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The emerging digital divides: Covid-19 and European youth work.

by Dr Alicja Pawluczuk





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THE EMERGING DIGITAL DIVIDES: COVID-19 AND EUROPEAN YOUTH WORK.

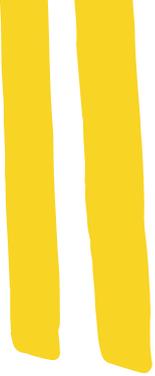
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We would like to thank all people who supported this project and/or took the time to share their experiences of using digital technologies in youth work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Forward: a few words on limitations

The problem of the digital divide in youth work provides a way to contextualise existing digital inequalities and start conversations about how to dig deeper into possible solutions. The distinction between digitally excluded and digitally included youth workers does not aim simply to label, categorise, or divide. Youth workers' digital competences, confidence, and motivations shift and evolve - and so does digital transformation. The term *digital divide* is used in this report as a metaphor to explore these complex dynamics. In no way does one's digital inclusion (or lack thereof) reflect one's youth work expertise and this study should not be interpreted on this basis. Regardless of the skill level of digital engagement, all youth workers participating in this study showed incredible amounts of commitment, passion, and resilience to their work at the time of the crisis. I'm grateful for the time they took to participate in this study.

This study provides a small glimpse into the situation and cannot be used as representative of the whole of the European youth sector. The limitations include a small sample size and data collected only during the first year of the pandemic. In 2020, many youth organisations began learning how to shift their activities into online spaces. The results presented in this report offer insights into youth workers' experiences of that particular period. Despite its limitations, I hope that this report could provide some 'food for thought' into digital inequalities in the youth sector.



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INTRODUCTION

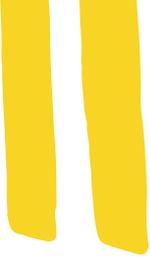
The pandemic-induced accelerated use of digital technology has brought about significant changes to European youth work. Youth work methods, their delivery, and the overall meaning of what youth work does - all of these have been affected by the sudden need to go digital. For many, the digital transformation [1] of the youth field has meant adjusting to the new digitalised normal. In the light of the European wide lockdown, many youth workers had no choice but to reinvent themselves as digital youth workers [2].

Global policymakers have called for a multilateral approach to protect the future of the “COVID-19 generation” and to confront any unpredicted issues that might arise during and post-pandemic. Youth workers have been at the forefront of the battlefield right from the start. Across Europe (and beyond) youth workers utilised available digital tools and skills to keep in touch with young people, making them feel safe, valued, and connected to their communities.

In my previous research (Pawluczuk et al., 2019), I found that as technologies have become core aspects of young people’s lives, youth workers had to adjust, experiment with, and re-invent their practice to respond to the novel challenges and opportunities related to youth digital participation. The pandemic has accelerated this process of youth work digitalisation even further in a short amount of time. It can be argued that, in the light of the European wide lockdown, many youth workers had no choice but to reinvent themselves as digital youth workers.

[1] In the European youth field, digital transformation is understood as a multi-stakeholder and inclusive process encompassing the co-design, implementation, and utilisation of people-centred digital technologies with and by young people, youth workers and other relevant stakeholders. digital transformation changes the way most areas of the youth field operate and describes the evolving integration of digital technologies into social, economic, and cultural processes and structures (Pawluczuk, 2021). The full definition can be found at: <https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/digital-transformation>.

[2] Digital youth work, the term mostly used in Europe (Harvey, 2016; Kiilakoski, 2017) is perceived as a vital part of youth engagement practices and defined as an area of youth work that implements digital technologies to enhance outcomes of youth-centred initiatives.



What have we learnt about youth digital participation and the use of digital technologies in youth work during the Covid-19 pandemic? What challenges and opportunities have youth workers experienced when using digital technologies in their work during the pandemic?

The aim of this report is to examine these questions. The analysis presented here is based on the outcomes of an open-ended survey with (99 respondents) and three online focus groups (approximately 45 participants) with European youth workers. The analysis reveals new insights into the emerging forms of the digital divide among youth workers. The report examines characteristics of the two groups: digitally included and digitally or partially digitally excluded youth workers.



First, I'm going to examine how COVID-19 has affected digital youth participation and youth work. Youth participation is understood here as:

"...individual young people and groups of young people having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, contribute to and influence societal decision making on matters affecting them, and be active within the democratic and civic life of our communities" (European Commission, 2018).

Digital youth participation is therefore defined as an alternative mode of participation, whereby digital tools and spaces are utilised. Building upon the work of scholars (Eynon & Geniets, 2016; Helsper, 2017; Livingstone & Third, 2017) and young activists (5 Rights Commission, 2017), meaningful youth digital inclusion is defined here as a set of larger, systematic, continually evolving, and critical youth engagement practices (Pawluczuk, 2020). Thus, apart from seeing digital inclusion as a process primarily related to education and employment opportunities, it is important to emphasise the importance of young people's agency, human rights, and free will.

SECTION 1

Youth digital participation and the Covid-19 pandemic

Two years after its first emergence in Europe, Covid-19 continues to affect nearly all areas of young people's lives. From education and economic loss to mental health – the long-term impact has been described as the 'pandemic scar' on young people (Maxon, Bacalso, and Şerban, 2021). Right from the start of the pandemic, digital technologies have played a key role in ensuring young people's access to education (both formal and non-formal). Through digital participation young people could continue to stay connected, informed, and entertained. Young people's meaningful digital inclusion has become an essential part of youth work delivery.

In 2020, it was estimated that up to 2.2 billion children and young people aged 25 years or less did not have an internet connection at home. This figure accounted for two-thirds of children and young people globally (United Nations Children's Fund and International Telecommunication Union, 2020). The most recent European-wide statistics about young people's digital participation indicate that only 1% of young people in the EU have never accessed the Internet, while 95% use it daily (Eurostat, 2019). These European statistics come with a set of limitations. Despite being updated on an annual basis, many governments do not involve marginalised young people in the data collection process (Ştefan and Şerban, 2021).

