mitigate the negative effect on the ability to conduct activities offline. In addition, increasing the funding overall to shift the donor-driven orientation of the youth sector.

Providing support and coordination by the state where it lacks, to compliment the sole international donor organisations assistance.

In between these lines discussed above, correspondents agree that better coordination on national and local level, concerning both state funding and introducing policy changes, is much needed to respond to both youth sector and its beneficiaries needs. This is seen as important, especially in navigating ongoing changes that COVID-19 pandemic introduced in a variety of areas that the youth sector is engaged in supporting, shaping, and addressing to help young people navigate new realms.

4. Impact of COVID-19 on state operated programmes, youth work services and other supports for young people

Provision of services for young people was identified by correspondents as the single most important issue impacted by the pandemic, with programme expansion, outreach capacities, national and international projects, training and research being highlighted. Only a minority of correspondents (3%) report no significant impact (Figure 19)

Young people's access to state operated programmes and services across a range of areas was deemed by correspondents to be either low or medium. (Figure 20)

New programmes and initiative in response to the impact of the pandemic identified by correspondents included non-formal education and training, digital skills, mental health and wellbeing, with employment, civic engagement, and physical health also being highlighted. Almost 30% of correspondents indicated no new programmes or services being initiated as a result of the pandemic. (Figure 21)

Figure 19.

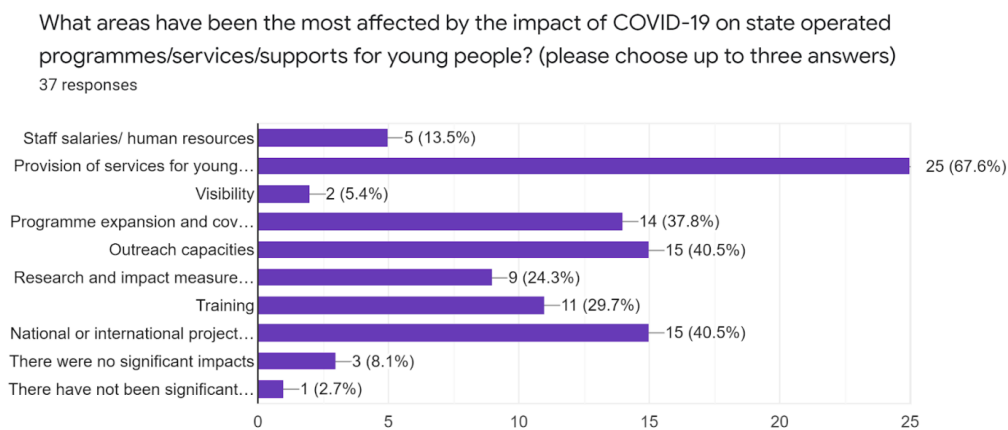


Figure 20.

What has been the level of young people's access, in the following areas, to state operated programmes/services/ supports during the COVID-19 pandemic:

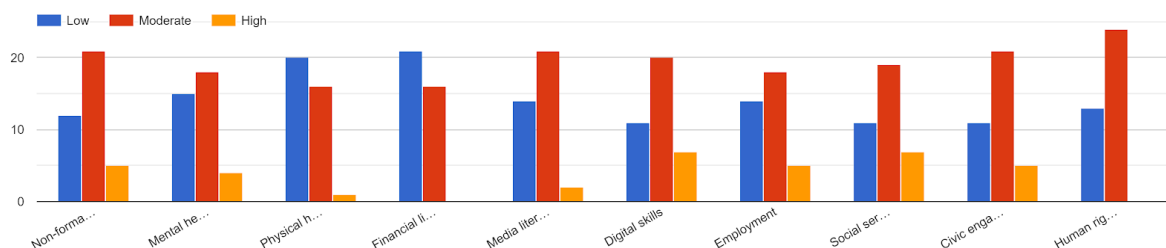
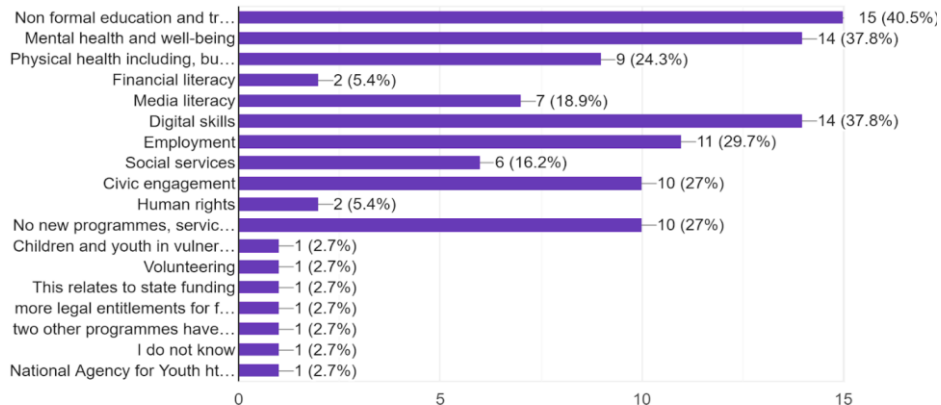


Figure 21.

Can you identify any new state operated programmes, services and/or initiatives for young people, in the following areas, that are planned for 2021-...longer term in response to the COVID-19 pandemic:
37 responses



4.1. Analysis

Provision of services for young people - including subsets such as programme expansion, outreach capacities, national and international projects, training and research - was identified by correspondents as the most important issue impacted by the pandemic.

Young people's access to state operated programmes and services across a range of areas - non-formal education and training, mental health and wellbeing, physical health, financial and media literacy, digital skills, employment, social services, civic engagement, and human rights - was deemed by correspondents to be either low or medium.

While non-formal education and training, mental health and wellbeing, and digital skills were identified by correspondents as areas for development, almost 30% of correspondents indicated that no new programmes were being planned in response to the pandemic.

The impact of the pandemic meant that many programmes and services had to go online or be delivered virtually. Funding in general remained unaffected, correspondents refer to "cancellations", "delayed" or "hindered" projects and a shift towards services that were more aligned with social work. In certain instances, funding was "uncertain", or "dependent" of foreign donors or European programmes. Programmes in youth care and psychological support were hindered and young people's mental health and wellbeing were adversely affected, particularly those at risk and marginalised.

Nonetheless, correspondents refer to new or planned initiatives in such areas as education and training, digital skills, employment and entrepreneurship, social services, volunteering and for young people with disabilities. There is evidence that digital youth work services, ad hoc smart youth work and other innovative practices were adopted, and funding was increased or planned to be increased in some circumstances.

Main findings suggest that in terms of youth policy development and implementation, two significant issues emerged from the responses.

Non-formal education, training, programmes and services provided by the state sector for young people were seen as the most impacted by COVID-19 and young people's access to such programmes and services was deemed to be medium to low.

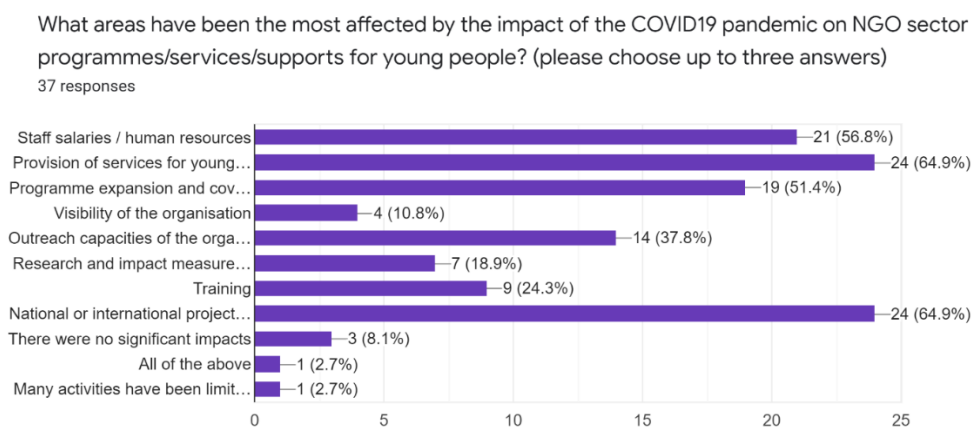
Two consequences appear to have resulted from this lack of access: deterioration in mental health and wellbeing among young people and lack of capacity, training and skills in using digitalization.

