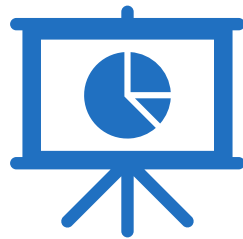


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ME!**



**REPORT**

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH WORKERS

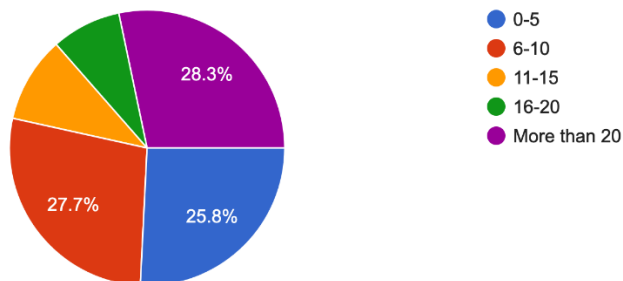
As part of the project "**Do (not) DIGITALIZE Me**", supported by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, a research on how digitalization of different aspects of youth work has impacted work in real life was conducted, and 200 young people and youth workers took part in it.

The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions, divided in four categories:

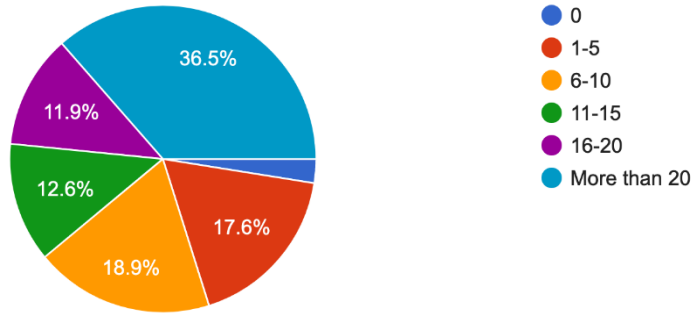
1. General information
2. Usage and challenges
3. Impact
4. Needs and future



### GENERAL INFORMATION



This part showed that most of the people that participated in the questionnaire come from an organization that has **more than 20 members (28.3%)**, followed by organizations that have **6 to 10 members (27.7%)** and **0 to 5 members (25.8%)**, which reflects the diversity of the organizations that participated in the survey.



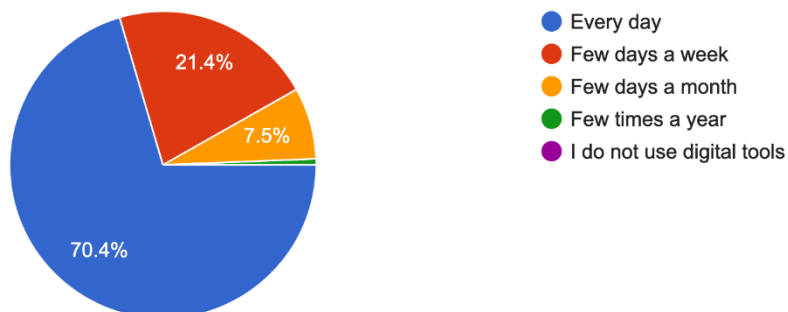
Also, most of the participating organizations have **more than 20 volunteers (36.5%)**, followed by organizations that have **6 to 10 volunteers (18.9%)** and **1 to 5 (17.6%)**.

Participants that took part in the questionnaire came from different countries, and most of them were from Serbia (11.3%), Montenegro (9.4%), Greece (6.9%), France (5.7%), Spain (5%) and Turkey (5%). Other countries that participated are Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Russia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Cyprus, Ukraine, Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Denmark, United Kingdom, Georgia, Norway and Sweden.