When discussing young people's realities, it is crucial to note that they are indeed a very diverse group of individuals, whose digital participation (and therefore access to digital youth work) might be affected by intersectional factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, or/and disability (Alper, Katz, & Clark, 2016). Therefore, to understand young people's digital participation in the context of COVID19 it is essential to frame it within the "interconnected systems of oppression and privilege" (ibid 2016:107). A 2021 cross-European [#DigitalDecade4YOUth](#) consultation exercise provides evidence of how intersectional factors can affect young people's digital inclusion. For example, young people from Roma communities living in Greek settlements reported not having any connectivity coupled with a lack of resources to purchase data. LGBTQ+ young people in Germany reported being subjected to online hate which has detrimental impacts on their digital participation.

Young people's digital inclusion varies depending on their geographical location in Europe. In 2021, Ayllón et al. (2021) report that in 2019, 5.3% of children in Europe were digitally deprived [3]. According to their analysis, there are only about 0.4% of children are digitally deprived in Iceland, while in Romania and Bulgaria the figure reaches 23.1% and 20.8%, respectively. All the above factors might affect young person's access to, participation, and benefit from digital youth work. Understanding young people's digital participation (or lack thereof) is essential to contextualising youth workers' experiences of delivering their services during the pandemic.

[3] Ayllón et al. (2021) define "digital deprived" children as those who "lived in a household that could not afford to have a computer and/or lived with adults who claimed they could not afford to have an internet connection for personal use at home" (2021:1)



SECTION 2

Understanding digital youth work

The term digital youth work first emerged in Finland in 2012 as part of the discussion on the digitalisation of youth work (Kiviniemi & Tuominen, 2017). As indicated by Kiviniemi and Tuominen, at the time the key goal of digital youth work was to "comprehensively strengthen the agency of young people in a technologised and digitalised world" (2017: 14). However, it was not until 2017 when the official definition of digital youth work was established by the expert group set up under the European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018. The expert group proposed the following working definition of digital youth work:

- Digital youth work means proactively using or addressing digital media and technology in youth work.
- Digital youth work is not a youth work method – digital youth work can be included in any youth work setting (open youth work, youth information and counselling, youth clubs, detached youth work...).
- Digital youth work has the same goals as youth work in general and using digital media and technology in youth work should always support these goals.
- Digital youth work can happen in face-to-face situations as well as in online environments – or in a mixture of these two. Digital media and technology can be used either as a tool, activity, or content in youth work.
- Digital youth work is underpinned by the same ethics, values, and principles as youth work.

It is important to note that digital youth work is not static. It cannot be given a definite meaning, structure, or value. Digital youth work is a continually evolving practice affected by intersectional factors (both for young people and youth workers).

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The European recommendations on digital youth work emphasise the importance of youth workers abilities to stay agile and open for continuous learning in light of the ongoing digital transformation of youth work. In their recommendations, the European Experts Group on Digital Youth work argues that it is important to:

“not only focus on the skills related to using digital media but look more broadly at the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to ensure an engaging and meaningful digital youth work experience. An agile mindset is crucial for youth workers to perform their work in our dynamic society” (Council of Europe, 2019)

To address youth workers training needs, a Digital Youth Work Competences Framework is proposed. The framework outlines four categories of competencies: (1) youth work competencies; (2) digital competencies; (3) competencies related to the organizational digital development; and (4) knowledge of digitalisation of society (for the detailed list see Annex 1). The European experts have called for a strategic effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of what digital youth work is and how it should be taken forward. In the Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Digital Youth Work (2019), the importance of youth workers digital literacy (digital literacy understood here as both functional and critical skills essential for meaningful digital participation) education is emphasised.



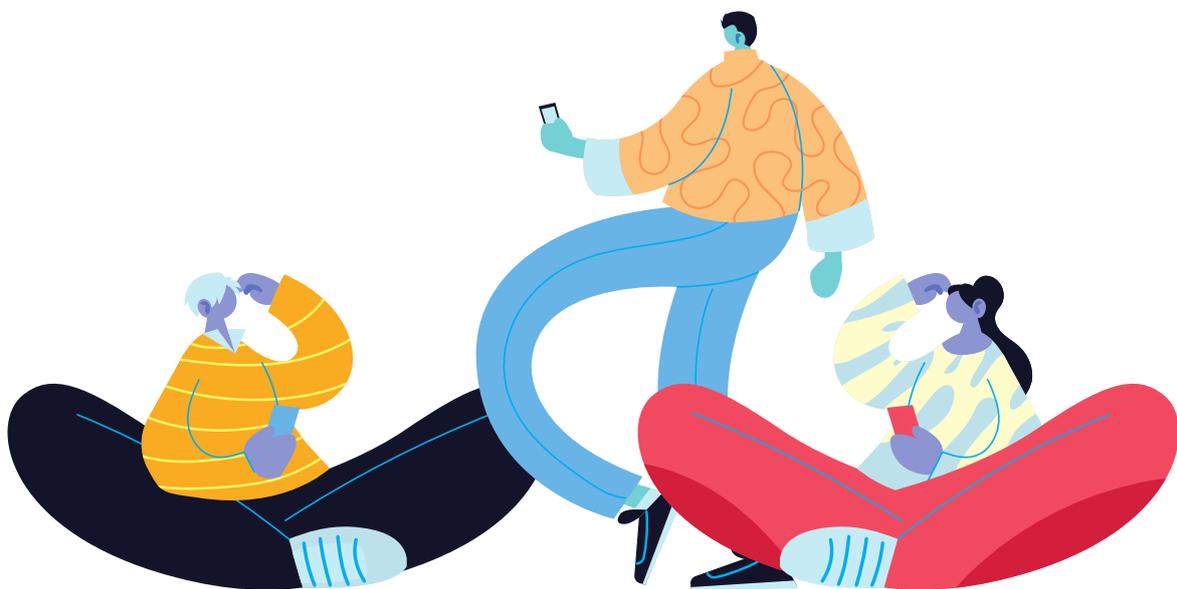
However, despite European wide calls for digital youth training and countless examples of successful digital youth-work projects, previous research revealed evidence of scepticism, 'tech fears', and insecurities among those who facilitate and engage with them. As digital technologies have become more present in the non-formal learning sector, many youth workers felt under pressure to present themselves as technology enthusiasts (Pawluczuk et al., 2019). Many youth workers describe the presence of digital technologies as intrusive and getting in the way of their relationships with young people (e.g. lack of human contact, body language). In addition, many reported not having sufficient digital literacy skills to confidently deliver digital youth work. The study revealed an overall sense of resignation when it comes to keeping up to date with the latest developments in young people's digital lives as well as digital youth work.

