

## Peer Learning Round Tables



## Cluster 2: Prosperity

Building back innovative, inclusive and sustainable economies and providing decent and productive jobs for all

### Session 2-2

## Young people and COVID-19: Impact and Solutions

Friday, 12 March 2021, 10:00 – 12:00

### Guiding questions for round table

- Question 1** | COVID-19 has exacerbated important inequities and disparities along various socio-economic dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, geography, income, disability, sexual orientation and identity, migration, and others. What are some effective initiatives to address inequities and maintain social cohesion?
- Question 2** | The rapid move towards digitalisation has posed challenges, but also created opportunities. How can we harness this momentum to build resilient economies and communities, close the 'digital divide', and ensure all young people equally benefit from digitalization?
- Question 3** | It has been widely recognised that youth participation is a right and an effective mechanism for better policy design and implementation. However, some youth organisations have been facing fewer opportunities for engagement. What are some good examples of policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis and some effective participation mechanisms that have been created and implemented with young people as partners?
- Question 4** | During the COVID-19 crisis, young people have missed out on learning, job opportunities, social interactions, and many other aspects in this important developmental period of their lives. What are and how do we mitigate some of the immediate, medium- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the young women and men?

## Setting-the-scene

### Short presentations by young people

Ms. Alexandra Florentina Peca, representative Group of European Youth for Change, to share highlights from consultations with over 15 000 young people who contributed to the Report “*Preventing a ‘Lockdown Generation’ in Europe and Central Asia: Building resilient societies with young people in the era of COVID-19*” issued by UNICEF & European Training Foundation.

Ms. Nikita Sanaullah, European Youth Forum, Senior Policy Officer, Social & Economic Inclusion, to share highlights from *Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-being*, by European Youth Forum, ILO, AIESIC, and other partners.

Ms. Elisa Haxhillazi, representative of Generation Connect – Europe Youth Group, to share highlights from the *Declaration: Regional Priorities for Europe Towards 2025*, by the ITU Generation Connect.

Ms. Valeriia Hurzhii, Teenergizer regional network, to share highlights on mobilization and peer support provided by youth to youth to help them cope with mental health challenges during COVID-19.

## Policy actions for discussion

### Policy action 1

Addressing inequities and maintaining social cohesion following the COVID-19 crisis, which has exacerbated inequities along gender, ethnicity, geography, social-economic status, sexual orientation and identity, migration, and other dimensions.

### Presenter 1

**Moldova:** Ms. Natalia Griu, State Secretary for Education, to present a programme that provides psycho-social support aiming to mitigate the mental health impact of COVID-19 on young people.

### Policy action 2

Harnessing the momentum to build resilient economies and communities, close the ‘digital divide’, and ensure all young people equally benefit from digitalization

### Presenter 2

**Kosovo\*:** Ms. Kozeta Imami, Education Specialist, UNICEF, to present the *Learning Passport*. The learning passport is an innovative approach to learning, connecting over 345,000 students and 33,400 teachers on one platform, and providing 14,000 recorded lessons in one place for all children. It combines digitized skills-building programmes using UNICEF’s Upshift, Ponder and Podium programmes, and the use of Microsoft Teams for virtual events by teachers and students.

### Policy action 3

Creating and implementing policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis with young people as partners.

### Presenter 3

**Turkey:** Mr. Halil Ibrahim, Department Head, Ministry of Youth and Sports, to present the *Mahalle Support Mechanism* (a youth volunteer initiative engaging peer groups to better understand the impact of COVID-19 in 25 provinces); *Youth-centred communications* and engaging *Youth ‘vloggers’* (Live YouTube broadcasts (“Eşit Ağırlık” or Equal Weight) on COVID-19 related topics, mobilising public figures to influence positive behaviours among young people; MoYS and youth associations disseminating videos developed by youth).

\* All references to Kosovo should be understood in the context of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

**Policy action 4** | Mitigating the immediate, medium- and long-term impacts on learning, job opportunities, social interactions, of the COVID-19 crisis on the young women and men.

**Presenter 4** | **Sweden:** Ms. Sofia Brännström, Swedish Delegation, to present policy examples from Sweden, including government and youth initiatives of the Swedish Youth Council and their member organizations in civil society to facilitate young people entering the labour and housing market; to establish themselves in society-at-large; and to unleash the potential of innovative solutions in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

## Interactive Q & A

**Participants** | Short interventions and reactions from the floor  
Interactive question & answer session with participants, governmental presenters, and young people.

## Wrap up and take-aways

**Co-chairs, UN Regional Issue-based Coalition on Adolescents & Youth** | Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UNICEF  
Alanna Armitage, Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA

## Moderators

**Moderators** | Gabriel Brezoiu, Group of European Youth for Change (GEYC) General Manager, Romania  
Gabriela Doni, Y-Peer Focal Point, Moldova

## Background

COVID-19 disproportionately impacted young people. School closures, disruptions to formal and informal work, labour immobility, fractured social networks, and diminished access to services continue to impact young people, long after restrictions are removed, and the pandemic is brought under control. Today's youth, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation, will experience the generational costs of COVID-19. Young women and girls face intersectional vulnerabilities and discrimination. This has immeasurable consequences for social cohesion, stability, and economic prosperity.

Governments worked hard to meet the challenges facing young people, such as quick innovations in digitalisation, while managing the immediate health and economic crisis. Young people also worked hard to meet these challenges. Youth and youth-led organisations are at the forefront of responding, such as through volunteering, online skill building, mutual aid initiatives, combating disinformation and awareness-raising, and supporting peers and younger children in learning.

A meaningful participation of young people in efforts to Build Back Better brings visionary and innovative solutions for inclusive and sustainable development. This roundtable will highlight the youth's experiences, best practice and challenges faced by young people due to COVID-19, and government and youth organisations responses to the crisis. The roundtable will showcase innovative government responses to address the challenges facing young people due to COVID-

19 and will provide a space for youth to share their views for youth-oriented building back to inspire policy solutions.

## Organizers

### Lead organizer

UN Regional Issue-based Coalition on Adolescents and Youth, under the leadership of the co-chairs UNICEF and UNFPA, in collaboration with various youth networks.

### Contributors

UN Major Group on Children and Youth  
European Youth Forum  
Group of European Youth for Change (GEYC)  
Members of the UN Regional IBC on Adolescents and Youth  
UN ECE