

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	Asociacija "Aktyvus jaunimas" (Active Youth Association)
Country	Lithuania
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Evelina - evelina@akt.lt
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monika Grigaitė, VJOSAS - Vilnius Union of Youth Organisations "Apskritas stalas", Member of the Management Board 2. Kotryna Liutkutė, VJOSAS - Vilnius Union of Youth Organisations "Apskritas stalas", Member of the Bureau 3. Evelina Laurynaitė, LiPSA - Lithuanian Psychology Students Association, Prezident 4. Liepa Černiūtė, Lithuanian Youth Union "Žingsnis", Vilnius Chapter Coordinator, Member of the Administration 5. Danielius Koroliovas, JKL Vilnius - Young Conservatives League: JKL, Chairman 6. Deimantė Rustekaitė, Ateitininkų federacija, member 7. Lukas Eigėlis, Vilnius City Youth Council, Chairman 8. Domantas Katelė, President of LiJOT - Lietuvos jaunimo organizacijų taryba (Lithuanian Youth Council) 9. Paulius Vaitiekus, Vicepresident of LSS - Lietuvos studentų sąjunga (Lithuanian Students' Union) 10. Šarūnas Grigonis - Chairman of the Anykščiai District Municipality Youth Council and the youngest Councillor elected there, as well as the Chairman of the Vilnius Youth Organisations Union "Apskritas stalas"

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- **Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?**
- **Individual conversations or group meetings?**

There was a group meeting - an event, more like a workshop with 7 of the participants. Participants were invited via VJOSAS - Vilnius Union of Youth Organisations "Apskritas stalas" and LiJOT - Lithuanian youth organisations Council.

There were 3 parts of the event: opening the event and presenting the results we already gathered during the project, then using Lego Serious Play method participants were reflecting on the information heard, this lead to the discussion, and then there was the last part on finding out about existing actions and needs using the World Cafe method.

The event took 2 hours.

With Domantas Katelė communication happened via email individually.
With Paulius Vaitiekus via Zoom call individually.

With Šarūnas Grigonis via email and phone call.

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

Because they are leading youth organisations and are shaping the direction of organisations, they are the closest to the youth so together (as they are all involved in above mentioned umbrella organisations - VJOSAS / LiJOT) they can do much more by hearing about the situation, sharing their own experiences and difficulties and agreeing on common actions to take to make the change.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

They agreed with all the points said and commented from their point of view (read below).

From their own experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

- Less socialisation, young people find it harder to interact in person
- Fear of talking at all - it is difficult to talk to people when it is more than 1 on 1, although with friends they are chatty, but in other situations e.g. In other situations, such as in events or in organisations, they find it difficult to speak
- People have come back from quarantine different, they expect something different in the activities of the organisation, the usual activities are no longer satisfactory and they don't offer themselves and don't know what to offer, young people don't know, so what to do now? There is confusion, despair.
- There is uncertainty - about oneself, about the future, uncertainty about what to choose, whether or not to socialise, whether or not to separate, not knowing if choosing one direction will lead to negative consequences (professional), a lot of "what ifs"?
- Sadness, severely deteriorated mental health, also not only from covid but also from war, fear, emptiness
- Everything is moving and changing so fast that people are tired and can no longer move forward
- Feeling that they missed so much during the 2 years in quarantine (*especially the 12th graders and freshmen who were promised the best year of their lives and they were sitting at home*), they are trying to make up for it - they are having fun socialising, creating, they want to do more of it now, not to go to study or do something more serious, but to socialise and have fun (*not listening to presentations, but e.g. making lego workshops and socialising*) - and now there are a lot more of these small events, whereas there used to be bigger ones that took a long time to prepare for
- Loneliness - people have been in quarantine for so long that they have become exhausted and when they come out they start looking for new people, any kind of people, people that matter (*with existing friends they have broken up, they have seen how to communicate or not, they have seen what kind of people they are, they have remembered their "faults", they have realised that these people are not them, and besides, people have changed in the quarantine, they have found new hobbies, they have*

found new themes etc.), and now everything is falling apart, all the relationships, because people are starting to come back to a better state, they know themselves better after the quarantine, their values, they look back and they start to find people again

- In the Youth Line, the main issues and problems that young people addressed while calling were relationships with peers (*how to communicate*) and loneliness

- The change was very drastic for those who joined students union live. They didn't know how to communicate online and keep the spirit, games and some other things have helped at first, but then they got bored soon. It was clear that physical contact was desperately needed and a lot of things fell away without that.
- Although those who came to the students union together with the pandemic, they found it cool to interact online, but after coming back to real life it was very strange, they didn't know how to socialise live anymore (although the receptions were live).
- There as well appeared psychological problems.
- And now it's noticeable that youth became highly passive. The question is - is the just the new generation thing (*as every year even without a pandemic it seemed to move that way*) or is it the pandemic?

In this case, organisations don't know how to act, they don't know if it's their fault, do they do something wrong and its' themselves to blame, or is it the new generation or post-pandemic effects. They don't know how to motivate and empower youth to take up the initiatives and be active.

- People don't know how to approach new people. Especially after a long time of not communicating live. But once they break through that they can talk, then they want to communicate a lot and to make up for the times they missed.
- As well the career path also suffered as many final-year students failed to have their research done, it was more theoretical than practical parts which does not help for their enrolment into real work. There were a lot of referrals, and negative experiences, thoughts on how will students look in the labor market? It was all theoretical work, a lot of panics. Those who didn't want to just slip away went on academic holidays and in this way extended their time of studying and coming into the labor market.

- In discussions with VJOSAS member organisations, it was noted that the overall activity of young people in joining organisations and groups has decreased, with young people being slower and less active in joining organisations. Remote activities were not always engaging and interesting for young people in a way that would lead them to actively participate in volunteering activities or to improve their competences.

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

No specific policies or policy directions there identified, but the participants mentioned what is happening to support and help youth:

- There is an **increased focus on mental health**. Basically, there is just a lot of emphasis everywhere on the fact that it has gotten worse, and in many places there is an effort to take into account not only mental health but also physical health.
 - **Distance events have emerged**, which is good in principle, because on the one hand people from smaller towns can take part, on the other hand, if a person doesn't want to interact very much, he or she is given the opportunity to just join in, to listen, and that can be the start of his or her courage to communicate again.
 - **More free events, short, a couple of hours, in the evenings**. In the past, everybody was very focused on the big events, the big occasions, but now, coming back from the pandemic, people are enjoying any kind of get-together.
 - There are **opportunities for learning support**, such as. "Padėsiu mokytis" ("I'll help you study"), because not everyone can afford tutors. It's still kind of working because there have been a number of these platforms and it is believed that at least one of them is working, it is believed that it will continue to work as long as there is a demand for it, and if there is no more demand there is no more demand, but as long as there is a demand it is believed that it should work.
 - There were and are many information channels, such as. There have been a number of channels, such as "Žinau viską" ("I know everything"), where there's a lot of information in one place, because they try to organise it and make as much useful information available to young people as possible.
 - LiJOT psychologist - raised as an idea (back in the January roundtable discussion) and probably implemented. LiJOT has decided to allocate a certain amount of funding for the psychologist and people can go for consultations - people can register anonymously for free, they will set a time and you go for a normal consultation for free, you can repeat, there is a cycle.
 - The thing that has come out of organisations is that some of them have ŽIK - žmoniškųjų išteklių koordinatorius (a human resources coordinator), who is someone who is an internal psychologist, at least within the organisation, who can help. The ŽIK is the closest person to a psychologist that members have, this person is responsible for the physical and emotional state of the members in the organisation and if it goes beyond that, they have to help so that they can continue to function normally. You have to make sure that people continue to function and work in the organisation, that everything is good in their minds, that they feel good. That's how you help people, maybe they don't have anyone to talk to, to confide in, maybe it's just very difficult.
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- From the LiJOT side, it is very difficult at the moment to identify anything that is being done about the post-pandemic challenges, because it is like going back to "normal" life - talking about topics that were relevant before the pandemic and maybe turning a blind eye to and underestimating the impact of the COVID-19 on a young person.

- Indirectly linked - psychological support, especially in high schools, psychological support was made available remotely in high schools. Has it been successful everywhere? No, but very promptly, in the long run, everyone coped to have it. In general now the possibility to get psychological support is higher as there is also more staff working and the service is accessible.
 - LSS created a podcast called “Cukinija” (“Zucchini”) by themselves, which did not only discuss issues of concern to young people, but also how to deal with one's own emotions, how to plan one's time, how to plan one's employment, and experts participated in the interviews in a conversational format. They think it was very useful to youth but it's hard to measure as they didn't get the feedback.
 - For the local (University) level, there was a lot of emphasis on further community building, although at a distance, there was an effort to create the conditions and at least have some kind of counterpart as before.
 - And now direct action to help young people to deal with the post-pandemic challenges is neither known nor done by themselves, more in cooperation with organisations that do (LiJOT, Department of Youth Affairs), and the LSS tries to make its content more accessible in a more accessible format (live streaming, etc.).
 - It's more in the European context to deal with that topic. Starting from small things like giving people mental breaks (because it can be overwhelming to be near people) during events, and trying to create a safe transition space throughout the events.
 - What they are doing as LSS is on the higher education side - what they can do now to make that transition from live to online education and backward easier or better.
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- Essentially, the same funding projects are being run at Vilnius municipal level and young people are being encouraged to act through them. Various possibilities are being explored to assist the Youth Council in Vilnius City, but it wasn't heard of any more specific initiatives specifically targeting young people affected by the pandemic.
 - However, in the autumn, Vilnius Municipality is planning to conduct a survey for young people about their needs, including questions about the consequences of Covid-19. This would lead to a youth policy strategy for Vilnius, which could potentially touch on the impact of Covid-19 if it proves to be significant.
 - At the level of the VJOSAS organisation, there is constant contact with their organisations, psychological health is strengthened together with partners, and additional event formats are implemented.
 - In Anykščiai, where there are almost no youth organisations, there is a 10-fold increase in funding for young people and a planned youth club, which is expected to stimulate young people's activism, initiatives, and greater cooperation among themselves, and expose them to more opportunities. This is not directly because of the Covid-19, but it can help to tackle those challenges as well.
 - Also, as an example, during the pandemic there was a call for volunteers to help deliver food to the elderly, so a lot of young people joined this initiative and it was observed that volunteering is very attractive, it is important to have a place to get involved.

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

Thoughts and ideas on what to do:

More like short term:

- **More free events, short, for a couple of hours, in the evenings** (*more volunteering, concerts, festivals, picnics*). Now that people have returned from the pandemic, they are happy to be together. For those who organise events, **invite authorities and some famous people** (*those who have something to say that would interest people*).
- **Events between youth organisations** - need to get to know each other, to identify a common goal, to collaborate: workshops, picnics, larger joint events - concerts, festivals

More like long term:

- There are no discussions of the **pandemic**, its **consequences** and the solutions, so it needs to be **published through all organisations** (*and not necessarily in the name of Covid, as there may be a war influence*)
- The participants didn't hear of some kind of **post-pandemic strategy**, as if there should be but they don't know, it should be based on relationship building both within organisations and within society itself, within the same policy-making groups - **they see the need to create it**
- **Training, events about the pandemic** - it shouldn't be some seminar that you come to listen to, and maybe not even bringing up the implications, but workshops, which is what we did well with Lego Serious Play
- Some kind of **collaborative platform between organisations** (Especially about LiJOT / VJOSAS).
- **Leaders' Clubs** not only before the Assembly, to have them **every 1-2 months**, so that there is some kind of more constant communication between the leaders of the organisations, and then between the members, and a bigger and more meaningful work for the public comes out

And what should be done after the event?

After sharing with the participants all of the information shown and agreed upon, they should share the insights with their organisations and initiate the discussions on common dissemination, common platforms for chairmen, and the idea to start creating the strategy for dealing with post-pandemic challenges all youth organisations together.

As well there is planned to be a continuous session with LiPSA (*and all other organisations, CONTINUE participants*) to discuss the most important problems on a deeper level - a psychological level.

It is also wanted to spread the importance of the issues. There is a need to develop a sense of common understanding between people, to promote the fact that we are past the stage of being closed-minded and that we need to be more respectful and understanding of each other, because we are probably not all in the best psychological shape. It is important to know how not to overstep another person's boundaries. It is important to talk about emotional intelligence.

LSS could share the results of the project among the student representative bodies and their members. And not only share but also start talking about it.

Perhaps it is also worth creating social campaigns from the reports? (easier to spread the message) To take this up with LiJOT, LSS, LMS? The big organisations should do this to spread the information and the topic all over Lithuania, to raise awareness about the post-pandemic challenges.

In principle, VJOSAS is ready to contribute to the initiatives already underway, but on its own, with 19 youth organisations in Vilnius, it is carrying out various trainings and inter-organisational discussions on the topic. Each time the organisations meet, they are asked about the problems they are facing, and they are helped institutionally and with various kinds of support. It is felt that this topic could be developed further, especially as it is not entirely clear that the pandemic as such will not return, and that another lock-up at home would be very harmful for young people.

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

Participants have mentioned that although there are plenty of trainings and conferences they haven't heard of any about Covid-19 and its impact on youth - that was an interesting insight to hear as it is a very important topic for all of them working with youth - they have noticed the problems but they have never talked about it under the collective Covid topic.

As well there was an interesting thought said about how people behave after Covid. In the collective report from all our organisations it was said something that young people learned to see the real friends and filtered the true ones during the pandemic and participants of this event mentioned the opposite - that people have missed people so much and they were disappointed or bored in their previous friends (a lot of happen in their head and in general during the lockdown), that after they came out of the quarantine, they started to look for new people to be with, any people, the matter that it would be someone to be with. And now after some time many of these relations are collapsing as people start to realise what they like and what they don't and what their values are.