Moving forward to 2020, the pandemic has led to the acceleration of the use of digital technologies in youth work, despite these reservations. As a result, many European youth workers were forced to take on the roles of digital youth workers. The sudden shift to online spaces has led to multi-layered disruption in the way youth work was delivered. A study involving twenty European countries (Böhler, Karsten, & Pitschmann, 2020) revealed that 70% of respondents felt that the pandemic had a major impact on their work. Covid-19 not only affected the overall meaning of youth work but also its methods, approaches, and funding. (Pawluczuk and Şerban, 2022). Problems such as lack of reliable internet connection and limited digital literacy skills surfaced as a key problem among youth workers. Many youth organisations had to cancel all their programmes for 2020-21 due to a lack of funding and/or difficulties in keeping the organisations motivated through distance. Balancing between their personal and organisational digital needs as well as those of young people, many youth organisations have also outlined limitations related to implementing youth work using digital technologies (Böhler et al., 2020; YERPR, 2020).

Covid-19 not only affected the overall meaning of youth work but also its methods, approaches, and funding.

The pandemic's restrictions on lack of face-to-face interactions have had a negative impact on the quality of youth work itself. Many argued that while digital spaces have offered a temporary relief during the Covid19 crisis they cannot substitute for offline forms of youth engagement. Finally, despite the negative impacts of Covid-19-induced digitalisation of youth work, it is important to highlight some of the positive impacts on youth work practice - namely the solidarity, creativity, and resilience in the European youth worker sector (Böhler et al., 2020; YERPR, 2020).

Digital youth work continues to be an area of interest for many (e.g., researchers, youth organisations, policymakers). However, despite the increasing amount of data and publications on the topic, youth workers' experiences of digital youth work are still unresearched. The aim of this study is to provide new insights with an aim to extend the discussion on how to best shape a more inclusive and meaningful digital youth work for all.



SECTION 3

Methods

01

Open-ended survey

The aim of the survey was to collect information about youth workers' experience of using digital technologies during the Covid-19 pandemic. To this end, youth workers were asked how/if has COVID19 affected their youth work services and what challenges and opportunities they experienced as a result.

The survey was active between August and October 2020. The information about the survey was shared with European youth work organisations, who promoted it on their social media outlets and in their newsletters. Ninety-nine youth workers participated in the survey. The biggest group of participants were based in the United Kingdom (44 participants). The rest of the participants were from the following countries: Austria (2), Czech Republic (1), Estonia (1), Finland (27), Germany (9), Greece (1), Ireland (8), Italy (1), Latvia (1), Portugal (3), Turkey (1).

02

Online workshops

Three online sessions took place between March 2020 and September 2020. In total, approximately 45 participants joined in these sessions. The first session was joined by 16 youth workers based in the United Kingdom. The second and third session was open to youth workers in Europe. It is estimated here that 29 youth workers joined the session. Due to the online nature of these sessions and the use of Zoom as a video conferencing software, it is impossible to indicate how many participants stayed through the entire session. Apart from those who actively participated in the discussion, there were also participants who had their cameras on and off during the session. Some decided to share their thoughts in the chat session only. To ensure that the participants felt confident sharing their concerns, none of the sessions was recorded.



SECTION 4

Findings: the emerging digital divides in youth work

The study revealed a distinct difference between two groups: youth workers who might be considered as digitally included and those who were (or partially) digitally excluded (for more detailed characteristics of these two groups see Section 4.1 and 4.2). The sliding scale from 0 to 100 used to describe one's digital competencies had the following indicators: 0 - low; 50 - intermediate; 100 - advanced.

The data indicates that youth workers primarily fall into two groups: those who describe* themselves as having upper-intermediate and advanced digital experts (approx. 35%) and those who indicate that their digital competencies [4] are intermediate to low (approx. 65%). In the context of the Digital Youth Work Competencies Framework, this study primarily focuses on the youth workers digital competencies. However, in their testimonies, participants also referred to the organizational digital development and knowledge of the digitalisation of society. In what follows, this report outline youth workers' experiences of digital youth work and Covid-19 at the end of 2020.

