

Questions:

1. How has COVID-19 affected young people's access to services (including health and counselling); digital tools, youth participation and employment opportunities?
2. What measures can be taken at national and EU level to support the youth sector in areas affected by COVID-19 pandemic?

Spoken Text:

- Dear ministers, [dear Commissioner],
- We thank the presidency for arranging this informal exchange of experiences and ideas on the impact of COVID-19 on youth.
- Although young people seem physically less affected by the virus, the social impact on youth is enormous.
- As we all do, The Netherlands also recognizes the concerns of young people. They have not been able to meet their friends in the street or at the sports- or youth club. Schools and higher education have been closed, and youth are having concerns about losing their (first) jobs. Many worry about their future.

- Families are forced to stay at home and sometimes this leads to tension or even to violence and abuse. For this reason a national campaign on domestic violence and child abuse has been launched.
- Various other measures for youth in vulnerable situations have already been taken. Schools and municipalities, for

example, have joined hands to provide day care and school activities for these young people.

- Young people in foster families or in a residential setting are given the best possible support to keep in touch with their parents.
- Healthcare has been continued as much as possible, where necessary in an alternative – digital - form.
- All information for care providers, parents and young people is published on a website of the Netherlands Youth Institute, such as a guide on Day-care and Day time activities for young people with physical or mental limitations, and information on the strengthening of mental health.

- Also, young people who are experiencing financial difficulties can rely on various support measures in the Netherlands.

- Digital youth work is one of the focus areas in the youth sector. Many youth workers keep in touch with young people online via meeting apps and game sessions.

- The global crisis also offers opportunities for young people to develop creative and innovative ideas and contribute to the community.
- They are committed to society through – for example – Civic Service volunteering projects. This extra effort

during COVID-19 varies from helping others with grocery shopping and sending cards to lonely elderly people, to becoming telephone buddies.

- Youth organizations have been able to adapt to the changed working conditions and have found new methods to deal with the pandemic measures, such as virtual formats for guest lessons on the EU Youth Dialogue.
- Recently, a start has been made to partially reopen primary schools, special education and childcare. Sports and exercise and daycare activities have also started up - carefully - again.
- Dear Colleagues,
Nobody could have foreseen that a virus could have such an enormous impact on our daily lives and society. But we can learn from each other's experiences and innovative solutions. Together we will beat this virus, and create a new perspective!
Thank you.