Research-based analysis of European youth programmes

RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE IMPACT OF THE CORONA PANDEMIC ON YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE (RAY-COR)

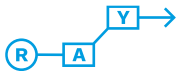**TRANSNATIONAL CASE STUDY REPORT**
17 JANUARY 2022

Written By:

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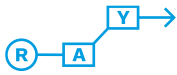
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1. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic has shaken youth work to the core. Some of the immediate consequences and policy responses of the pandemic have intermittently gained some visibility in the youth field in Europe, but the long-term impact remains unclear. In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances, the RAY Network has started a dedicated research project on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on youth work at the European and national level. While much of the current work on the pandemic has focused upon the often-negative effects on economic, education and mental health prospects of young people and interruptions to youth work, we find it important to focus on, and highlight, successful responses of youth work to the pandemic and its effects on young people.

The present report is an analysis of the overall context of successful youth work responses to the coronavirus pandemic in Austria, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia, and Turkey. The analysis of these successful responses includes an overview of the kinds of projects that were ongoing at the time in which the pandemic spread and the ways in which these projects were modified to adapt to the pandemic situation. It also includes relevant observations about the effect of the pandemic on youth work and a compilation of what youth workers found to be helpful and unhelpful conditions when working under the pressure of the pandemic crisis. This list is synthesized in a final set of recommendations for the future.

2. METHODOLOGY

To explore youth work responses to the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on youth work and young people, we conducted case studies based on explorative interviews. Case studies involved one to two group interviews with youth work organisations represented by their youth workers and youth leaders directly organising, offering and/or implementing youth work. This means that youth work stakeholders in roles such as overseeing, evaluating and/or financing youth work were not part of the sample of interviewees. In each of the ten participating countries, participant organisations were selected by the Erasmus+/Youth in Action national agency and national research partner of the project, with feedback by the RAY transnational research team.

We conducted a total of thirty-nine case studies. In the case study interviews, youth workers talked about the projects that were ongoing at the time the coronavirus pandemic was declared and new rules and regulations

put in place. They described how the pandemic situation changed their ongoing projects and activities and/or what new projects and activities were developed as a response to the pandemic. They also described what conditions made it easier to produce a useful and appropriate response to the crisis and what made it more difficult. Some of them provided recommendations for the future in general, and to be prepared for similar crises in particular.
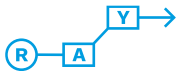
National research partners conducted the interviews in their national contexts and submitted a summary report of all interviews to the transnational research team, who analysed them in this report. The present transnational document summarises and integrates the information from all thirty-nine case study interviews.

1. EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON YOUNG PEOPLE

In general, and as expected, the pandemic situation brought confusion and stress for young people. A number of reports mention that not being able to meet face to face with friends and youth workers had a strong negative effect on young people. Many mention feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety. The Austrian report in particular describes that, as a result of the pandemic, young people felt even more lonely than before and that such loneliness sometimes led to suicide. The Slovakian report described a research project about the effects of the pandemic in which they found that, one year after the first lock down young people "lack[ed] personal contacts and [a] "glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel"." They write that "A relatively large group shows signs of fatigue and frustration".

Moreover, national reports describe that young people became fatigued by on-line activities and sought face-to-face contact more and more as the periods of isolation continued. The Latvian report describes that as the pandemic advanced, they saw the demand for (presumably on-line) leisure activities go down and at the same time saw the need for assistance in formal education increase. Another observation that comes up often is that inequalities among young people became larger as a result of the pandemic.

On the bright side, the Norwegian report highlights that young people have gotten more political visibility as a result of the pandemic.

2. PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED IN CASE STUDIES

This section summarises the themes and kinds of projects that appeared *repeatedly* across our sample in order to give the reader a feeling for what kinds of organisations and projects were typical of our sample. You will find projects that were ongoing before the pandemic hit grouped together with projects that were started as a result of the pandemic. This is because the section is not meant to be a detailed or exhaustive description/classification of all projects that came up but a selection of the most representative ones.