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	Artemisszió Foundation
Country	Hungary
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Olga Irimias, olga.irimias@artemisszio.hu
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Polett Péter, social worker at József Attila School (Szigetszentmiklós, Hungary) Magdolna Szabó, social worker at Hunyadi Mátyás School Anna Édes-Takács, project coordinator at Subjective Values Foundation Istvan Keszthelyi, director of Burattino School and Home for socially disadvantaged children Szilvia Mádi, coordinator at Motiváció Tanoda, an afternoon school in Szeged, Hungary Zsombor Lakatos, social worker, family and child specialist, researcher, group leader working with migrants and refugees at Menedék Association Eszter Tóth, group leader of young women's group at Csodaműhely Association (Csobánka, Hungary) Catherine Odorige, Refugee Outreach Coordinator at Next Step Association Ildiko Szili-Darok, vice-mayor of the 8th district of Budapest Krisztina Scholtz, trainer, educator, teacher at Petzelt Vocational High School in Szentendre, Hungary

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?
- Individual conversations or group meetings?

The first 2 interviews were held in person in Budapest, with 2 social workers of schools. The rest of the interviews were held online individually. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes.

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

1-2. : These schools are primary and high schools at the periphery of the Budapest agglomeration, which means that among the students are youngsters with socially disadvantaged backgrounds as well (ages between 8-18).
3: Anna works with youth projects targeting migrant youth and aiming for social inclusion and democratic participation of youngsters.

4. István is the director of a school and childrens' home for disadvantaged children and youth, ages between 8-24.
5. Szilvi is working with children and youth in two afternoon educational institutions that are run by their organisation. One is in the town of Szeged, where middle-class and disadvantaged children and youth attend as well. The other school is located in a rural setting, and helps specifically disadvantaged youth. The two schools have about 40 students each.
6. Zsombor has a lot of experience working with children and youth with migrant/refugee background, he also leads groups of teenagers and youth in their 20s.
7. Eszter led a group process for young women/girls during the Covid period in a small town called Csobánka. The group consisted of mainly Roma girls, aged between 14-19 years.
8. Catherine is working at an organisation which offers vocational and educational help to migrants and refugees in Hungary, and she is a migrant herself as well.
9. Ildikó is a politician in charge of human and social issues of the 8th district of Budapest and she is also involved in an educational programme for disadvantaged youth organised by an NGO. She has a vast experience working in the social field as a social worker, teacher, family therapist, supervisor, project coordinator, etc. and supports various projects fostering social intergation and intercultural dialogue.
10. Krisztina works with a number of organisations and also as a freelance trainer. Last year she worked as a teacher at Petzelt Vocational High School in Szentendre, Hungary, where a lot of disadvantaged kids study as well. She also works as a mentor at an NGO helping people living with autism.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

- 1: She works mainly with children and they did not talk specifically about Covid last year.
- 2.: Their experiences were similar, anxiety and unpredictability were two major issues.
- 3: High-schooler students also missed a lot social contacts and also the celebrations and riuals (graduation, etc.) because of Covid. Also, university students are lacking social events, finding it difficult to make friends. Youngsters coming from a disadvantaged social background suffered more during the pandemic, because they live in smaller flats, and the relationships within the family are not so good, so being locked in together was a hard experience. Not being able to go to sport and other extracurricular activities was hard for most of the youngsters.
- 4: For the older students (14-24 years), we did not feel that much of pressure during the pandemic, because they live in the childrens' home and even before the pandemic they did not go out that much, they mostly socialise among themselves. Strict lockdown was difficult, but sometimes they went out despite the regulations. A lot of them did not take the pandemic situation seriously (washing hands or

taking vaccination).

5. All the findings are relevant to their setting, but in differing extents. For example, our kids were not especially focused on hygiene or very much afraid of the virus. What was very similar is that they suffered a lot from not being able to meet, and when they could meet again, they were excited, but also a bit nervous about it. They got used to being online and were hesitant to go back to the school and to the community. There was some difference in how kids could adapt to the situation, depending on their social background. Those who were used to having digital tools at home, could adapt easier, while those who didn't also suffered more from losing the personal contacts, because that was their main means of communication.

6. Many issues were similar, but there are some differences: among their clients, the things that they learned during lockdown were not sustained later on. The youngsters were also impacted by the Covid-related situation in their home countries, and also their home culture (in terms of wearing mask for example). The less intergrated is someone in the Hungarian society, the more exposed they are.

7. Online education was easier for the students (less demanding), but it had very negative effects on them. Some of them stopped taking part in the group activities, dropped out of the group.

8. It was a relevant problem that people with migrant background, who are not Hungarian citizens, could not get tested or vaccinated.

9. Among the refugee youngsters, fears were expressed stronger because they reminded them of the trauma of fleeing their country. This also impacted the other students in the community.

10. At the vocational school, students come from very mixed backgrounds, so they experienced lockdown in very different ways.

From their own experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

2: Anxiety and unpredictability are major issues that came up when working with youngsters last year. One student also had a traumatic experience when his mother felt sick and went to the doctor at night, so he found himself alone when he woke up. Issues of life and death came up and were discussed. Also, teachers reported that smaller children felt anxious going back to school after lockdown and some refused to go back, stayed at home. The lockdown seriously hindered the development of social skills of kids, especially the ones who don't have siblings. A

lot of children need extra care or have problems integrating into school.

1-2. Kids who come from socially disadvantaged background have more problems, they have a harder time adapting to the community after the lockdown. But also in general, a lot more energy has to be put into the social development of children and youngsters.

2. For smaller kids, keeping up with studies by themselves was difficult during lockdown, as their parents had to do their work and there was often nobody to help them in their studies.

1-2. For small kids who are in the process of becoming more independent from their parents, the lockdown also hindered this process.

2. During lockdown, some kids played long hours of video games, often in parallel with their online classes.

1-2: More and more activities are going online, and cyber bullying has become an increasing problem.

3: The youngsters suffered from not being able to meet in person during lockdown, which decreased their social skills, and impact of that is still a problem. The university student life is still not back to normal, with a lot of educational activities being online and social events lacking – outgoing students socialise mainly with friends from their high school. Youngsters got used to being alone and socialising less.

The age group of 18-20 years old are facing difficult life decisions (studies, work direction), and the uncertainty caused by the pandemic made it even more difficult for them.

4. Some youngsters' parents lost their jobs as they were working in the service sector, some of them are very poor and did not have enough money to buy food, so the organisation donated some food supplies (which is normally not part of their activities).

5. Reading and other skills deteriorated, especially for younger kids (10-11 years old), and they themselves felt bad about it as well. Some kids/families needed help with doing homework, some needed food because the parents lost their jobs – this mainly affected the less privileged families.