5. Impact of COVID-19 on NGO sector programmes, youth work services and other supports for young people

The survey looked at the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the NGO youth programmes, youth work services and young people themselves.

Both provision of services for young people and national and international project implementation have been considered as affected, as per 65% of respondents. (Figure 22) In addition, 57% respondents believe that COVID-19 impacted salaries/human resources across NGO sector, whilst 51% of respondents suggest the impact on NGOs' sector programmes expansion and coverage (51.4%).

Figure 22.

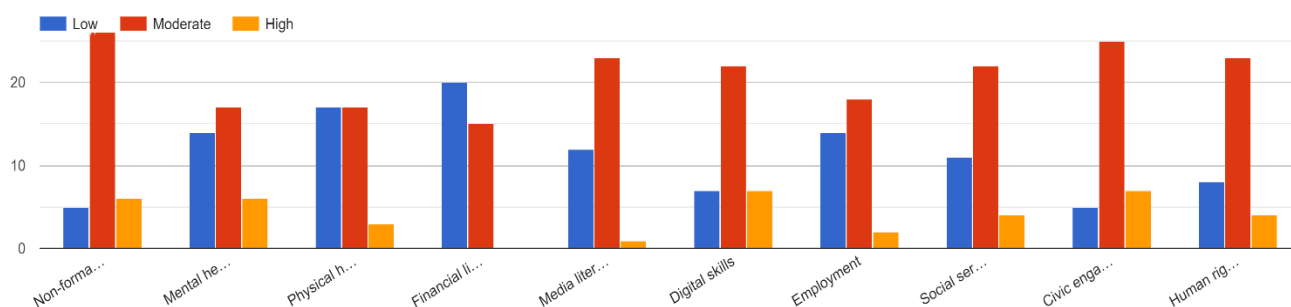


Respondents have rated the level of young people's access across different areas of NGOs' programmes, services and support provided during the pandemic, as seen in Figure 23. Respondents have highlighted that the young people's access in the areas of non-formal education and training, civic engagement, and media literacy as dominantly moderate.

On the other hand, views on young people's access in the areas of mental health and wellbeing, physical health that is not limited to outdoors only and social services are highly distorted among correspondents and experts. Finally, responses suggest that the financial literacy is least accessible area, as seen in Figure 23 below.

Figure 23.

What has been the level of young people's access, in the following areas, to NGO sector programmes/services/ supports during the pandemic:



Some respondents suggest that volunteering programmes are highly accessible, including digital activism. On the other hand, responses suggest that the non-formal education has been perceived as an area of low access.