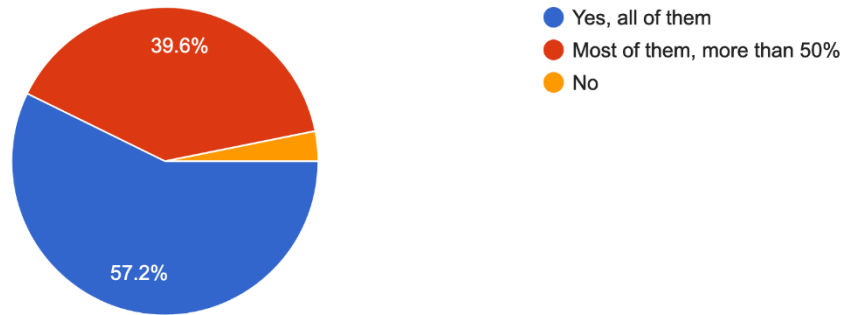
## USAGE AND CHALLENGES

In the Usage and Challenges part of the survey the idea was to see how often and what digital tools do young people and youth workers use in their everyday activities and what are their biggest challenges in using them.

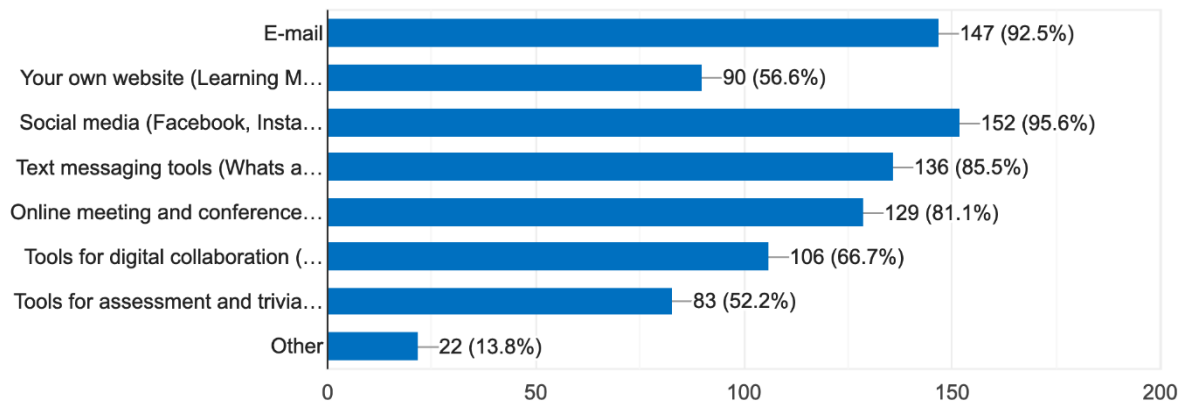


Out of all the participants, **70.4% of them stated that they use digital tools every day in their work, and 21.4% use them a few days a week.** The other responses, which

cover less than 9% all together, include using digital tools a few days a month, a few times a year or not using them at all, which shows that the majority of the participants had to adapt to using digital tools almost every day during the COVID-19 pandemic.

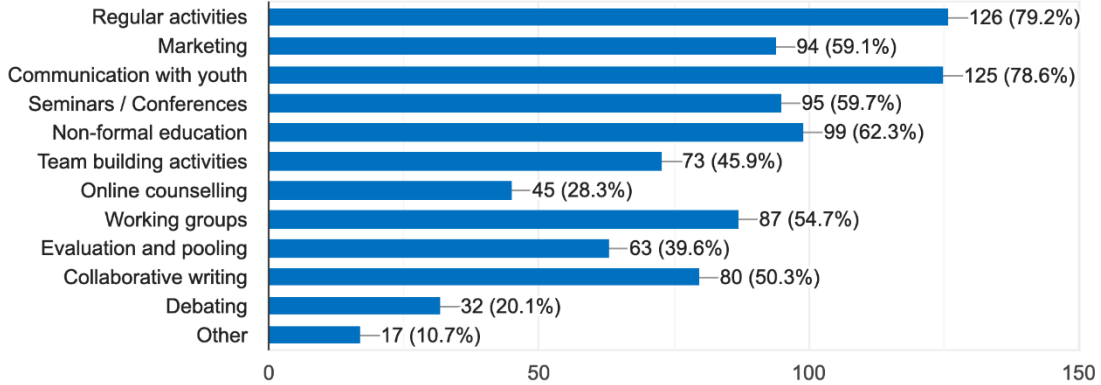


**57.2% of the participants stated that all of their members know how and want to use digital tools, while 39.6% said that most of them, more than 50%, know how and want to use digital tools, showing that there still are people that either do not know how to use digital tools or are refusing to use them, which is something that needs to be dealt with.**