6. In case of university students from other countries, they were alone in the dormitory and far away from their families, so isolation affected them especially severely. There are some school children who pursue studies in their home country in distance education while living in Hungary – they have almost no social connections apart from their parents, so during the lockdown they didn't even speak to anyone apart from them. Another problem was that many people working in the service sector (restaurants, etc.) lost their jobs in the lockdown, causing existential problems. For some women, attending online events was a good opportunity, as offline they would not have participated because of family obligations and cultural norms. During the lockdown, when education and work was

only online, there were large gaps between families in terms of how many digital tools (laptops, tablets) they have and what is the priority of who should be using them. The association received donations of tools, but often the digital skills were lacking, and together with the language differences, caused problems. The level of the kids' education was much lower during online education, and their social skills deteriorated.

7. Many students had difficulty to participate in online education due to lack of equipment or lack of experience using online tools (Teams, etc.) Youngsters experienced a lot of frustration because of the online education in the beginning.

8. Some people lost their jobs during Covid and had financial difficulties, were not able to pay their bills. Mental health challenges were also present. It also came up that some family issues were present, during lockdown everyone was at home and there was frustration and conflict in families, even violence.

9. The migrant students who were already used to distance education, switching to online learning was easy and they could help others (high school students at an afternoon school). There were cultural/religious differences concerning how strictly students followed the Covid regulations. Orthodox students were very easy about them and sometimes broke the lockdown. Catholic children were very strict to follow. Muslim students, who are normally very easigoing about rules, in Covid followed the regulations very strictly.

Many youngsters lacked physical closeness and connection and got pets during Covid.

In families where children feel unsecure for some reason (refugees bacjground, or children not well intergated in the community), they felt happy that they could stay at home. In other families, where the space is crowded (small flat, or big family, such as in Roma families), they suffered from the lockdown more. Some of the more socially disadvantaged families did not have equipment for all family members, so children could not follow online education. They collected donations to help this situation.

Daily routine was very important for the youngsters. Many of them started going to stay up very late, because they didn't have to go to school, and their biorhytm shifted, which made them tired and demotivated.

Also, issues of gender identity came up in the age group of 18-19 years old. Especially the girls, who didn't receive any feedback as a woman, lost their confidence as women and their gender identity wekened significantly (one girl is about to have her breasts removed). This is a consequence of not meeting in mixed groups with girls and boys. It became normal not to express gender identity for example through clothing, because they got used to wearing comfortable, loose clothes. The boys also got used to the lack of rivalisation during Covid and became more passive.

Now in the post-covid there is a swing back in this field, also the war in Ukraine strengthened the idea to live in the day, because of the uncertainty of the future. For those in grief, the lack of community caused a much longer process of grieving. During Covid restrictions we were exposed to much less infections, so after that when people get sick (not Covid, even a simple flu), it affects us stronger. People were not prepared for that, there was no information about that aspect. At the same time, people started taking hygiene much more seriously (washing hands, etc.)

10. Very few kids were good at regulating themselves and their routine, they were the ones who enjoyed being alone, they didn't miss going to school, and they had some form of processing their emotions, such as drawing and reading or other creative activities (video making). For the majority, losing a daily routine was a major problem and some got hooked on video games, playing at night until 5am and sleeping in the day, They did not attend online classes, which did not have string consequences at school (they could continue). Kids who were facing severe difficulties (without family) could not keep up with school and dropped out of the system. Several students started working (as there were no strong requirements to attend online classes) and earning money was so motivating for them that they stopped school altogether.

Isolation and loneliness were big problems for the youngsters. Some kids faced depression. Some had to stay home because of their elderly relatives, which made it even harder, but also came with a sense of responsibility and belonging.

Events and rituals (such as school leaving) were cancelled due to Covid, which was very difficult as these are important parts and stages of growing up.

In the beginning, they longed for the community and meeting, going to school, and over time they got used to distancing and became reluctant to go out and participate in events or meet others.

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

1-2. A lot of kids stayed at home with doctors' approval because of Covid, which caused problems for the school. The communication was completely lacking between the doctors, teachers, social workers and school psychologist. (To minimise health risk, but this had an adverse impact on the children's social development). Organisation of this kind of collaboration has started already, and it should be fostered in the future.

2. The teachers and the education system have developed a great deal in terms of digital education (in the first lockdown the teachers just started learning it). Also, raising awareness about digital literacy and conscious media consumption, safe

use of internet has started (but not as intensively as expected).

3. Organising as many offline programs for youngsters as possible (while keeping them safe). Making team building events for youngsters, and helping them to connect to each other and be more active in communities and the society.

Paying more attention to mental hygiene would be important.

Also, the pandemic shed more light on the issue of domestic violence, which is another topic that should be paid more attention to.

4. Many kids lacked digital tools in the beginning, but the organisation could quickly respond and give out equipment to switch to online education. After lockdown they took the kids to offline events, camps, as quickly as possible (with support and collaboration of other NGOs). Also while collecting donations for equipment, the cooperation between the school and private people and companies was very strong, which was a good practice and very moving. This equipment and digital education tools are still used and the connection is still there with the donors, they can rely upon these in the future.

The school receives food regularly from a food bank, and in the pandemic they could also offer food left over by them to people living around the school, so people (the community and the organisations) became more socially sensitive. So, the school received help and could offer help, experiencing collaborations in society.

5. The organisation donated food for those in need during the pandemic, and donated also tools that were necessary for digital education (laptops, etc). They also started doing online educational activities, but often kids didn't want to attend after being on online classes all day, so one-on-one personal activities worked better. This was important to keep the contact with them. It was important for the staff to keep flexible and adapt to the situation and the needs of the kids (it was not always easy for volunteers to change plans a multiple times).

When they saw that the reading skills of kids started to deteriorate, they started to work on it. Also, they talked about personal issues (relationships, family relations) with the kids. Another learning is that it is important to keep in contact with the parents as well, the pandemic strengthened their relationships with the organisations, the parents often asked help in making the homework with the kids (the less privileged parents could not solve them with the kids), and sometimes parents asked for help asking food.

6. The lack of information in English and other languages was an apparent problem, and the association quickly adapted to answer the needs and make public materials about Covid regulations in different languages. Also, receiving vaccination was restricted to documents that some migrants & refugees do not have. So, the pandemic shed light of the problems of public information flow and legal conditions of healthcare. Often, the staff of public administration institutions don't have

enough knowledge and (language, communication) skills to cater for migrants and refugees. It could be a solution to train them, or to make some of the public administration offices more prepared, so that foreigners know that they can go there.

Within the association, it was a challenge to go online with the activities, and some clients were not able to keep in touch online. At the same time, migrants are more used to online communication because of their contacts with their home communities, so many of them could switch to online communication. So, online communication will stay part of the work of the association even after the pandemic (it can't be used in all aspects, for example trust building, but for translation it can be a good way). Also, in public administration digitalisation and online communication has improved during the pandemic.