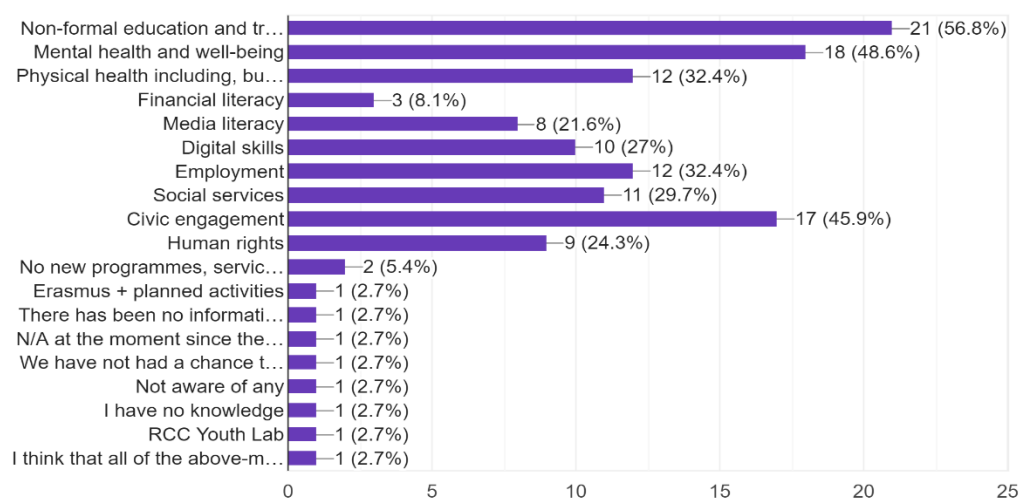
Figure 24 portrays suggest that there are some services and/or initiatives for young people, that are planned for 2021-2022 or the longer term in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus, based on respondents' answers, seem to be mainly on:

- Non-formal education and training as suggested by 57% of respondents.
- Mental health and well-being as suggested by per 49% of the respondents.
- Civic engagement as per 46% of the respondents.
- Physical health not limited to outdoors activities as per 30% of respondents.
- Employment and social services with an average of 30% as per respondents' views.

Although respondents perceive financial literacy as a least accessible area – there are no answers that suggest plans/activities proposed to combat this. Only 8% of respondents mentioned activities or plans to enable access to financial literacy programmes, both in short term and long term. (Figure 24)

Figure 24.

Can you identify new NGO sector programmes, services and/or initiatives for young people, in the following areas, that are planned for 2021-2022 or longer term in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
37 responses



5.1. Analysis

Views and assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on NGO sector programmes, youth work services and other supports for young people, across respondents' countries vary. There are both positive developments and examples, so as negative ones offered by respondents from different countries.

When it comes to positive developments, the NGO sector in Georgia has been actively implementing COVID-19 mitigation measures and youth sector implemented projects funded by the Youth Agency - a large-scale volunteer project "Youth Volunteering in Response to the COVID 19 Pandemic in Georgia", by the non-governmental organization Helping Hand with the support of UNICEF Georgia and the National Youth Agency.

In addition, the role of NGO sector in Belarus was crucial in communicating with youth info campaigns.

Organisations in Czech Republic have freed up their volunteering capacity and expanded their activities to help those in need. Financial, legal or psychotherapeutic consultations and advice were provided. Additionally, many organizations have been involved in the production of protective equipment and educational materials and significant part of the non-profit sector largely replaced its standard project activities with the provision of humanitarian aid.

The positive example from Republic of North Macedonia is that the Union of Youth Work has finalized training for youth workers, based on the accreditation for youth work provision by the Centre for Adult Education within the Ministry of Education and Science.

In Estonia - one of the areas that has got lot of attention is mental health. Additionally, different initiatives for youth workers e.g. webinars for youth on how to cope with the COVID fatigue are organised by The Estonian Association of Youth Workers.

In Italy, “Digital Civic Service” project aims to train about 1000 young volunteers to understand and promote digitalization. The project stems from the cooperation of the Department for Youth Policies with the Department for Digital Transformation.

In Malta the Loneliness Response Line is an example of a YMCA’s response to the problem of increased isolation and loneliness. In addition, 'Donate Your Words' campaign is reaching out to people who are ready to record a short video to support our cause to combat loneliness in young people.

On the other hand, negative development suggested by respondents mostly point out to the continuation of the shrinking of the youth sector, with many youth organizations being on the brink of closing, with their outreach severely affected.

For example, in Poland the first study of May 2020, involving 700 foundations and associations, demonstrated that 60% of them suspended all or most of their activities. The most severely affected were the organisations operating in the rural areas (80% of them) as well as sports and cultural organisations.

In Romania, young people are seen to be disappointingly low on the public agenda. In an Ireland context, young people themselves highlighted their concerns around the economic impact of the COVID-19 on rise in youth unemployment that currently stands at 45%.