Help with mental health

Several projects in the case studies focused on offering mental health counselling for young people. Some of those projects were implemented by organisations whose main function, before the pandemic, was mental health support and others started as a response to the pandemic by organisations who were initially offering other activities - for example international activities which could no longer be performed.

### *Cultural and community activities*

Participants described activities aimed at creating meeting points for the youth - face-to-face or online, depending on what the situation allowed – where they could find connection with others and do what they found interesting or relevant. Some organisations offered specific activities, like music creation, LAN parties or volunteer programmes while others offered a space where young people could decide what to do and take initiative to create engaging projects. In this category also belong reflections on youth work, like the online discussion video series to assess youth work-relevant topics created by one participant organisation.

Fulfilling vital needs of young people with fewer opportunities

The activities described in the case studies included providing food and shelter for young people with fewer opportunities, which became even more necessary after the pandemic started because school closures led to young people missing one free meal a day – the one they usually had at school. One organisation went out to meet homeless youth during the confinement period to provide them with information, assistance and connection.

Advocating for the youth

More than one organisation described projects aimed at representing the needs of young people socially and politically. These projects included lobbying donors to include young people as beneficiaries of pandemic-related financial help, recording and presenting the lives and needs of young
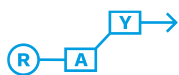
people during the pandemic and officially documenting instances when the rights of young people were not observed.

Trainings, guidance and information

A big number of participants describe organising workshops and trainings, guidance or information for young people, youth workers or youth work organisations. For example, organisations offered workshops for young people to explore self-growth, to reflect on their future and how to best approach it, or to reflect on how they can make their daily life more sustainable - for example, by finding alternatives to fast fashion. They developed workshops for youth workers to better understand non-formal learning and they prepared materials to put together a career guidance course for young people who are deaf. In one case, the governmental department of youth affairs put together detailed information as to how the new pandemic-related legislation affected everyday youth work and how to best proceed to avoid interruptions in youth work activities and services while abiding to the law.

Fostering networking within the youth sector

Two of the projects described by participant organisations entailed creating overarching regional networks of youth work organisations ("umbrella" organisations) that should serve as a way to increase cooperation between organisations and to increase participation of young people.

3. COMMON RESPONSES TO THE PANDEMIC

Cancelling and/or postponing activities

As a result of the pandemic, much of the international youth work activities had to be cancelled, especially during lockdown phases. In some cases, activities could be postponed.

Continuing face-to-face activities while abiding to pandemic regulation

However, youth work organisations worked hard to continue meeting with young people and offering services and support while abiding to the specific pandemic regulations. For example, some Finnish and Austrian organisations modified their volunteering programmes by performing them at national level instead of international level like it was originally planned (volunteers travelled to a national, instead of international, location). Other modifications of activities involved meeting outdoors, meeting in bigger spaces, or hosting activities in smaller groups if they were one-time activities, and in smaller, isolated groups if they were ongoing.
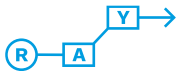
Often, what pushed youth workers to find ways to continue face-to-face services was the fact that these were crucial for the target group and even more so during the coronavirus pandemic. Finding a way to do things like meeting with others or escaping overcrowded lodgings was very important for the well-being of the young people who benefited from the youth work services offered by the organisations in our sample.

Collaborating with local governments

Organisations turned to their local governments for support that would allow them to continue face-to-face activities in spite of coronavirus-related restrictions. This was successful in at least two occasions: one organisation was allowed to go out on the streets during lockdowns to assist homeless young people and another one was given access to public buildings where they could find rooms big enough to carry out face-to-face activities while adhering to social distancing measures.