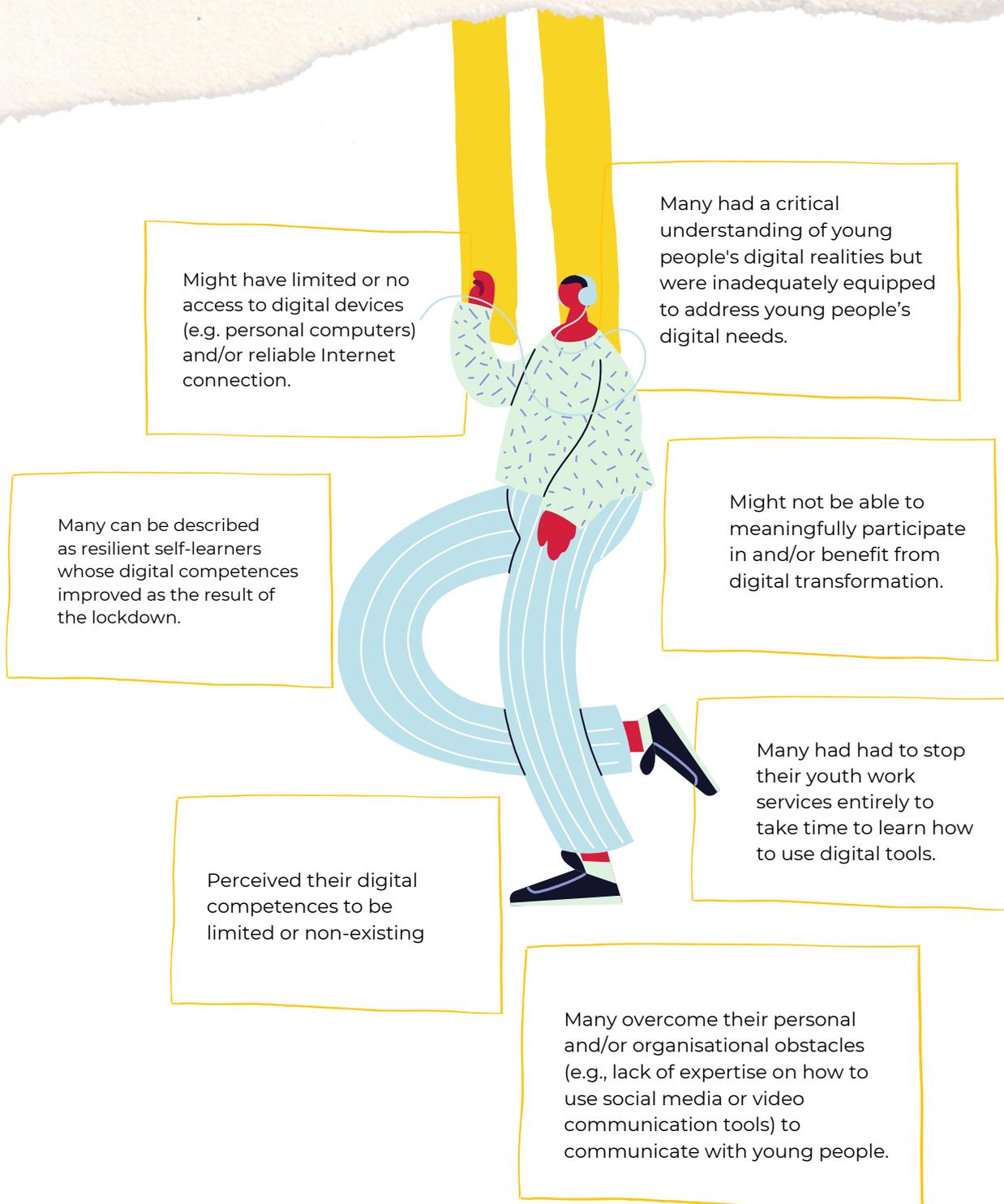
[4] [The EU's DigComp 2.0 Framework](#) identifies the key components of digital competence in 5 areas: (1) Information and data literacy; (2) Communication and collaboration; (3) Digital content creation; (4) Safety; (5) Problem-solving.



SECTION 3.1

Digitally excluded and partially digital excluded youth workers

Digitally excluded and partially digital excluded youth workers

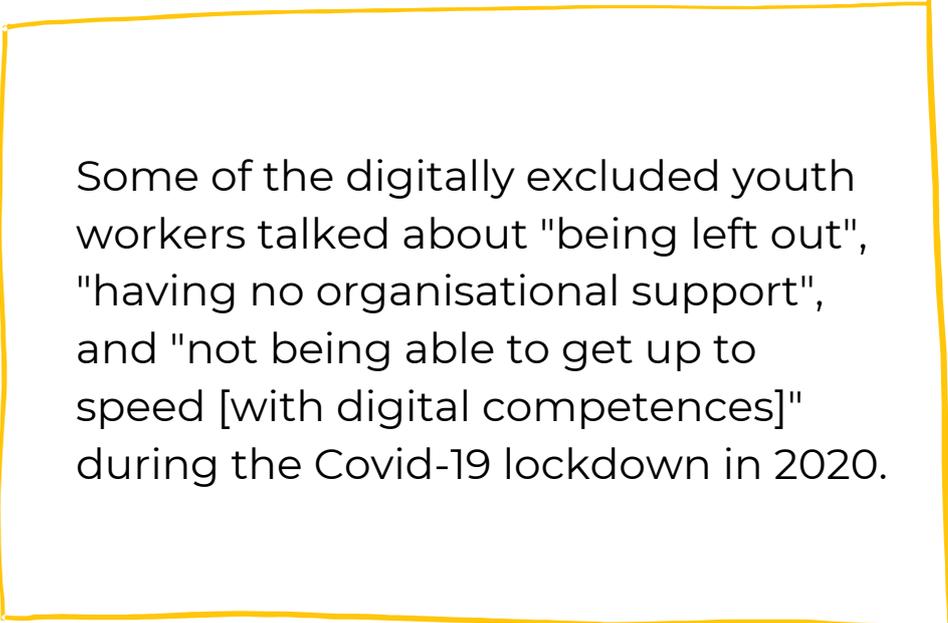




Digitally excluded (and partially digitally excluded) youth workers are those who described their digital competencies as below intermediate or intermediate (0-50) on the digital competencies scale used in this study). Digitally excluded youth workers might be those who perceive their digital competences to be limited or non-existing. Digitally excluded youth workers might have limited or no access to digital devices (e.g. personal computers) and/or reliable Internet connection. They might not be able to meaningfully participate in and/or benefit from digital transformation.

Digitally excluded (and partially excluded) youth workers have been hit the hardest by the Covid-19 lockdown. This group indicated that they had to stop their youth work services entirely to take time to learn how to use digital tools. For many, the learning process was described as stressful and chaotic. When suddenly adopted during the pandemic as the sole means of participation, some initially perceived digital technologies as a communication barrier - not an enabler. Some youth workers talked about digital technologies getting in way of the youth work interactions and activities. Not being able to see or hear young people due to poor connection, limited ability to facilitate activities, lack of privacy when working from home, sharing a laptop with another family member - these were some of the key issues described by the digitally excluded (and partially excluded) youth workers.

Some of the digitally excluded youth workers talked about "being left out", "having no organisational support", and "not being able to get up to speed [with digital skills]" during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020.