In Cyprus, over the past year, most NGOs working with youth reported that their sustainability was in danger, mainly because their financials are based on EU funded projects and the majority of these projects had to be cancelled or postponed.

When it comes to Western Balkans, e.g. in Serbia, one of the main challenges exposed by the correspondent is that many programs needed to be carried out online or in a hybrid form - this meant that some young people have had easier access to programs, but some young people who do not have access to internet have been excluded.

What stands out is the number of respondents highlighting that the negative impact on the youth sector programmes, services and support will highly affect the lives of young people at risk or marginalized, with a particular negative impact on their mental health and well-being.

Finally, the lack of sustainability, funding and flexibility of all stakeholders involved is seen as the greatest challenges in tackling the COVID-19 impact on services, programmes and support towards young people in the coming period.

However, the list of positive examples provided by respondents serve as an inspiration and a knowledge resource in combating the negative impact that pandemic has on young people’s lives, so as youth work programmes, services and support.

6. Conclusion

Both this survey and the survey in autumn 2020 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.

Twenty-one countries responded to both surveys, while 14 other countries responded to one. While there was some variation in the questions asked in the surveys, it is possible to identify a number of common areas:

- Communication with young people
- Funding and future policy direction
- Impact on and response of state sector programmes and services
- Impact on and response of NGO sector programmes and services
- Impact on and response of young people.

From the onset of the pandemic, official communications have been targeted at the population in general rather than at young people and are often seen as one-way and directional. There are issues with the quality and clarity of official communications and mixed messaging resulting from lack of coordination 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 a dialogue using digital media were seen to be lacking.

The need for social distancing since the onset of the pandemic and the resulting social isolation of young people emerges as the single most important factor in curtailing their physical access to state sector programmes and services. This had two main consequences: deterioration in mental health and wellbeing and over-reliance on digitalization. There is evidence to suggest that countries with developed state sector programmes and services were less impacted and more responsive and that young people with fewer opportunities fared worst of all. While there were some examples of state sector initiatives to address the impact of the pandemic, they appear to be the exception rather than the norm.

Impact on and response of NGO sector youth programmes, support and services so as impact on young people, remain of high concern. Although there have been some initiatives and plans put in place to combat the COVID-19 impact, the sustainability of the youth sector is yet questioned, due to either financial or organizational constraints. This is seen to impact the young people, as direct beneficiaries the most.

In general, if the youth sector is to be revived, sustainable and strengthened during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, alongside being able to provide ongoing support for youth to thrive, higher support in funding so as sustainable and long-term quality policy measures are needed.

7. Examples of responses in different countries with links provided

Albania

A general study on the sector's response (including youth NGOs) and media can be accessed here:

<https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/22/the-role-of-civil-society-and-media-in-crises-management-in-albania/>

Belgium

There has been a lot of consultations with children and young people from non-profit organisations and local governments on different thematic areas. An overview is presented here and only available in Dutch:

https://www.keki.be/sites/default/files/keki%20corona%20-%20finale%20versie%20-%20reduced_final.pdf

The results show how children and young people experience the crisis and what their needs are can be found here:

https://www.keki.be/sites/default/files/20201223_%20English%20report%20corona_KEKI-final_1.pdf

In addition, policy advice can be found here:

https://www.keki.be/sites/default/files/20201223_Policy%20advice_youthaboutcorona_ENG_final.pdf

More information on the Call for projects 'Strengthening the resilience of children and young people in vulnerable situations', with activities planned between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2023 can be found here:

https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/jeugd/subsidies/vernieuwende-projecten?mc_cid=1c3a352f5e&mc_eid=af936ad6e3&fbclid=IwAR0OgLfRlQIR5f3rXvYbq20Py5xhaYWKvL-raNVBpO_a7FDoEI188qBF1WE

Bulgaria

The research of the Active Citizen fund can be found here:

<http://bcnl.org/analyses/grhdanskiyat-sektor-sled-nachaloto-na-krizata-s-covid-19.html>

Research and info on BCause:

<https://www.bcause.bg/razvitie-na-sredata/news-sredata/608-grazhdanskite-organizatsii-sa-se-spravili-v-krizata-covid-19-blagodarenie-na-chastno-finansirane,-dobrovolchestvo-i-sartsata-rabota.html>

There was some independent research made available as well:

<https://participationpool.eu/resource/youth-work-during-pandemic-times-how-the-field-felt-the-pandemic/>

Croatia

Emergency mental health phone numbers have been established in cooperation with the Croatian Psychological Association. Also, a leaflet with most relevant information on well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic was published and disseminated widely and can be found here:

https://demografijaimladi.gov.hr/UserDocImages/Brochure/mladi_hr_brosura_digital.pdf

Cyprus

The State and specifically the Youth Board of Cyprus, proceeded in May 2020 to the establishment of a dedicated Working Group on Covid 19, consisting of Youth Board officers, youth organisations' representatives and young people. The Working Group analysed the situation faced by young people and youth organizations due to the pandemic through focus groups and questionnaires. Please see the relevant report at: <https://onek.org.cy/apotelesmata-omadas-ergasias-covid-19/> (available in Greek only).

Moreover, the organisation created a special section on the website for communicating its actions and services offered during the lockdown <https://onek.org.cy/projects/covid-19-i-drasi-mas-afti-tin-periodo-takatafernoume/>

Moreover, the Youth Board carried out a Youth Barometer survey in November-December 2020 with a section dedicated on the Covid-19 pandemic. Full report is available at <https://onek.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/varometro2021.pdf> (in Greek).

Regarding the funding for the youth sector, the Youth Board of Cyprus proceeded in May 2020 with the design and announcement of a new, complementary funding scheme, entitled "ReCOVer2020", offering financial support to actions/activities run by young people and youth organisations, targeting the effects of the pandemic crisis. More information: <https://onek.org.cy/programmata-ypiresies/efkairies-chrimatodotisis/recover20/>

Estonia

In begin of March 2021 there was press conference for youth <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9Upi8QhJs> where Minister of Education and Research, Minister of Social Affairs and Deputy Director of Health Board responded to young people questions related COVID-19 pandemic, related restrictions and vaccination concerns.

Innovative practices that have been launched / used due to COVID restrictions are for example: e-hobby school (<https://ehuvikool.ee/meist/>); discord, roblox, actionbound, scoove, mobo programs have been used for youth work and also for communication;

Article about usage of digital platforms in outdoor activities can be found here: https://entk.ee/special_posts/kuidas-rikastada-suviseid-ouetegevusi-digiga/ and on innovation in youth work, here: <https://mihus.mitteformaalne.ee/innovatsioon-noorsootoos-teekond-juhuslikust-taotluslikuni/>

Peaasi.ee (NGO that deals with the promotion of mental health, prevention of problems, early intervention and reduction of stigma in society) has launched online mental health youth centre for young people to get help with mental problems (<https://peaasi.ee/>) and activities for school environment to carry out to support pupils mental health (https://peaasi.ee/tunnikavad_kevad-2021/).

Finland

State allocated 10,5 million Euros to outreach youth work and school-based youth work so that the effects on CoVid crisis can be combatted. More information on: <https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/korona-avustuksilla-lisaa-tukea-ja-kohtaavia-aikuisia-lasten-ja-nuorten-arkeen?publisherId=69818103&releasId=69893902> (in Finnish only)

The state has launched a campaign to make hobbies cheaper for the young during summer 2021 for NGOs providing hobbies. More information on:

<https://minedu.fi/-/erityisavustukset-valtionapukelpoisille-valtakunnallisille-nuorisoalan-jarjestoille-nuorten-harrastus-ja-kesatoiminnan-lisaamiseen>

France

In order to inform young people about the health situation and send them safety instructions, the Government has developed communication tools consisting of guides, web banners, posters, flyers as well as infographics specifying health protocols and “Good things to do” in different situations.