7. During the lockdown the organisation moved activities online as fast as possible and started experimenting with connecting youngsters through facebook or other means, focusing on topics that were important for them at the moment, such as: cooking, movies.

They also tried activities to be done in closed group on instagram, which was working for about 2 weeks, but after that the youngsters lost motivation. When it became possible, it was a priority to move activities offline.

It is also important to strengthen communities and institutions that can support youngsters, so that they have a safety net in times of crisis, such as the pandemic.

8. During the pandemic, beneficiaries needed different kinds of help than before, so the organisation had to adapt their activities. They started donating dry food and offering financial aid to those who for those who experienced financial problems and could not pay their bills. They also started a mental health program and also family therapy for those who needed it.

To address the issue of disinformation, a network of different NGOs worked together to share information and to disseminate it to the members of their communities.

The organisation also worked on raising awareness about Covid and distributing masks, sanitisers, vitamins. Also created some videos in several languages about the topic, together with families of the community.

Before Covid, they could reach out to people by directly walking to them on the street and now (because of mask, distancing) it became impossible, so contacting people became much more done through social media.

During Covid it was apparent how unequal healthcare is in Hungary (only citizens could be vaccinated), which was not strategic but political.

9. The public administration in the 8th district was very active in disseminating Covid-related information in different languages.

They also gave financial aid to those who lost their jobs due to Covid, and the number of incoming applications showed how many people live off temporary jobs

that are an unreliable source. A lot of youngsters and a majority of migrants and refugees are working in the grey zone, so if there is a crisis, they immediately lose their income source.

A problem is that in a lot of (vocational) courses during Covid students did not get any (or very little) practice, so the students that graduated now are underskilled. For them, some extra practical training would be needed, otherwise they will not be successful in their field and can lose their jobs. The educational institutions should organise these kind of trainings, which should be subsidised.

10. In the lockdown, the school could not provide a very fixed framework of online education, attendance was not compulsory, so a lot of students did not attend, which was a problem. Another learning point is that some things and subjects can be done online, it is even better for some people, such as youngsters who live far away or those living with autism (for whom the distance created a safer space). Also, we understood how important it is to be consequent and have a strong framework. Being flexible (making attendance of online classes optional) can seem a nice gesture for the students, but on the long run it led to some students dropping out.

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

1-2. Organising a meeting between child doctor, psychologist, teachers and social workers to coordinate their work.

1. Supporting parents in letting their kids go to school more, in order to help them become more independent.

1-2: When working with students, we have to address real life and online life as well, asking them not only what is happening at school, but also what is happening with them in online space. (This is not only due to Covid, but the pandemic has accelerated the process of going online.)

5. Dealing with debating, active citizenship. In the past 2 years, there are more youth at the school at Szeged (high schoolers mostly), than before, so they would like to deal with these activities. During the pandemic, a lot of discussions, conversations were held with them, and it worked well even online – it was a good time to evaluate what are the issues that they are interested in. Now they will be



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more active in organising debating events for them and even a student council with regular meetings and their own budget. The organisation can now be more active and structured in asking the opinion of the youngsters and involving them more actively to participate. Also, paying continuously attention to developing reading and comprehension skills of students.

8. The mental health program is continuing, as now there is need for it because of the Ukrainian war – some clients are facing trauma and stress because of the war.

10. If this kind of situation happens again, it would be important to deal with the issue of how we are present online. For example, some students logged in from their bed.

Also, it is important to develop the resilience of the kids, because they can't expect safety to be provided from outside. Some kind of self-awareness should be part of school curriculum.

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

8. During the pandemic the organisation started making awareness raising videos, which worked well, so in the future they will be able to use these skills. Also, to take care of hygiene, the organisation had to organise better the visits of clients (to avoid crowding).

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	Crossing Borders
Country	Denmark
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Emma Hyland
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yossra Al Asmi - Teacher 2. Julia Rakogianni – Pre-school Teacher 3. Frances Gorman - Teacher 4. Marie Burke - Teacher 5. Roxana Zlate – NGO Founder 6. Adrianna Talaga – Volunteer Coordinator 7. Runa Midtvåge – University Professor 8. Kristoffer Rae – Culture Officer at Embassy of India in Copenhagen 9. Pani Alba – Anna Lindh Foundation Grants Officer 10. Melina Niraki - Psychologist

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?
- Individual conversations or group meetings?

There was a large variety of interview settings, some were conducted through email (in cases where it was difficult to find the time to meet in person or online), others were conducted via phone call or online zoom call, and the remaining (about 6) were conducted in person.

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

The first consideration were teachers, as they have the power to directly impact the lives of young people and have unique knowledge through working with teachers every day. We spoke to a mix of different teachers, from all different levels of a young persons life, all the way from pre-school to university.

We furthermore wanted to involve people who are working with organizations and NGOs that directly involve youth, as such we spoke to representatives from NGOs and volunteer organizations that directly involve youth.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

The interviewees all resoundingly agreed with the findings and were very interested in the topic. They were very engaged in discussion about how they've noticed the findings themselves, and very much expected these challenges. They particularly resonated with the fact that the same pandemic impacted so many young peoples lives in such different ways. The interviewees all agreed that the findings represent the realities of youth during this period, and that nothing critical was missing. One interviewee that gave an interesting insight into one additional challenge that is missing, which is that young people are facing issues with digital literacy. The interviewee made the following very relevant point:

- “I believe the findings well represent the situation that the youth has been facing in the past couple of years. I believe that there is only 1 challenge that is missing, and it is the one of digital literacy. Many young students have seen their education and the way it was delivered completely revolutionized compared to what it used to be before covid. Many have found themselves without the tools needed to undertake education online, or to properly express themselves. This aspect has caused a lot of stress for many of them and I believe it should be addressed.”

Another interviewee mentioned that an issue they've noticed is youth unemployment – how it was exacerbated during the pandemic but now, even ‘post-pandemic’ youth are still being denied opportunities due to their lack of experience. They mentioned that we can't expect that youth have the same level of experience, in terms of job experience and internship/voluntary experience, as we might have expected pre-pandemic. The playing field is different, we need to be the ones who give youth the chances they didn't get.

One more relevant point was that as much as we focus on youth, we need to focus on the entire system around them. Youth don't exist in a bubble, their lives are impacted by the behaviours of their parents, teachers, bosses, friends, families, shopkeepers, hairdressers, servers, everyone they talk to or meet. Attitudes, understanding, and education need to be provided for everyone, so they know how to treat youth and so they have a better understanding of the issues they're dealing with.

Another relevant point made was that we don't necessarily need to educate youth as much as we think, we can support them in their journeys through their social issues, mental health, inequality, education, etc. but we also need to support them by empowering them to make their own changes, choices and leading the way

towards their own future. Youth are very capable, but need to be given opportunities - so we can support them by providing our services in project design, NGO expertise, funding, entrepreneurial advice, etc and allow them to walk their own path.

Many of the interviewees commented on loneliness and isolation as an important and long-lasting consequence of the pandemic for youth.