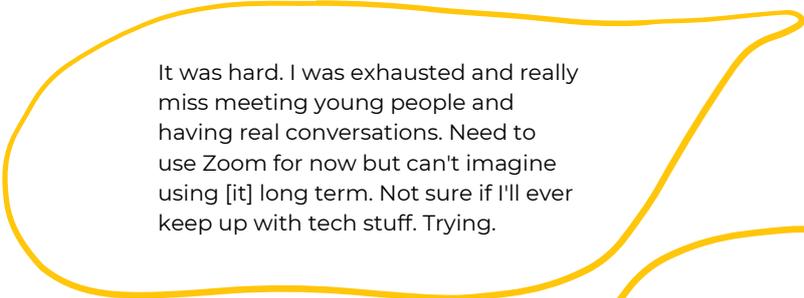
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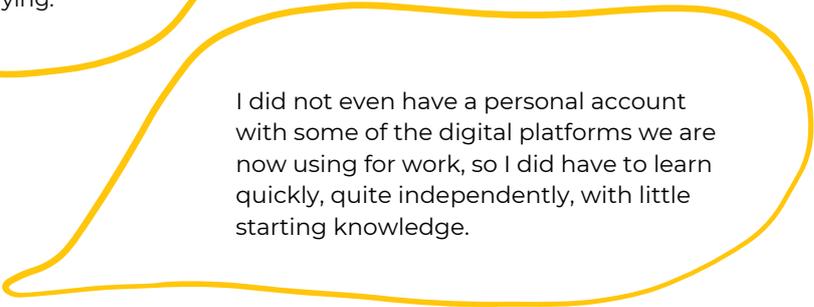
There was a sense of initial frustration and anxiety related to the initial use of digital technologies. While many workers started learning new digital tools during the lockdown, at the time there was a general lack of understanding of the diversity of online spaces. Unlike digitally included youth workers, digital excluded youth workers seemed to be afraid of using the newer and more multifunctional and interactive digital tools (e.g., online gaming platforms) and decided to use the most common - and possibly also less participatory forms of communication (e.g., video conferencing tools).

Despite their limited digital inclusion, digitally excluded youth workers nonetheless have a critical understanding of the issues related to digital youth. Many seem to have a nuanced understanding of young peoples' realities and how digital technologies affect different areas of their lives. Many accounts touched upon issues related to young people's digital inclusion (e.g., no access to wi-fi or a functioning device). Due to their limited digital inclusion, they were less equipped to address young people's digital needs.

Nonetheless, this group showcased an incredible amount of resilience and creativity. Many talked about overcoming their personal and/or organisational obstacles (e.g., lack of expertise on how to use social media or video communication tools) to communicate with young people. Digitally excluded youth workers can be described as driven and self-learners whose digital skills improved as the result of the lockdown. Moving forward, this group requires digital inclusion support such as digital competencies training, access to digital devices, reliable internet connection, and ongoing support from digital inclusion experts



It was hard. I was exhausted and really miss meeting young people and having real conversations. Need to use Zoom for now but can't imagine using [it] long term. Not sure if I'll ever keep up with tech stuff. Trying.

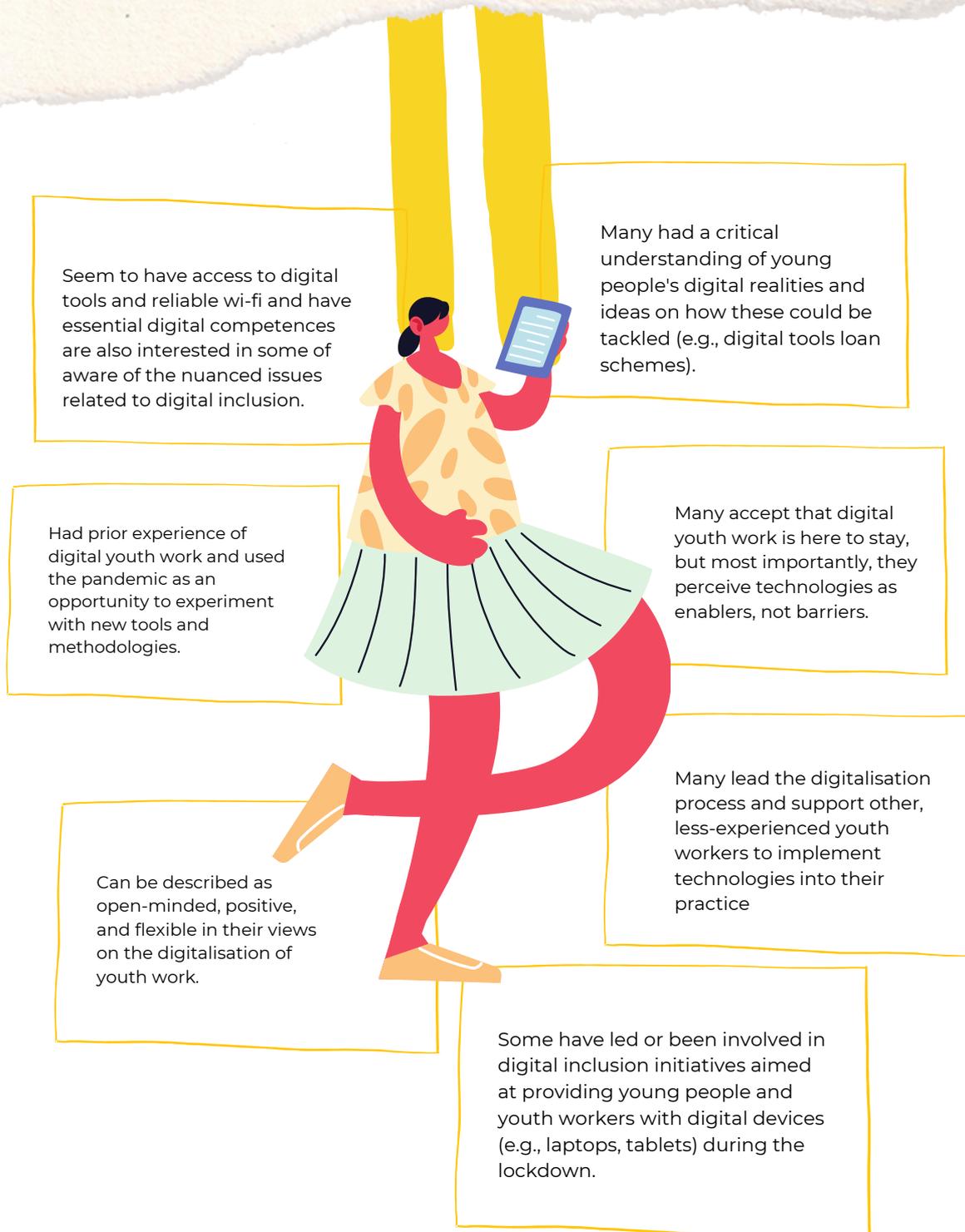


I did not even have a personal account with some of the digital platforms we are now using for work, so I did have to learn quickly, quite independently, with little starting knowledge.