These tools were relayed on the institutional websites and social networks of the ministry in charge of youth: <https://jeunes.gouv.fr/> and <https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus/ressources-a-partager>

For example, one of the measures of the 1 Jeune, was to support young people excluded from employment by offering tailor-made integration pathways such as

- Strengthening mechanisms for sustainable inclusion in employment
- The significant increase in support mechanisms towards employment
- Strengthening support for young people towards a qualification with a view to employment in sports or animation supervisory professions (youth work)

More information can be found via: <https://www.1jeune1solution.gouv.fr/>

Georgia

The Government of Georgia regularly conducted consultations with minority organizations and activists. Within the scope of the Human Rights Council, a communication platform was set up to hold regular meetings with DPOs, PwD organizations, LGBTQI+ activists, community and international organizations. For more information please visit:

http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/files/docs/9341ENG_Human-Rights-during-COVID-19.pdf

Germany

Innovative practices such as Virtual VET fairs, can be found on the following link:

<https://www.ihk-ausbildungsmesse.de/>

Walk & talk formats for personal career counselling:

<https://mwvlw.rlp.de/de/presse/detail/news/News/detail/schmitt-berufsberatung-mal-anders-walk-and-talk-in-mainz-und-feriencamp-in-kaiserslautern-mache/>

Online advice for young informal caregivers: <https://www.pausentaste.de/>

In the whole, the measures caused increasing poverty, isolation, inequality, and sorrows – a doubling of the occurrence of anxiety and depression among young people. More information can be found here:

<https://www.uke.de/kliniken-institute/kliniken/kinder-und-jugendpsychiatrie-psychotherapie-und-psychosomatik/forschung/arbeitsgruppen/child-public-health/forschung/copsy-studie.html>)

Only one federal state, the Saarland, adapted the funding of child and youth care institutions to the new conditions under Corona. More information:

<https://www.jugendhilfeportal.de/fokus/coronavirus/artikel/foerderung-fuer-kinder-und-jugendhilfe-wird-an-corona-angepasst>)

More information on the direct lump sum payments for every child and young person aged under 25 who is still in education or training in 2021 can be found on:

<https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/presse/2021-12-kinderbonus-einmalzahlung-fuer-familien-in-2021>

A program called “Nachholpaket” was launched for the years 2021 to help young people catch up learning deficits and personality development lags caused by Corona. More information on:

<https://www.bmbf.de/de/kinder-und-jugendliche-nach-der-corona-pandemie-staerken-14371.html>

Research on the impact of the pandemic – including effects on young people’s education can be found here: <https://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/bekanntmachung-3457.html>

Civil society actors launched web-based offers like www.krisenchat.de to support young people in coping with the challenges and hardships caused by the pandemic.

The government started an initiative called “Offensive für psychische Gesundheit” (offensive for mental health), which aims on the promotion of preventive measures, expanding offers of recovery and rehabilitation as well as networking among health institutions and stakeholders. More information on: <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/offensive-fuer-psychische-gesundheit-wird-vorgestellt-160888>. Unfortunately this program is not well-resourced with a substantial budget to finance new measures.

In many cities and counties local partnerships for family were founded, before Corona crisis, but now tackling the task to support families coping with the pandemic by coordinated action of the public authorities and civic society on the local body. More information on: <https://www.lokale-buendnisse-fuer-familie.de/>

There were several attempts to support especially the group of homeless people, like those of the Malteser aid organization, more information on:

<https://www.malteser.de/aware/engagement/obdachlos-in-zeiten-von-corona.html>

Ireland

Two reports that provide details on how both the state and the NGO sectors engaged and consulted with young people in relation to COVID, can be found on: <https://spunout.ie/news/covid-19/hows-your-head-young-voices-during-covid-19-report> and <https://www.youth.ie/articles/covidreport/>

Luxembourg

The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth runs a webpage “well-being@home” <https://schouldoheem.lu/fr/well-being%40home> where pupils and young people can get useful information and guidance to maintain or foster their well-being during the lockdown.