Adjusting face-to-face activities to be carried out online

In spite of the large effort invested in keeping activities face-to-face, almost all of the interviewed organisations had to convert at least some of their activities and organisational processes from a physical to an online format. This adaptation of activities to online formats has made it possible to continue youth services which otherwise would have had to stop completely and then be rebuilt through considerable time and effort. It has also allowed the maintenance of spaces where young people can be together and keep up social relations throughout the pandemic, which was crucial for their emotional well-being in times where we could observe an "exacerbation of the problem of loneliness to the point of suicide", as described in the Austrian national report (p.25). In spite of the complications associated with adjusting activities to be carried out online, many organisations judged the adapted version of their projects as successful in reaching its initial goals.

The kinds of online "tools" that youth organisations used successfully were as varied and specific as Duolingo or Minecraft. Discord and social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SnapChat, YouTube) were mentioned in several national reports as tools that enabled the creation of virtual meeting points akin to the physical ones that organisations provided before the pandemic. Google services (Google class room, drive, jamboards) were also mentioned as a tool for the exchange of information, while video calling tools (Zoom, etc.) served to conduct online meetings with the youth and among co-workers. It seemed that the success of some digital tools over others depended in part on how well the chosen tools complemented or related to the activities that were carried out by the youth clubs before the pandemic. For example, one Estonian organisation had to abandon their attempt to
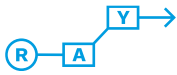
engage the youth through a Discord channel because of lack of interest (they moved to engaging the youth through the creation of a Minecraft server instead), while another Estonian organisation found their Discord channel to be so successful that they had to implement opening times so that it could be managed properly. This second organisation explains: "Discord most closely resembled the usual youth day in our youth centre." (Estonian national report, p.17)
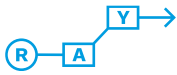
Focusing on new needs that emerged during the pandemic

Several organisations describe a clear shift in focus of their activities and goals as a response to a perceived change in the needs of young people as the pandemic unfolded. Organisations who at the beginning of the pandemic focused on continuing with their provision of non-formal education and leisure activities described a shift of focus towards mental health as the pandemic advanced. They started offering emotional and psychological support and including the topic of mental health in their projects. Other organisations turned towards advocating for youth rights and young people's need for support when their main mobility activities became impossible due to the pandemic. As a remarkable example, one Turkish organisation was able to lobby two donors successfully and to achieve the prioritization of the needs of young people in the political agenda.

Collaborating with young people and recording their needs

Youth participation is often already embedded in the working methods of youth organisations. Still, in the context of orchestrating a reaction to the pandemic, many respondents explicitly mentioned collaboration with young people, likely as a way to underline the crucial role of co-creating this reaction together with its young beneficiaries. Sometimes organisations surveyed the youth about their needs, while other times organisations provided support and resources to let young people ultimately invent and implement activities or solutions.

Organisations recorded the needs of young people during the pandemic not only for the immediate purpose of creating an emergency response, but also for documentation, lobbying and guidance purposes of youth workers and young people. By conducting these studies and through their everyday work, organisations seemed to have sensed a great need for connection and togetherness among the youth, preferably face-to-face togetherness. They have found a corresponding problem with loneliness and isolation for young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. Some organisations propose to continue analysing future challenges to be faced by youth work and young people beyond informing an immediate response to the coronavirus pandemic.

4. COMMON OBSERVATIONS

The pandemic as a booster for digitalization

In general, respondents agree that the pandemic had an accelerating effect on the digitalization of youth work by pressing youth workers to learn new digital skills and launch services that they may have taken much longer to try in normal circumstances. For example, one participant organisation estimates that within six months they have undergone digital development that would have taken about four years to unfold under normal circumstances. The interviewee shares: *"Perhaps the corona pandemic and the lockdown situation has shown that this kind of thing [online mental health counselling for young people] could be useful and you will just do it. You won't take long time to consider on how to best to do it online and if this also means little failures along the way, it is understandable."* (Estonian national report, p.7).