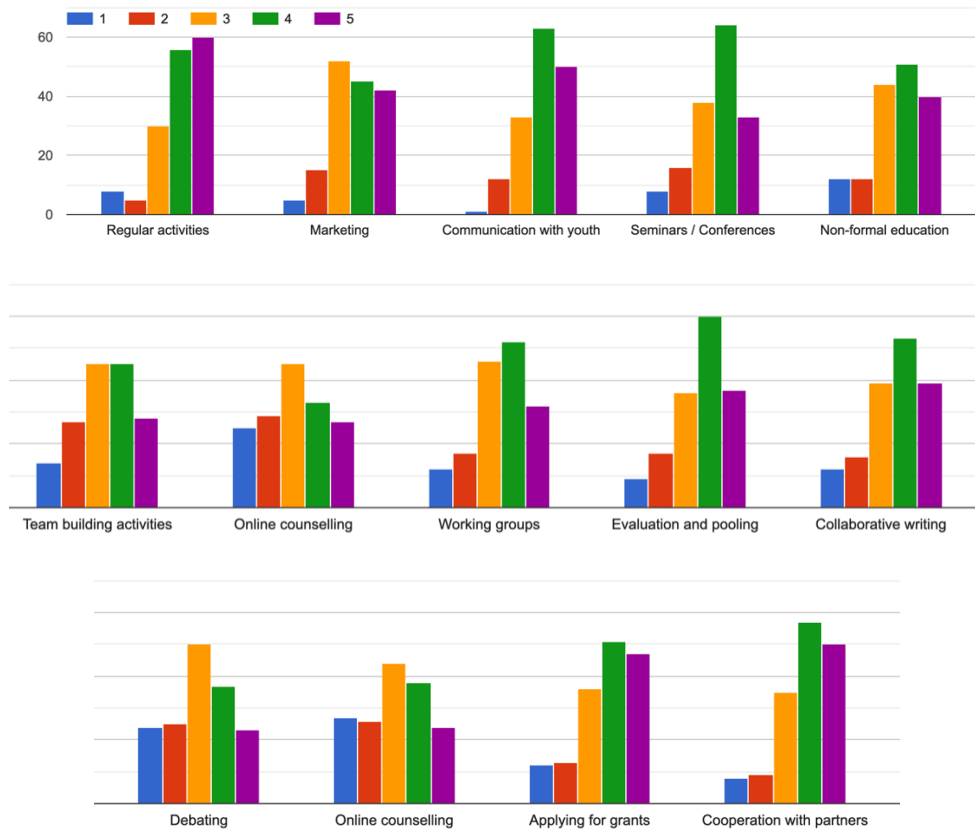


**The most popular digital tools are Social media (95.6%), E-mail (92.5%), Text messaging tools (85.5%) and Online meeting and conferences tools (81.1%).**

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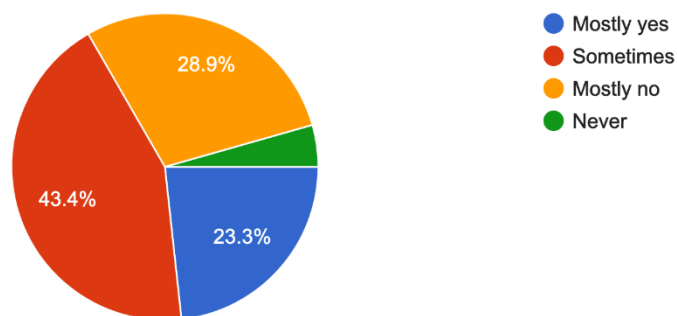


Participants answered that they mostly use digital tools for **regular activities (79.2%) and communication with youth (78.6%)**, and to a lesser extent for non-formal education, marketing, seminars/conferences, working groups and collaborative writing. They least use them for **team building activities (45.9%), evaluation and pooling (39.6%) and online counselling (28.3%)**.