Another programme offers short videos which include information on physical activities at home: <https://aktivdoheem.lu/aktiviteiten/jugendlecher/> The information are provided by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, the Ministry of Sports, the national school on physical education and sports and the National Youth Service.

The scouts movement was very active and launched a webpage where they offered help for people which could not go out (shopping, walk the dog, delivering of medicinal products). More information on: <https://www.fnel.lu/lu/news-page/2020/3/14/alldagengba>

Malta

During the last year, for the safety of the young people, schools were shut down twice and this was communicated on the media and also through a legal notice which was via: <https://mfhea.mt/closure-of-schools-covid-19>.

Telecommunications service providers have introduced several beneficial measures. More information can be found via the link: <https://www.mca.org.mt/sites/default/files/Covid-19%20article.pdf>

This link <https://www.pwc.com/mt/en/pwc-malta-press-room/government-announcements-during-COVID-19.html> includes some of the communication the state has done to ensure young people have access to rights especially in relation to employment and financial support.

Free internet access was provided to 250 students, as well as the loaning of computers, lap-tops or tablets to students to stay connected with the rest of the school and continue their educational progress. Link to the press release by the Ministry for Education can be

found

here:

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2020/April/14/pr200664en.aspx>

The Ministry for health through its webpage <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx> provides policies on the mitigation of COVID 19.

Last year the government published a mental health strategy for 2020-2030 (Building Resilience Transforming Services), with a vision to improve mental health care in Malta. Link to the strategy is below [https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental Health Strategy EN.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental_Health_Strategy_EN.pdf)

The government provided various funding which can be found in the link below <https://covid19.maltaenterprise.com/regeneration-initiatives/>

The National Youth Agency is running 2 online youth cafes during the Covid pandemic, one caters for young people between the age of 13 and 16 and the other youth group caters for young people aged 18 or older <https://youth.gov.mt/our-agency/online-digital-youthwork-services/>

The Agency has 2 online programmes (Instapoint and Choosedays), which are run weekly on social media and covers youth work services provided by the agency and the involvement of young people in youth work practice. More information on:

<https://youth.gov.mt/get-your-online-meeting-started/>

and

<https://youth.gov.mt/choosedays/>.

Loneliness Response Line is YMCA's response to the problem of increased isolation and loneliness. 'Donate Your Words' campaign is reaching out to people who are ready to record a short video to support our cause to combat loneliness in young people. More information: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=279777789682295>

ŽAK runs 4 Youth Cafes and works with young people through online sessions, by providing material for activities and through one-to one communication:

<https://www.facebook.com/youthcafegormibyzak/posts/3070607459709784>

Bronja is a service who links together young people with the elderly by providing a phone call a day: <https://www.facebook.com/prismsmaltaprojects/videos/157547092311141>

The Fidem Charity Foundation have set up a helpline operating every day to support anyone experiencing mental wellbeing or legal concerns. <https://www.fidem.org.mt/hear-to-help.html>

Solidarity Meals aims at providing individuals struggling during COVID-19. It delivers hundreds of meals daily: <https://thefredmizzifoundation.com/solidarity-meals-objective-reached/>

Ukraine

Local communities in Ukraine have implemented local projects to find solutions to youth problems, including social restrictions, security and access to rights and services. More information on: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/best-youth-community-initiative-2020>

COVID-19 has influenced the projects of most NGOs and among the successful cases of response can be considered the project “Prokachai” <https://story.youthcenters.com.ua/>

Project “Prokachai” on Local Youth Centers Development, more information on: <https://youthplatform.com.ua/proekt-rozvytku-molodizhnyh-tsentriv-prokachaj/>

All-Ukrainian survey on impact COVID-19 on youth in Ukraine, can be found here: https://www.ua.undp.org/content/ukraine/en/home/library/democratic_governance/COVID-19-impact-on-youth-in-Ukraine.html