However, respondents also agree this development needs proper support in order to continue successfully. For example, they often bring up the importance of educating youth workers and young people on safety issues of online tools, like data protection issues, safety issues when it comes to online interactions or mood/emotional issues related to extended engagement with virtual games or social media. They ask for digital competence trainings designed to help youth workers better prepare to be part of the digitalization of youth work. This would not only enable more youth workers to stay functional as the field continues to digitalise, but it would also promote an active approach to this digitalisation for a larger amount of youth workers, fostering as a result the spontaneous development of successful digital initiatives such as the Minecraft server mentioned above, which was initiated by a youth worker with previous experience in the game.

Pros and cons of online activities

Moving activities to an online realm has made it possible for them to reach new (and sometimes quite large) audiences of young people who live in places far away from the providing youth centre or who have interests that the youth centre started addressing as a result of transitioning online, like gaming-related activities. It has also enabled the collaboration with organisations and experts who are based in distant locations and who would otherwise have been unavailable. In one occasion, young people were able to "exchange with high-ranking federal and European politicians with whom no contact would have been possible in face-to-face meetings" (Austrian national report, p.16).

Still, many interviewees agreed that there is something about physical interaction irreplaceable by an online version of the same activity. Online
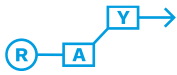
activities were "better than nothing", but "not the same" as the face-to-face ones they replaced (Norwegian national report, p.8). When compared to a face-to-face format of the same activity, online formats often lacked valuable emotional closeness and spontaneity and made participants more prone to being distracted or to miss sessions. Interviewees sensed that it is more difficult to keep young people engaged with online formats, partly because the sudden increase in online activities caused by the pandemic brings with it a sense of "digital fatigue". Interviewees also report that online activities often do not reach young people with fewer opportunities at all even though they are some of the largest beneficiaries of youth work. Moreover, technical problems during an activity's online implementation easily led to a feeling of disengagement. They observe that when given a choice between virtual or face-to-face activities, young people generally prefer the second. At the same time, interviewees wonder whether encouraging an increased use of online devices is a good idea when it comes to the physical and emotional well-being of young people in a world where they may already spend more time than is healthy looking at a screen.

Young people with fewer opportunities harder to reach and help

The pandemic situation has served to underline the importance of the work that youth workers do – sometimes even to youth workers themselves. Youth work provides connection, education, stimulation, guidance and resources that are invaluable for young people in general, for young people with fewer opportunities in particular and during a pandemic even more. Sadly, it is exactly these young people who need it the most who have had the biggest problems staying in touch with youth work during the pandemic. They are the most likely to not have access to a digital device and a quiet space for online youth work, the most likely to lose interest in activities when their format was changed and the most likely to require extraordinary treatment that may not be granted - like allowing them less stringent isolation, allowing them to go out of a crowded living space or into a communal eating room, allowing youth workers to walk the streets during lockdown in order to assist them or providing professional helpers, like sign language interpreters, for the whole duration of an activity. Because the coronavirus crisis has had an enlarging effect on inequalities and problems already present for these young people, some participant organisations in the Finnish context suggest monitoring the success of youth work responses through the wellbeing of young people with fewer opportunities.

Paradoxical effect of the crisis on youth work networks

National reports describe how the pandemic has had opposing effects on youth work-relevant networks. In some cases, the emergency situation has stimulated the use of existing but lethargic interorganisational networks, the spontaneous and rapid growth of networking among youth workers and youth
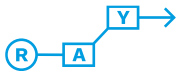
organisations and the creation of projects with an aim to build and nurture these connections systematically. This was likely the result of youth workers reaching out to one another in a moment of need. In other cases, however, participants report that the pandemic has been destructive to inter-institutional cooperation and has interrupted regular networking in a way which, they fear, may result in its eventual disappearance. This happened as a result of communication moving from face-to-face to online formats, the cancellation of international projects and the cancellation of volunteer-driven projects, which threatened to dismantle the valuable international and volunteer networks behind these activities. The effect of the pandemic on youth work-relevant networks of organisations and individuals, therefore, depended on the context in which these networks are useful: the ones which sustained activities that can no longer be performed in pandemic conditions faltered, while the ones that proved useful in providing their members with valuable resources to navigate the pandemic proliferated.
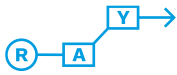
5. COMMON HINDERING CONDITIONS