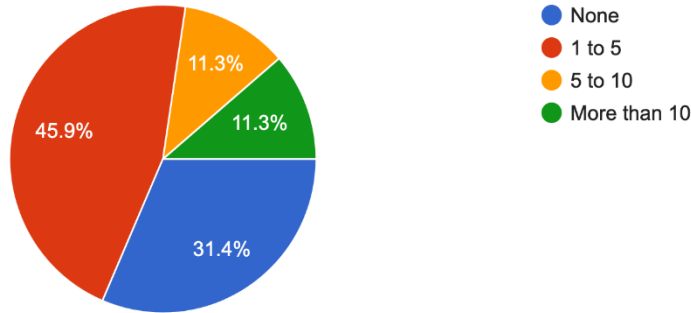


The purpose of the following question was to **assess the capacities of the organizations to use digital tools in different segments**, from 1 to 5, with 1 being None, 2 Low, 3 Medium, 4 Good and 5 Excellent, and the results are as following (taking into account the most frequent answers given to each segment):

- Regular activities - 5
- Marketing - 3
- Communication with youth - 4
- Seminars/Conferences - 4
- Non-formal education - 4
- Team building activities - 3, 4
- Online counselling - 3
- Working groups - 4
- Evaluation and pooling - 4
- Collaborative writing - 4
- Debating - 3
- Online counselling - 3
- Applying for grants - 4
- Cooperation with partners - 4
- Cooperation with local authorities – 4



When asked whether **their current digital skills present a challenge while adapting to new IT trends**, most participants stated **sometimes (43.4%)**, followed by **mostly no (28.9%)** and **mostly yes (23.3%)**.

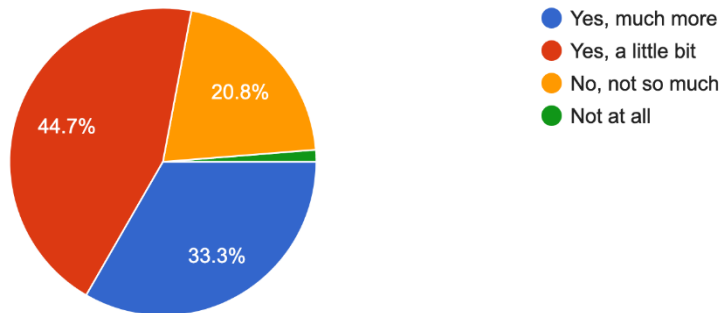


They were also asked how many trainings in digital tools the members of their organization had undertaken in the past few years, and most of them responded **1 to 5 (45.9%), while 31.4% stated none.**



## IMPACT

This part of the questionnaire shows the impact that digitalization had on the number of members, the organization of activities, and on different aspects of work.