SECTION 3.2

Digitally included youth workers

Digitally included youth workers



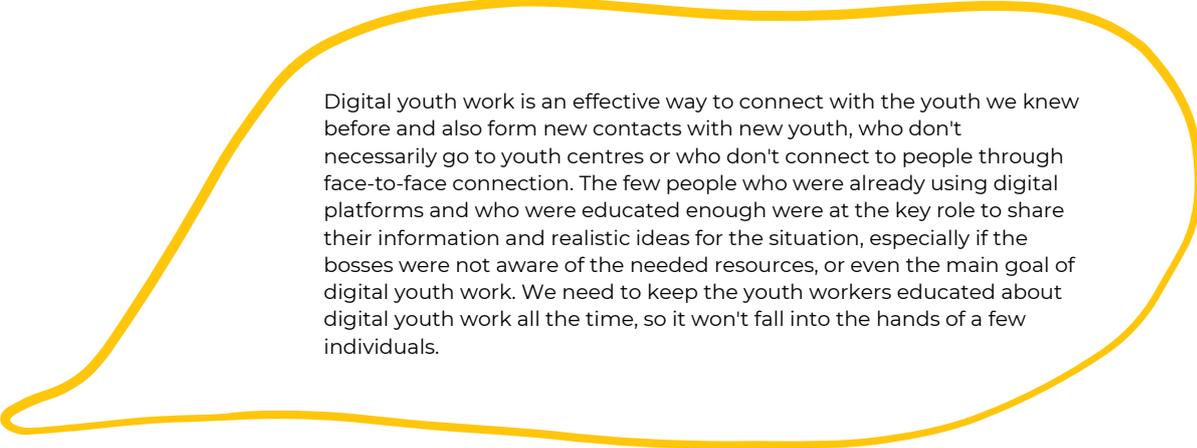


Digitally included youth workers are those who described their digital skills as above intermediate or advanced (60-100 on the digital competencies scale). Digitally included youth workers who seem to have the essential digital competences are also interested in some of aware of the nuanced issues related to digital inclusion and digital transformation in the youth field (e.g., surveillance, human rights, and internet governance).

Digitally included youth workers seem to have access to digital technologies and reliable Internet connections. The members of this group often referred to the importance of taking proactive steps to ensure that all stakeholders have access to digital technologies. For example, some have led or been involved in digital inclusion initiatives aimed at providing young people and youth workers with digital devices (e.g., laptops, tablets) during the lockdown. Some of the digitally included youth workers seem to approach digital transformation in youth work in a more strategic way, proposing practical steps on how to address issues in the sector (e.g., facilitation of online training sessions for youth workers).

Digitally included youth workers tend to present themselves as cautiously optimistic experts in digital youth work. While aware of the digital inclusion problems in the field, digitally included youth workers seem to be optimistic about the use future use of digital technologies in youth work. Digitally included youth workers can be described as resilient, open-minded, and flexible in their views on the digitalisation of youth work. They not only accept that digital youth work is here to stay, but most importantly, they perceive technologies as enablers, not barriers. Their work goes beyond the use of digital tools to communicate with young people, but to use them to facilitate (and co-facilitate) more interactive activities with young people (e.g. online gaming sessions).

Digitally included youth workers can also be recognised as those who lead the digitalisation process and support other, less-experienced youth workers to implement technologies into their practice. In their accounts, unlike the less digitally experienced youth workers, this group talked about 'continuing', 'transferring', and 'expanding' their digital practices. Thus, in their own accounts, those described as digitally included focused primarily on the strategic aspects of the impact of Covid-19 on youth work, including topics such as supporting others/lack of skills among other youth workers, moving/transferring services, and strategic approaches to digital youth work (e.g. policy making).



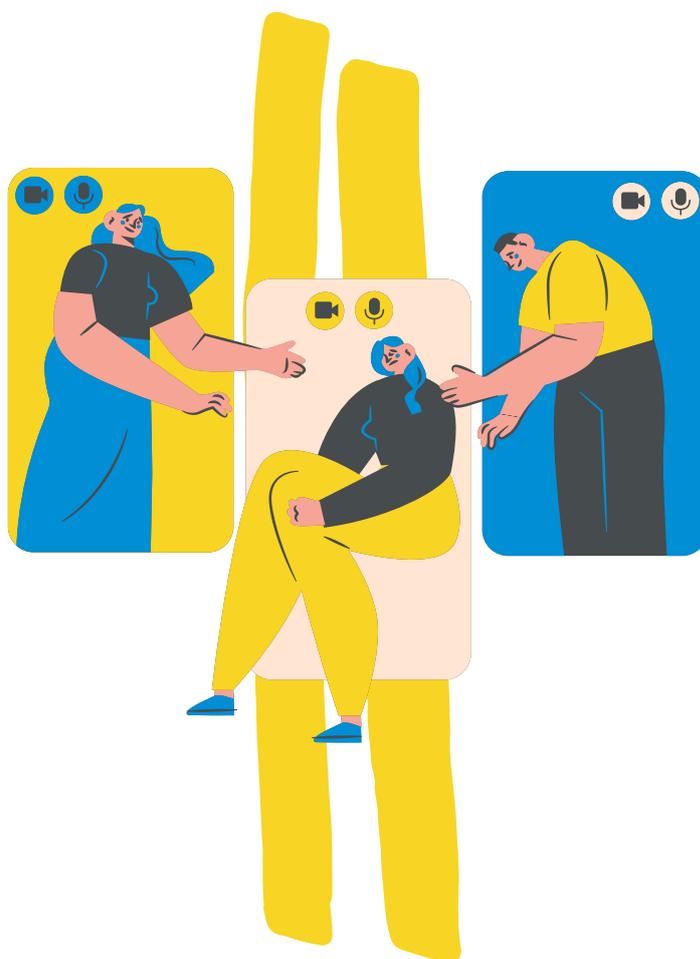
Digital youth work is an effective way to connect with the youth we knew before and also form new contacts with new youth, who don't necessarily go to youth centres or who don't connect to people through face-to-face connection. The few people who were already using digital platforms and who were educated enough were at the key role to share their information and realistic ideas for the situation, especially if the bosses were not aware of the needed resources, or even the main goal of digital youth work. We need to keep the youth workers educated about digital youth work all the time, so it won't fall into the hands of a few individuals.