Too much extra work and too little time

National reports explicitly mention how the process of adaptation of projects to the pandemic conditions required important amounts of extra work and effort leading some youth workers to work significant amounts of overtime hours. Many times, youth work organisations did not have enough human resources or working time to properly manage the large amounts of extra work that suddenly became necessary in the pandemic situation. The available workers needed more time to become acquainted with new digital tools and adapt their activity plans to the new possibilities. One Estonian interviewee from an organisation who usually offers face-to-face counselling for the youth observes: "for the counsellor the preparations to online counselling in Zoom took more time, there were sometimes difficulties with sound and or video quality. In general, online counselling takes more effort from the specialist and they prefer not to do it online, if possible, they would prefer to meet with youngsters face-to-face" (Estonian national report, p.7).

Youth workers had to perform under important time pressure and even then it was inevitable to cancel or postpone valuable planned activities, partnerships between organisations and funding applications.

Emotional burden of the situation

On top of working over hours and doing so under time pressure, youth workers commonly performed under conditions of uncertainty (about restrictions, budgets, plans for the immediate future, etc.), while fearing for their own futures in the field or while being brushed off as dispensable

entertainers rather than recognised as valuable educators. The combination of all of these pressures was emotionally taxing and became an obstacle to the resilience of youth work. "Not only young people themselves, but also youth workers find it emotionally difficult and demotivating to work in such conditions" underlines the Latvian report (p.11), and it calls for greater emotional support for youth workers. Another interviewee from Finland admits: "the coronavirus year really has tested my own endurance limits" (p.4).
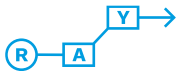
Financial difficulties

Work overload and lack of proper funding repeatedly come up in our studies as conditions that make youth work more difficult in Europe. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most commonly mentioned hindering factor when it comes to responding to the crisis situation created by the coronavirus pandemic are financial difficulties.

What characterizes the specific kind of financial difficulties triggered by the pandemic is that many times they are related to uncertainty about funding rather than simple lack of it. These situations include, for example, not knowing whether financial support from the relevant ministry will ultimately be available, or not having time to apply for funding for restructuring services because resources were spent in the process of restructuring itself.

In one particular case, youth workers were not guaranteed any funding for the large amounts of extra hours involved in re-designing an activity completely so that it could be performed remotely. This project is not yet finished and it will undergo a big budget cut if no face-to-face meetings are conducted before it ends. If this happens, the work involved in adapting the activity to an online format will not be remunerated. The reasoning for the budget cut seems to be that an online version of a project should require much less resources than a face-to-face one, especially when the face-to-face one involves international travel. On the contrary, and as described on the previous section, the message from the national reports that we analysed is that adapting a service or activity to a new online format can easily require the same or even more work and resources than performing the service or activity in its original format. Once an activity has been adapted to an online format, in which case workers have experience with it as well as a protocol to follow and ready-to-use materials, the activity may require less resources than its fact-to-face version. Therefore, adapting a project to an online format should not be understood a priori as a reason for budget cuts.

Coronavirus-related restrictions and keeping up with them

Coronavirus-related lockdown measures, restrictions on assembly and restrictions on mobility (including international mobility) come up in some

national reports under hindering conditions when it came to responding to the crisis. Nevertheless, in the context of youth work, one could argue that they are the crisis itself. Navigating this crisis was made more difficult in some cases by the fact that youth workers were not always sure about what was and wasn't allowed when it came to providing activities under coronavirus-related regulations.