From their own experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

- Loneliness was mentioned frequently as a key issue
- Youth isolating themselves from each other - even now that they've returned back to schools without social distancing.
- Youth seeming more uneasy with normal social interactions, like sitting next to each other, eating lunch together, etc.
- Youth being afraid to touch each other or be touched
- Youth developing more aggressive tendencies
- Some younger people stopped speaking as much during the pandemic and forgot large parts of their vocabulary.
- Families suffered economically which also contributed to issues at home, such as divorce, lack of a good family dynamic, etc.
- Boredom and loneliness
- Disruption of life and routine.
- Self- development / Independence,
- Impact of Isolation,
- The lack of a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood,
- Depression,
- Missed opportunity to live specific events that occur once in their lifetime at young age.
- Mainly, young people had to rethink and revolutionize the way they interact with their peers and with society at large. Depression, feeling abandoned and misunderstood, are some common issues that the youth had to deal with during isolation and the pandemic.

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

In Denmark, DUF (the Danish Youth Council) started an initiative where youth-led organizations collaborated with the national government in fighting the results of the pandemic through "What can youth do under COVID-19?"

Many Danish funding pools have opened up specific calls for projects that fight the impact of covid on youth (mentioned Trygfonden as an example)

European Year of Youth 2022

Next Generation EU

Netsof Danish digital youth conselling for digital self-help and social communities.

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

- Within schools, create programs to organize group activities (particularly for younger or more shy youth, who can't organize their own social gatherings) so that socializing outside of school becomes a regular habit again.
- We are social human beings, born with innate abilities to live in groups and communities and help each other. Thus, young people need activities of cooperation and social gatherings to learn and evolve.
- Organizations and schools should take action to support, help and educate parents, not just youth, as parents are often the ones who can identify that youth are struggling, and who will be able to take the steps to help them.
- Awareness raising - through social media campaigns, discussion hubs, informative events, etc.
- Focusing on creating more spaces for youth to congregate, so they know they are not alone.
- For organizations that hold events that bring people together – whether that's volunteer activities, dialogue events, food-sharing events, etc. make sure that it is clearly communicated to youth that they are included, welcome and wanted. For many youths who haven't had the opportunity to frequent social spaces in the past few years, attending these types of events can be very intimidating. Action should be taken to counteract that.
- Give the power to the youth. Allow youth to organize their own events - festivals, dinners, talks, etc. Give them their voice and a say wherever possible.
- For businesses and organizations – don't require the same experience in the hiring process for youth as you would have pre-pandemic. We need to be willing to give youth the chances they should have had during the pandemic.
- Design more programmes that give opportunities for youth to travel
- Ask youth what they want – what actions would help them? What training would help them? What do they feel they missed out on? What would they like to be given the opportunity to do?

- For organizations – organize focus groups and interviews with youth where they can give their input on what they would like to gain from an organization like yours. Build on this by actually implementing their ideas.

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

- Some interviewees seemed to feel quite on the spot for the last two questions – as they hadn't prepared knowledge of policies or actions that could be taken. In the future, I would maybe structure the interview differently so they had more time to reflect and think on these questions.
- One interviewee remarked that it should be youth that we are doing these interviews with, which was a point I agreed with, maybe we should replicate this process with young people.
- The interviewees in general were very impressed by the project, the aim of the project, and the progress we've made. I think they will genuinely follow for future updates.

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	FAJDP – Porto Federation of Youth Associations
Country	Portugal
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Cláudia Ferreira – claudia.ferreira@fajdp.pt Léa Oliveira – lea.david@fajdp.pt
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helena Sousa – Matosinhos Cityhall – Youth House and Youth Department – Youth Worker 2. Isabel Diogo – Matosinhos Cityhall – Youth House and Youth Department – Youth Worker 3. Ricardo Pereira – Maia Cityhall – Youth Department – Youth Worker 4. Rosana Santos – Maia Cityhall – Youth Department – Youth Department Coordinator 5. Flávio Ramos – Porto Cityhall – Youth Department – Youth Worker 6. Ricardo Mendes – Porto Cityhall – Youth Department – Youth Department Coordinator 7. Sara Monteiro – FNAJ (National Federation of Youth Associations) – Youth Worker 8. Sara Silva – CREFA (Regional Training Center for Animators) – Youth Worker 9. Inês Carvalho – Inducar – Project Coordinator 10. Catarina Sanahuja – UFAFDN – Project Coordinator 11. Joana Falcão – ASAS Ramalde – Youth Worker

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?
- Individual conversations or group meetings?

Everyone involved in this process were already aware of CONTINUE project and in contact with their insight reports and news. So, we decided to contact everyone to inform that they will receive a google forms questionnaire with some questions about COVID19 pandemic. And, if needed, we could talk over the phone or email. So, this is a result of their answers on a google forms questionnaire and some phone and email exchanges.

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

These stakeholders are relevant in Porto district and in the Youth field, with some influence regarding youth policies and disadvantage people. Some of them are working in municipalities (Porto, Maia, Matosinhos) and others are in relevant organizations dealing with youth, like FNAJ.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

Most notable issues:

1. Anxiety (64%)
2. Social isolation (54,5%)
3. Demotivation face to online classes (45,5%)
4. Lack of resources to access online classes (materials (eg: computer), Technicians (eg: digital skills), physical (eg: a proper space at home) (45,5%)
5. Increase conflicts in families (45,5%)
6. Greater use of online ways to communicate and be with friends (45,5%)

From their experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

1. Interpersonal relationship difficulties in families,
2. Uncertainty about the future,
3. Lack of socialization and outdoor experiences,
4. Social Anxiety;
5. Some difficulty in verbal communication between peers when returning to shared spaces,
6. Time spent in online games, social networks;
7. How to come back to face-to-face;
8. Learning and employability;
9. Climate emergency,
10. Political participation,
11. Mental health,
12. Housing, emancipation,
13. Demotivation
14. Lower school grades (due to online classes I noticed a drop in school grades and even possible, or even certain, several leads or course change due to lack of bases),
15. Anxiety about wearing the mask, and fear of getting sick and missing classes and/or tests,
16. Loss of income due to confinement,
17. Difficulty to deal with emotions and above all how to share feelings

One of the stakeholders has written this: The OECD has targeted the need for greater intergenerational justice. (At the youth organizations level, the pandemic created additional pressure on resources and sustainability.)