SECTION 4

Moving forward

The emerging digital divide in youth work is not solely about youth workers' skills or their digital access. It is about a greater understanding of digital transformation in the youth field and its challenges and opportunities, as well as the need for possible mobility on the digital divide spectrum. The limited digital inclusion support in the field has been and continues to be a systemic issue that might affect their youth work delivery. At the beginning of the pandemic, in 2020, many youth workers felt left out and unable to catch up with the digital transformation in the field. Digital youth work as a practice is also situated within a larger set of social, cultural, and economic power structures (e.g. the influence of tech companies and their privacy practices, local authorities, social). In our efforts to address the digital divide in youth work, it is important to consider these wider issues.

Youth workers and youth organisations require strategic and ongoing support to participate in the digital transformation in an informed, proactive, and meaningful way.





Types of support might include training, financial, and organisational support for the creation of new strategies (e.g. national, local), and resources for digital youth workers. To this end, co-creation of digital youth works focused training (both offline and online), learning resources and knowledge exchange platforms could be considered. All resources should be accessible, responsive to a diverse set of needs, and be updated on a regular basis. It is important that any digital youth work training intervention should aim to address youth workers' holistic needs in terms of their digital literacy, overall well-being, and time management.

There is a need for an up-to-date analysis of how socio-economic and cultural factors intersect with digital inequalities. The digital divides have a detrimental impact on young people's and youth workers (and other stakeholders) access to digital youth workspaces, activities, and resources. To improve the planning and delivery of future digital youth work interventions it is essential that both young people and youth workers are provided with a reliable internet connection and digital devices. During the pandemic, many youth workers had to rely on their personal devices and data allowance to manage and deliver their youth work provision. In addition, many problems have been noted in relation to young people's limited or lack of access to computers. It is recommended here that the youth work sector is provided with new resources to update their existing equipment and help the most digitally excluded young people to access digital youth work services.

Future research is needed in order to better understand how digital inequalities affect youth work.



Most importantly, it is crucial to note that the digital divide is not a static phenomenon. As digital transformation continues to affect most aspects of youth work so are new problems and the need for skills to deal with these. That is why we should not see these two groups on the opposite ends of the digital spectrum, but as interconnected and intersecting groups whose collaboration is essential to face the arising challenges in youth work.

There is a need for a unified (but not standardised) and youth workers centred approach to digital inclusion. To achieve this, more information is required about youth workers needs and how to best address them. A collective effort is essential to ensure that digital youth work leaves no one behind.



Appendix 1: Sample of youth workers' responses.

Question	Response	Digital Competencies Scale
Question: What are some of the key challenges that you experienced when using digital technologies for your work during the COVID crisis?	Finding time to do it. Finding things relevant to the young people. Getting young people to use the digital technology as it would appear different age groups use different formats and platforms to communicate	15
	My inexperience of using social media platforms (personally & professionally). Age restrictions and advice against using some social media platforms. Parental concerns of some young people accessing social medias.	20
	It has dramatically affected my youth work service. I am part of the [xxxxxx] time and being a rural area there is already a concern for people having good internet access. It happened so suddenly that there wasn't time to support young people into moving to online services. It also took a while to find an appropriate platform to use with young people. I also work with a lot of juniors who do not have access to social media, so I am very concerned that they have had no youth work input since March. It has also been stressful for the team with a lot of unknown times.	43
	1- Collaborating with non digital aware partners 2- Internet service quality is a huge deal, since most meetings, document shares and collaborative platforms are cloud-based, this requires good network bandwidth and availability 3- Digital system availability : minor downtimes of digital platforms had a clear and severe impact and daily deliveries	80
	Nothing really. Just few months everything had to happen online, not face to face. Now everything works almost normally.	100

Question	Response	Digital Competencies Scale
What type of support should digital youth workers be provided with during and after the pandemic?	Youth workers should be provided with a laptop so that they can work from home on the computer and not be restricted to what they can do during and after the pandemic. Also more hands-on training on learning digital youth work so that you have the confidence to teach and deliver online youth work.	0
	It's very full-on delivering online all the time, especially when it's not what you normally do, although I've attended lots of webinars where people have shared good practices etc there's still a disparity between what small organisations are able to do. Ideally, it would be great if there would be a way that digital youth work experts could really share their expertise. Having been to some webinars I still wouldn't feel confident in doing some of the great things that the presenters discussed or demonstrated. Working for a small charity with limited resources reduces our capacity. It would be so good if there'd be a way that digital experts could support charities that don't have the expertise or funding so that it becomes part of the package they can offer	30
	As Covid hit work exploring digital youth work in our area was just beginning, staff had limited if any opportunity to explore the concept and with little or no training. The lack of digital devices and constraints on accessing key platforms that young people use as a further barrier. However, staff endeavoured the best they could to reach out to young people in our area often using their own equipment. A genuine effort was made to overcome the barrier locally and the centralise assistance/approach that evolved certainly helped resolve some issues. If we are serious about digital youth work then a sustained investment is required not only in youth workers via training and skills development but resourcing to support the purchase/upgrading of of equipment, staff hours and programmes that bring young people on board to inform how we develop our digital youth work approach.	80
	A group session with plenty of time to go through what we learned about digital youth work, that practices worked and what didn't, how did it affect day-to-day work and people's own wellbeing and if there are things we could keep doing going forward. Also, more education about the possibilities of digital youth work to workers who are not so knowledgeable.	95