From the case studies, we know that countries like Lithuania provided, as part of their coronavirus response policies, online resources where third sector organisations could find all the COVID-related information that was relevant to them, including subsidies or services targeted specifically to them. Information resources seem to be a necessary means of support for many youth work organisations and it is therefore important to make them useful and easily accessible.

At least one national report requested similar information sites directed to the population, in particular to young people, so that they can easily access all information on restrictions, safety and new rules that affect them.

6. COMMON SUPPORTING CONDITIONS

Flexible and simplified administration

The most commonly identified supporting condition was administrational support by politicians and national agencies, usually in the form of allowing changes to projects through streamlined bureaucracy and providing flexibility in funding conditions. In one case, flexibility by the youth trainers immediately involved in the activity, who agreed to re-design their training under time pressure and with no guarantee of remuneration for their extra hours, is mentioned explicitly as having been key for project success. The support was greatly appreciated by participant organisations, who often refer to their relations with the national agencies and relevant governmental bodies during this time as *cooperation*. This sense of being supported and of working together must not be taken for granted in a situation of chaos.

Belonging to networks

Participant organisations across the board agree on the importance that networking has had in enabling successful responses to the pandemic situation (networking both at the individual and the organisational level). It has made it possible to find participants for the new online pandemic-adapted activities, to learn about relevant needs, challenges and possible courses of action, and to share valuable information and to find support.
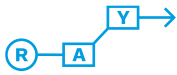
Sense of purpose and connection to youth

Some participant organisations described how having a strong connection with their target group, a clear understanding of what their core function as an organisation is and a sense of purpose were important factors that allowed their workers to better face difficulties and pull through. Moreover, having young people strongly engaged with youth work organisations already before the pandemic and keeping ongoing communication with them through the pandemic were reported as conditions that facilitated an appropriate response to the crisis.

*Pre-existing institutional capacities*

"Institutional capacities" is used here as an umbrella term that refers to capacities (in terms of staff, experience, other resources, etc.) which are useful in general to tackle an organisation's everyday tasks and that were perceived as very helpful during the coronavirus crisis situation. The ones explicitly mentioned in the national reports are: a shared understanding of organisational mission and vision, effective organisational communication, pre-existing experience with digitalisation of services and archives, and effective management structures and relationships. Different national reports underlined one or more of these pre-existing capacities as important conditions that helped put together a response to the pandemic.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital, personal and organisational capacity building

National reports bring up the need for support in the form of capacity building of youth work organisations. Different reports tap on different aspects of this capacity building need, but one important shared goal is the digitalisation of youth work. To this end, participant organisations ask for trainings for their members where they may learn about digital skills and the hazards of online work; they ask for information about and access to useful online tools; and they ask for support in producing online activities and combining them with face-to-face ones, so that young people can benefit from the advantages of both formats.

One further shared goal of capacity building that emerged with the present crisis is improving organisation's crisis management abilities. The specific steps required to improve crisis management do not yet seem to be very clear, but they are likely to involve fostering more effective organisational structures and organisational functioning, as one national report suggests should be done. They may also involve training individual youth workers.
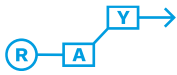
Keeping administration simple while ensuring proper funding

While the following recommendations were brought up explicitly only in a few national reports each, they straightforwardly relate to the common facilitating and hindering conditions discussed in this report. It is therefore likely that they are useful in most national contexts.
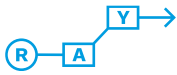
The first of these recommendations is to enable simplification of bureaucratic processes in times of crisis. As discussed above, part of the response to the coronavirus crisis by national agencies and governments was to reduce and simplify the bureaucracy needed to re-shape youth work projects to fit the new pandemic-related regulations. Such streamlined bureaucracy was greatly appreciated by youth work organisations. The recommendation is to be ready to repeat this response should it become necessary again.