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

Some of them are aware (63,6%):

1. Cuida-te + Program from IPDJ
2. FNAJ Youth Agenda for Health 2030 - a strategic reference for creating a health plan aligned with the needs of youth
3. The National Campaign to Desconfinar Jovem promoted by the FNAJ
4. Municipality of Matosinhos developed a program FEM - Municipal Emergency Fund to support the families most shaken by the pandemic. In addition, we are witnessing an increase in demand for psychological consultations
5. Porto Youth Strategy 4.0 (platform for youth participation)
6. European Year of Youth (political recognition of the need to create positive perspectives for young people and involve them in all stages of policy)
7. Youth Guarantee Programme
8. ERASMUS+Pro

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

1. Forums,
2. Seminars,
3. Positive actions on social networks,
4. Concrete support measures for housing, employment, psychological consultation... will bring greater stability to families, which will consequently help young people to grow healthy,
5. Psychological support;
6. initiatives that allow Youth to get out of the house, interact and have fun;
7. online awareness campaigns (example: suicide prevention)
8. Organization of a face-to-face event and providing access to projects that promote exchanges between young people
9. Involve youth associations in the school community; allow these associations to develop programs, activities, sessions in schools during school or non-school hours, which allow the sharing of issues related to physical, mental and emotional well-being among young people.
10. Activities that promote interactions between peers and families;
11. Disseminate this project (CONTINUE) and its results to partners and participants
12. Young people should use municipal youth councils to give voice to youth, define the agendas they consider to be priorities and concrete actions that can be jointly implemented (creating governance networks with the municipality, youth organizations and other local partners), also ensuring evaluation and accountability;

13. Development of specific programs (involving training and communication) aimed at enabling young people to have contact with new tools for emotional management, self-motivation,
14. Social networks for common sharing "I'm sad too!", "how I feel today", "I want to share", "how to overcome shame".

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

No one had referred that COVID19 pandemic was an opportunity to “closer/better family ties and relations”. Overall, they all feel very negative about COVID19 impact on youth.

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	Per Esemplio Onlus
Country	Italy
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Alberta Buffa a.buffa@peresempionlus.org Emanuela Firetto e.firetto@peresempionlus.org
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Valentina Chinnici: CIDI (Centro Iniziativa Democratica Insegnanti); president of CIDI Palermo and vice-president of CIDI at national level; she is also an Italian literature teacher; 2. Roberta Lo Bianco: Moltivolti; youth worker; 3. Michela Uzzo: CESVOP, youth worker in the volunteering field; 4. Danilo Conigliaro: CESVOP, youth worker in the volunteering field; 5. Filippa Alfano: MOVI (Movimento Volontariato Italiano) 6. Francesca Barbino: CESIE, youth worker and project manager in the education and migration field; 7. Giovanni Barbieri: CESIE, youth worker and project manager in education and gender violence field; 8. Riccardo Filippone: Sindacato Studentesco (Students' Union's member) and vice-president of the high school Regina Margherita's project "Transformazioni", which is working towards keeping the school open in the afternoon for extracurricular activities; 9. Marta Napoli: member of the students' school representatives of Regina Margherita and member of the Sindacato Studentesco; 10. Giuseppe Mazzola: member of "Arte migrante" Italian network aimed at promoting inclusive community building through arts in informal contexts.

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?
- Individual conversations or group meetings?

We decided to conduct a focus group rather than individual interviews as we thought that a group discussion could bring up more insight on the topic and represent an opportunity for strengthening connection between stakeholders at local level. We conducted the focus group in a blended way: we met the participants in person, except for one who could not attend due to covid, so she joined us via Zoom.

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

We decided to involve these specific stakeholders covering the role of decision makers in the local community because they all are responsible for creating opportunities for and with young people in different ways and dealing with different spheres of young people's lives.

For us it was important to involve two students covering the role of school representatives, therefore they work for and with young people directly to improve their school experience. While some participants work with young people in the formal education setting (teachers or members of organisations that work with schools), others work in the volunteering and non-formal education field.

Such a diverse group of people gave us the opportunity for an in-depth discussion.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

All participants found significant similarities between the findings of the WP2 and the experience of young people around them. The discussion of the focus group revolved mostly around the same issues and findings of the WP2, in fact participants found interesting the fact that the stories and difficulties of young people highlighted in the Pan-European Conversation of Change report were almost all always the same, even though they came from different countries with different cultures, histories, governments, etc.

One participant summarised the report saying “it emerges the need for active listening and engagement of young people and the realisation of concrete actions to support them”.

From their own experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

The key issues highlighted are:

- The huge impact the pandemic had on young people who started high school online; they felt left behind, teacher and youth workers registered a slowdown in their growth and quickness in learning;
- Total disruption of group relations. The idea of a sense of belonging to a classroom has been lost; harder to make friends and socialise;
- “Some teacher tried to help and were understanding of how we felt, while some others told us to just get used to it as we were all going through it”, which was not helpful for young people;
- It was wrongly assumed and taken for granted that the families and home conditions were all like that of fairy tales. Home was not always a safe space for young people and not all families had the capacity to work from home and have the children attend school online. It shows the inequalities of our society;
- Young people feel that, although the pandemic and the lockdowns were hard for most people, they were more affected because “we are still growing up, we are still discovering who we are, so we were robbed of important years of our lives”;
- Young people need more spaces where to socialise and engage in activities (volunteering, workshops, extracurricular activities);
- There is a need for more focus on young people’s wellbeing, happiness and enjoyment of life.
- Increase in mental health problems. In particular, young people that lacked the support or tools to overcome such a difficult time where more exposed to mental health issues (for example young people in reception centres);

- Not enough mental health support available and affordable for young people;
- there is a need to create spaces for the protagonism of young people within decision making processes;
- there is a gap between the requests of young people and the local policies;
- there is a need to create relationships of trust between young people and stakeholders.

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

- Participants discussed the need to first of all start with all the things that have been missed or skipped because of the pandemic, but with a new sense of awareness, which now comes from young people themselves as well;
- Projects that target young people, whether at national or at European level, should be focused around what young people actually need. In fact, participants that work for social organisations talked about how some of the projects they are working on stemmed from focus groups and discussion directly with young people (i.e. an organisation involved young people in the working team of the a project and is implementing something the students of a school were asking: the opening of a listening and psychological support desk);
- create a context in which young people are protagonists: this is when the best of young people comes out;
- The young people that took part in volunteering opportunities/projects are then involved in a peer-to-peer guide figure. This is helpful and meaningful for both the youngsters who can practice leadership and also for the ones that start a volunteering project. All participants stated that peer-to-peer is an effective method to foster young people's engagement active participation;
- Adults should assume more a mentoring role in the path of young people, instead of creating a hierarchical system of adult superiority: "his approach gives young people confidence, but does not make them feel abandoned";
- Involving young people in writing and implementing projects for the rehabilitation of social and public spaces is important and educational.
- The application of the existing regulation for the management of the "Commons goods" by civil society would enhance and improve growth opportunities for young people and communities

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

- Structuring spaces for concrete youth leadership where young people can express themselves without being judged and feel that they have a say and can discuss political and social issues freely;
- We should not always tell young people what to do, but we should ask them what they want to do;

- Explore more and more non-formal education. As well as a more “hands-on” learning approach in school (i.e. study history more in museums rather than just in a classroom);
- Participative democracy, proposals for activities from citizens to the administration. The tools are there, they just need to be rediscovered and to be made accessible to people;
- Create the possibility for extracurricular activities in order to rebuild relationships among young people;
- reinforcing the connection between stakeholders.