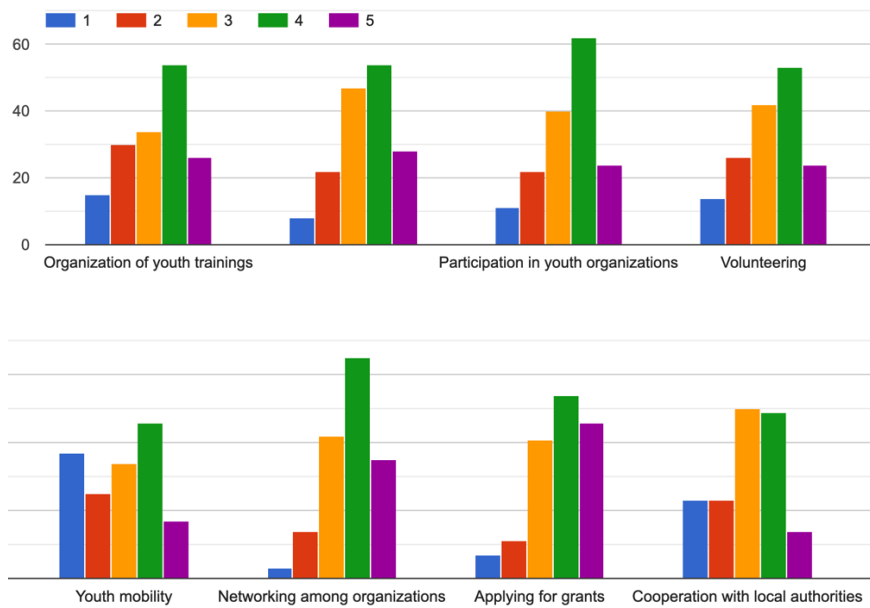


**44.7%** of the participants stated **that they gained just a few more members** by using online tools and learning methods, while **33.3% said that they gained many more members**, a fact that indicates a lot about the usage of digital tools, the accessibility and organization of work while using digital tools.

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When it comes to the influence of using digital tools on in-person activities, **49.7% participants said that more than 50% of their in-person activities were transferred to digital platforms**, for **32.7%** it was less than 50%, and **32.7%** participants stated that **all of their in-person activities were transferred to digital platforms**.



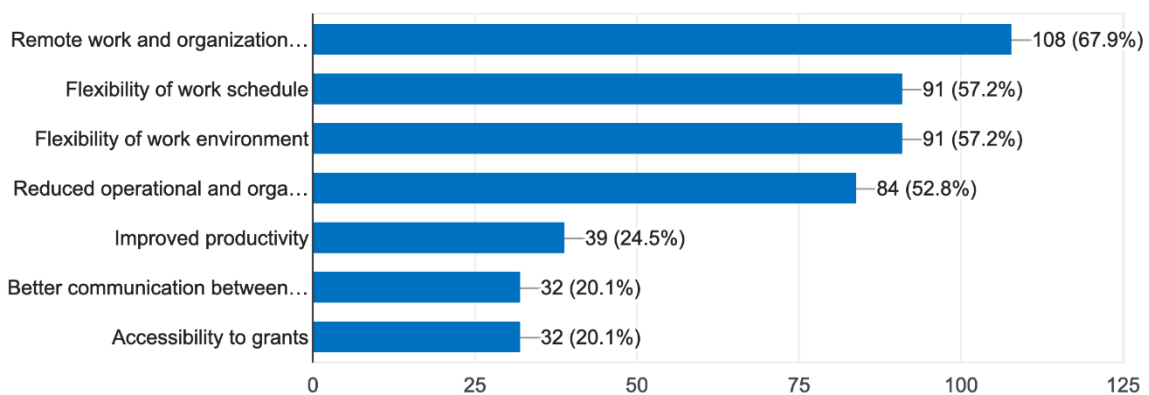
The following question was to **assess how digitalization influenced different aspects of work**, from 1 to 5, with 1 declaring that “It had negative influence”, 2 “It had somehow negative influence”, 3 “It didn't have any influence on this segment of work”, 4 “It partly positively influenced our work”, 5 “It had strong positive impact on this aspect of work”, and the results are as following (taking into account the most frequent answers given to each segment):

- Organization of youth trainings - 4



- Participation in decision making processes - 4
- Participation in youth organizations - 4
- Volunteering - 4
- Youth mobility - 4
- Networking among organizations - 4
- Applying for grants - 4
- Cooperation with local authorities - 3
- Cooperation with sponsors - 4

This shows that digitalization had partly positive influence on almost all aspects of youth organizations work.