At the same time, the budget modifications of some youth work projects, while achieved through less bureaucracy, sometimes haven't been able to accommodate the necessary expenses of adapting activities to the pandemic - specifically to the online realm. More than one national report underlines the importance of analysing project changes carefully and making sure that budget changes acknowledge and cover the extra expenses related to adapting the projects.

Analysing current and upcoming challenges of youth work

Analysing challenges for young people and for the field of youth work was explicitly mentioned only in one report, but the recommendation is likely relevant in more than one national context. It is closely related to staying in touch with young people in order to adapt to their changing needs, which was one of the successful responses from youth work organisations during the pandemic. It also involves taking a close look at the current working environment of youth workers and forecasting what obstacles will have to be dealt with in the future and what skills will be relevant to overcome them. Ultimately, this should lead to training youth workers on these skills and making them acquainted with these upcoming challenges so that they can navigate the future more efficiently.

Some obvious such challenge is the much-discussed digitalisation of life in general and youth work and the lives of young people in particular; another is tackling the youth mental health crisis that has erupted as a result of the pandemic, another creating financial resilience for organisations; yet another is defending an understanding of youth work as a valuable education provider. Upon careful analysis one may discover how many other challenges lie ahead. All of them require specific skills and understandings that can be brought over to youth workers through training. The recommendation is to

take the time to map challenges and goals, so that the knowledge about them can be integrated into youth work.

8. CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of a year and a half after the pandemic started, some of the organisations who survived it report a steep learning curve, especially when it comes to digitalisation, and a renewed togetherness where organisational networks of support were expanded and solidified. They also reported a new fear that existing volunteer and international networks will break down because the pandemic rendered them relatively inactive. In general, youth organisations in our sample were able to continue offering spaces for young people to meet, bond and experience personal growth. They also continued providing guidance and much-needed help for young people in critical situations and they were able to advocate for the needs of the youth that emerged during the pandemic. To do this, organisations modified their activities and collaborated with local governments so that they could continue working face-to-face with young people as long as possible. They also had to adjust some of their activities to an online format to avoid interruptions. As the pandemic spread, some youth organisations managed to keep a strong connection with young people and to shift their activities to meet young people's emerging, pandemic-related needs. At the same time, the pandemic exacerbated the common problem of young people with fewer opportunities being at the same time the ones most in need and the hardest to reach.

Having to keep youth work afloat in the midst of a global crisis has brought to the fore latent but well-known needs of European youth work organisations. The renewed desire to be ready and able to handle sudden emergencies walks us with painful scrutiny through the forest of familiar structural issues that afflict youth work organisations: the field and its workers struggle with bureaucracy and need professionalisation, more visibility, more recognition (official and unofficial) and a faster entry into the digitalized world; organisations, especially the larger ones, need better structures and better internal communication; projects need proper funding that finances all of their components and workers an amount of work that does not overload them.

The crisis has made the advantages of having (some of) these issues under control very apparent. Organisations who could meet the crisis with a strong connection to the youth, with workers highly skilled in the digital domain, with a sense of purpose, with efficient internal management, with little bureaucracy or with diversified sources of funding recognise how crucial these conditions were for their successful response to the pandemic. Organisations who did not have these bases also recognise how much they were in need of them. The most common struggles were related to
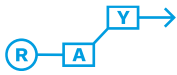
organising, financing and enduring the extra work involved in responding flexibly to the crisis while keeping the youth engaged.

Ultimately, there is a sense of need for better preparation, a more solid working basis that entails workers who are better prepared and informed for upcoming challenges, as well as organisations that are more digitalized, better managed and that have more resources available (financial resources but also others, like access to trainings, or access to public spaces to perform their activities). In general, organisations ask to be supported in building capacities that will make them not only more resilient in the face of another crisis, but also better equipped for their everyday functioning.
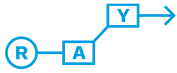
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[1] The National reports are currently unpublished but are available upon request.