Question	Response	Digital Competencies Scale
What are some of the key lessons you learned about the use of digital youth work during the pandemic?	That it is possible but not really great for good youth work	0
	That digital youth work can work (not for every young person/family). And that I need to improve my own understanding and usage of a range of digital youth work, electronic skills and social media platforms.	20
	Switched delivery to digital, didn't have permissions /financial support to deliver certain types of sessions so we did what we could! It was hard but young people turned up each week so we carried on!	44
	We neglect digital platforms way too much in our work. We acknowledge that digital platforms can be used and you can reach young people via them, but we don't really invest enough time in them. In some cases, we could reach more young people and the work would be more efficient when done on [the] digital platform. Still, for some reason, we value the physical encountering of a few young people more than digital encountering of dozens of young people.	95
	Digital youth work is way more successful in reaching youth that are in danger of isolating themselves from society, or who have mental or physical restrictions that keep them from physically visiting youth centers. We were able to get in touch with tons of new youth who really need someone to talk to online.	100
	Digital youth work is an effective way to connect with the youth we knew before and also form new contacts with new youth, who don't necessarily go to youth centres or who don't connect to people through face-to-face connection. The few people who were already using digital platforms and who were educated enough were at the key role to share their information and realistic ideas for the situation, especially if the bosses were not aware of the needed resources, or even the main goal of digital youth work. We need to keep the youth workers educated about digital youth work all the time, so it won't fall in the hands of a few individuals.	100

Question	Response	Digital Competencies Scale
Question: What type of support should digital youth workers be provided with during and after the pandemic?	Youth workers should be provided with a laptop so that they can work from home on the computer and not restricted to what they can do during and after the pandemic. Also more hand on training on learning digital youth work so that you have the confidence to teaching and delivering online youth work.	0
	A mentoring system would be good so that smaller and less well funded orgs can take advantage of others expertise . An hour workshop isn't long enough to support workers fully to incorporate into delivery plan - if we want to sustain digital delivery then a systemic approach with long term support is needed. Many are having to do this alone without a budget available	33
	It's very full on delivering online all the time, especially when it's not what you normally do, although I've attended lots of webinars where people have shared good practice etc there's still a disparity between what small organisations are able to do. Ideally it would be great if there would be a way that digital youth work experts could really share their expertise. Having been to some webinars I still wouldn't feel confident in doing some of the great things that the presenters discussed or demonstrated. Working for a small charity with limited resources reduces our capacity. It would be so good if there'd be a way that digital experts could support charities which don't have the expertise or funding so that it becomes part of the package they can offer	30
	Education, education, education. To teach them more ways to use digital youth work and to clarify its goals of it. Also to support them to not stop using digital platforms but to encourage them to use more digital platforms in their work. There were many new connections with new youth, and if digital youth work will "die" after the pandemic, these youth might not get the needed connection with youth workers.	95
	People need to prepare more during non-crisis times for such offers, to be ready if the situation strikes. I do believe the situation created some awareness and hopefully some respect for the methods and tools for digital offers, also outside of crisis. In upcoming training, I will focus more on strategic planning instead of hands-on tools experience for participants.	100
	We need to think strategically how to create sustainable and ethical solutions in the youth sector. It's not about dumping training onto youth workers - we need to learn about their needs and find new ways to make things work.	100

<p>Finally, if you could provide youth work policy makers and funders with 3 key recommendations for future developments of digital youth work, what would these be?</p>	<p>Response</p>	<p>Digital Competencies Scale</p>
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	<p>1. funding for equipment at home projects 2. more links between worker and young person with online session and a physical pack/info. to back up the discussion 3. training</p>	<p>15</p>
	<p>maybe when we get back to youth work we start to build up a better understanding of the different types of digital formats the groups we work with use. Possibly have a more up to date media programme that also involves the young people editing and updating. Try and use technology to spread youth work instead of seeing it as a negative in the centres</p>	<p>15</p>
	<p>training at uni in digital youth work</p> <p>1-Favoring, supporting youth inclusion and leadership(initiatives)at work 2-A special attention to youths recommendations 3-More responsibility in digital lead subjects</p>	<p>42</p>
	<p>1-Favoring, supporting youth inclusion and leadership(initiatives)at work 2-A special attention to youths recommendations 3-More responsibility in digital lead subjects</p>	<p>95</p>
	<p>1) Don't be afraid to fail. You don't have to approach youth with a ready concept/product. You can try things out and try different things. It's ok if something isn't working out straight away. 2) Don't be afraid to ask. Use participatory methods to engage young people in the development of the service. 3) Networking! Keep in touch with your colleague from different cities and organizations. Share what you're doing, your failures and your success. Learn from them, ask for advice and help others.</p>	<p>100</p>
	<p>Please, please fund online youth centres. Not everyone is able to come to physical spaces. Also, sometimes it takes a relaxing online community where you get to know the youth workers beforehand to help someone get out of the house and have the courage to meet people face to face. We need more tools geared toward youth work. Now we use third-party apps and software which have limits because of data protection laws. It would be great to have platforms developed for the use of youth work that could be run on private servers so that nobody else has access to the data. Have policymakers view digital youth work with the same importance as regular youth work. One is not better than the other - both have a capacity for helping and guiding youth in different ways, and both can help each other be better.</p>	<p>100</p>

Appendix 2: References

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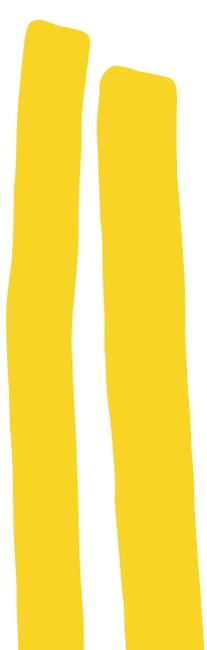
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