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

CONTINUE Stakeholder Meeting Synthesis Report

Name of Organisation	People's Voice Media
Country	UK
Report Writer Name and Email Address	Sarah Henderson / sarah@peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk
Name, Organisation and Role/Job Title of interviewees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mark Allison / Senior Programme Lead / Power2 2. Kate Green / Member of Parliament for Stretford & Urmston 3. Michelle Walker / Co-Production & Service User Lead / NHS (Norfolk Children & Young People's Health Services) 4. Laurence Walsh / Local Councillor / Trafford Council 5. Quina Chapman / Youth Participation Lead / Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) 6. Janey Hellmen / Trusts & Grants Fundraiser / GMYN 7. Liz Gregory / Skills & Employment Coordinator / GMYN 8. Marika Spence / Alternative Creative Education (ACE) Coordinator / Gorse Hill Studios 9. Tom Bland / Youth Voice Coordinator / Gorse Hill Studios 10. Louise Russell / Operations Manager / Gorse Hill Studios

Short description of interview settings. (3-5 sentences)

- Online, over the phone, in-person, via email, etc.?
- Individual conversations or group meetings?

- All interviews were held online using Zoom or Teams
- Interviews 1-4 were individual conversations
- Interviews 5-7 and 8-10 were held in groups

Why did you approach these particular stakeholders to take part?

The stakeholders were selected for a variety of reasons. Kate and Laurence were approached because as an MP and a Local Councillor, they have hands in the direction of national and local policy directly. They also attended the local Conversation of Change event in February.

Mark was approached due to his role at a youth development charity, Power2, while Michelle was approached due to her role working with children and young people for the National Health Service in Norfolk (South East England). Each attended the local and pan-European Conversation of Change events respectively.

Quina, Janey and Liz were approached due to their work with GMYN, a charity working with young people in the Greater Manchester area, where our WP2 and WP3 activities are taking place.

Lastly, Marika, Tom and Louise were approached due to their roles at Gorse Hill Studios. Gorse Hill has partnered with People's Voice Media for CONTINUE to recruit young people for WP2 and WP3 activities as well as hosting local events. It is a youth arts charity encouraging young people to take an active role in their community and learning.

What responses and feedback did stakeholders have to the findings of WP2? (List any relevant points made by interviewees)

- The findings from WP2 by and large correlated with the experience of all interviewees.
- Generally positive feedback on the level of insights we had from young people.
- Some interviewees highlighted that lack of participation in education was not always down to a choice to disengage – some young people did not have access to the devices they needed or were sharing them with other family members. Even lack of internet access was an issue which some of our interviewees described as a big surprise. Similarly, young people in residential care are often only allowed a limited amount of time on the internet per day which meant they could not participate in school.
- It didn't explicitly come across in our stories, but the interviewees by and large pointed out that SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) children suffered disproportionately.
- One interviewee was concerned that young people are being "catastrophised".
- We should be bold in saying the social actions don't just benefit young people.
- Some of our interviewees have found young people no longer want to reflect on the pandemic – they're ready to move on. However, these are the young people that are visible.

From their own experience, what do they perceive to be the key issues that young people are facing in light of the pandemic? (List all issues)

- Withdrawal from education and the subsequent falling behind that many young people are facing.
- The 'disappearance' of many young people from the sight of services.
- Services that were stretched pre-pandemic are now struggling to cope – especially youth mental health services.
- The disrupted transition from primary school to senior school seems to still be having negative consequences to self-confidence and engagement with learning.
- Mental health issues are proving challenging. More young people than ever need help but services are overwhelmed – they are reporting that they want to access early help and support but it is simply not available.
- Anxiety is manifesting in many forms: social anxiety, anxiety around exams and education, anxiety around health.

- There is no support available for parents who want to help but don't know how.
- There are concerns that social media is exacerbating the trauma suffered by young people by feeding their anxieties with false information. One interviewee suggested the National Curriculum should include media criticism so young people can choose and evaluate the information they consume.
- SEND children who had been making progress pre-pandemic have seen that progress set back.
- The disengagement brought about by going online also affected services such as Youth Advisory Boards. Young people who had previously been using these services disengaged once the pandemic began and, in some cases, that disengagement has persisted and the young people have "dropped off the radar".
- Some young people are experiencing "consultation fatigue".
- Gaps in employment and/or training can be difficult to explain to potential employers and can damage job prospects so those who voluntarily disengaged could find themselves with employment issues further down the line.
- Many funding sources are reflecting the fact that many young people appear ready to "move on". However, as this is only the view of the visible young people, what is being done to support those who have gone off the radar? How can they be found and their needs assessed?
- Young people who started Year 10 in 2020 are now taking exams they don't feel ready for and making plans for the next stages of their education without really feeling ready because they've missed so much.
- Young people who had "borderline" mental health issues have found that they have now, in many cases, become major issues.
- Unfortunately, it's likely nothing will be done until the "high achievers" see a drop in their grades and issues begin to directly affect schools.

Are there any relevant policies or policy directions that they are aware of that are relevant to supporting young people in the COVID-19 recovery, or that address the issues in the insight briefing?

- **These could be internally within their organisations, or at a local, national or European level.**

- Many interviewees actually noted a lack of specific policies that are designed for this purpose, but would like to see policies around education (particularly transitions between primary and senior school) and mental health.
- One policy within the NHS (Norfolk) is to be more joined up to avoid over-consultation.
- NHS (Norfolk) has also shifted to a single point of access number for all young people's services to make it easier to get information and signposting.
- NHS (Norfolk) – asset-based working
- Manchester City Council are doing a big push on young people's health and wellbeing.
- There is around a 10-month wait (if not longer) for in-person counselling and young people need quicker access to this.
- There needs to be policy in place to help identify the "off the radar" young people.

What concrete actions were identified that stakeholders could begin to implement immediately? (List all actions)

- Being dynamic and flexible in approach to work with young people.
- Continuing with having an option for online meetings/sessions when working with young people.
- To get more engaged with the Youth Parliament and develop it further.
- Work more collaboratively with councillors from other boroughs.
- Checking in, asking young people in sessions what they're looking forward to.
- Taking a person-centred approach.
- Touching base with people when you haven't heard from them in a little while.
- Keeping online access for certain services and events.

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections that emerged.

- Michelle discussed how a local senior school headteacher in her area had reported that the cohort of young people who transitioned to the school during the pandemic are a) very empathetic and aware of each other's' wellbeing and mental health, but are also b) struggling with very low self-confidence.
- Kate raised a fascinating point about the UK curriculum being very narrow and traditionalist, and how there's a growing debate around how you bring together formal and informal learning, and how informal learning can be used to draw in young people who are disengaged from learning. She is currently working on a project with a Conservative MP for the National Youth Agency looking at the relationship between youth work and education, and that relationship between informal and formal is becoming really key. Interim report to be published early summer.