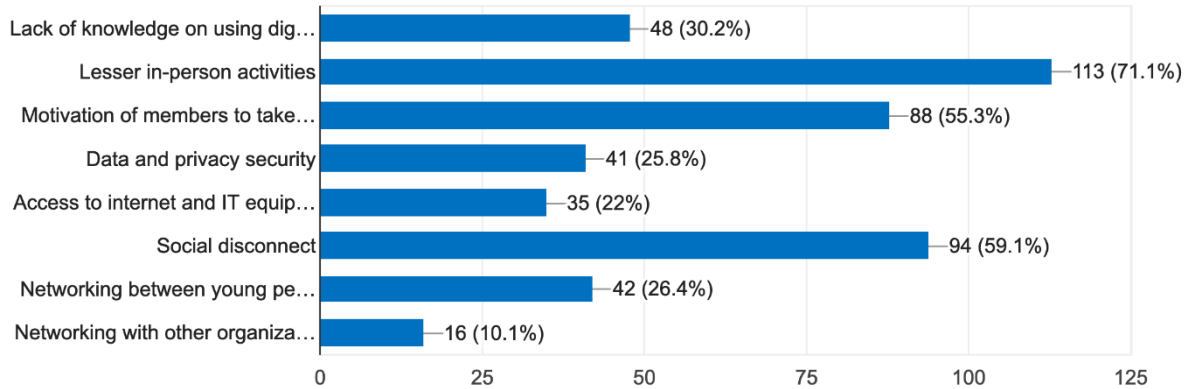


When asked what would be the main **advantage in using digital tools in their current work**, most of the participants stated:

1. Remote work and organization of activities – 67.9%
2. Flexibility of work schedule – 57.2%
3. Flexibility of work environment – 57.2%
4. Reduced operational and organizational costs – 52.8%

while the questions with the least answers were: improved productivity (24.5%), better communication between members (20.1%) and accessibility to grants (20.1%).

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On the other hand, as the main **disadvantages in using digital tools in their work**, most of the participants stated:

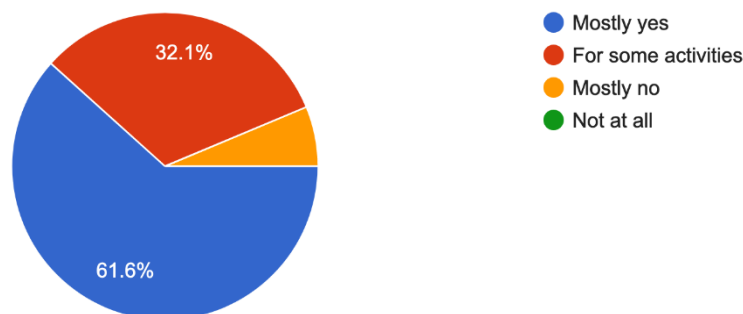
1. Lesser in-person activities – 71.1%
2. Social disconnect – 59.1%
3. Motivation of members to take part in digital activities – 55.3%
4. Lack of knowledge on using digital tools – 30.2%

Other disadvantages are: networking between young people (26.4%), data and privacy security (25.8%), access to internet and IT equipment (22%) and networking with other organizations (10.1%).

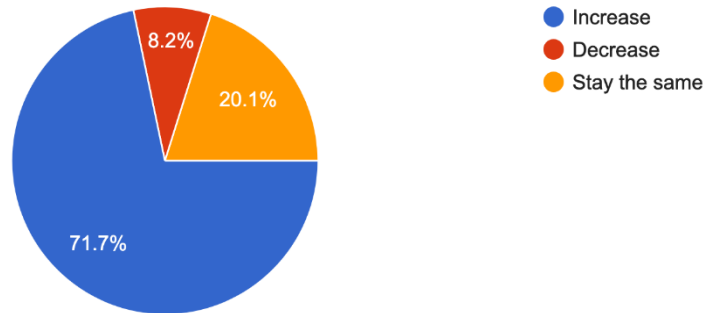


## NEEDS AND FUTURE

The last part of the survey shows the organizations' willingness and readiness to use digital tools in the future.



**61.6% of the participants said that they will mostly use digital tools in the future, while 32.1% said that they will use them for some activities.**



**71.7% participants believe that the use of digital tools in youth work will increase in the future**, and when asked in which digital area(s) would they like to develop their own skills and knowledge, the answers are as follows:

1. Using digital tools in non-formal education – 57.2%
2. Creativity in using digital tools – 57.2%
3. Following IT trends – 47.2%
4. Social impact of digital tools – 45.3%
5. Understanding the technology – 29.6%

## RESULTS OF FOCUS GROUPS

As part of the Do (not) digitalize me project, 5 focus groups were held in 5 different countries: **Ukraine, Greece, France, Germany and Serbia.**

The main goal was to define the positive and negative sides of digitalization and work from home in youth organizations, caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. Each focus group was attended by several representatives from different youth organizations, sharing their experience in the following 8 aspects: ***organization of training for young people, participation in the decision-making process, participation in youth organizations, volunteering, networking among organizations, applying for grants, cooperation with local authorities and cooperation with sponsors.***



At the end of each focus group, a common conclusion and recommendations were made on how to improve the process of digitalization and the online work in youth organization in the future.



The focus group from **Ukraine** consisted of 10 participants aged 25-30 years, of which 8 were women and 2 men. As some of the biggest **disadvantages**, they pointed out the impossibility of ***participating in wider events and bad internet connection.*** The biggest **advantages** were ***increased responsibility, greater interactivity and an easier process of organizing the event.*** Regarding the organization of training for young people, the focus group from Ukraine believes that digital registration has facilitated the gathering of young people and the processing of their data. On the other hand, it was impossible to organize conferences between Ukraine and the Antarctic Station. Likewise, it ***was difficult to hold the attention of the youth throughout the whole event.*** With the help of various digital tools, the decision-making process for young people was more attractive and increased their sense of responsibility. From the aspect of youth participation in youth mobility projects, it was difficult to engage young people to participate in this type of project because they felt that the cultural component of the exchange was being lost. Regarding the process of networking among organizations,

the focus group from Ukraine believes that **digitalization has facilitated networking and made it easier to organize joint events and projects**. With regard to grant applications, they believe that the application process itself has been facilitated for organizations from rural areas. The focus group from Ukraine did not express any concrete opinion on participation in youth organizations, volunteering, cooperation with local authorities and cooperation with sponsors.



Next in line was a focus group from **France**. The focus group was held online because at that time France was in its third lockdown. Due to the fact that the focus group was held online, representatives of youth organizations from all over France were able to participate. The focus group included 10 people, of which 6 were women and 4 were men. The average age of the participants was 30 years. As the **biggest advantages** of digitalization in the work of youth organizations, they pointed out **easier communication, reduction of geographical exclusion and faster access to information**. As the biggest **disadvantages**, they pointed out **the time needed to master the use of digital tools, the lack of social contact, the adjustment of materials and budget for the same**. As for the implementation of trainings for young people, they think that it was harder to find participants and keep their focus throughout the event. On the other hand, they point out that some important **advantages are the global influence and expansion of training for young people and the possibility of participation of young people from all over the world**. From the aspect of participating in the decision-making process, some of the participants pointed out that they managed to hold the annual meeting online during the lockdown, while others felt that this was not possible. They also feel that during online meetings the focus was more on decision making rather than on trips to the meeting place.

From the perspective of participation in youth organizations, the focus groups from France consider **the lack of social contact and creating connections between people as the main disadvantages**. On the other hand, some of the organizations managed to find solutions such as online volunteering, where volunteers were enabled to participate in the daily activities of youth organizations. They also find that working

from home can be beneficial for people with fewer opportunities. As far as volunteering is concerned, *it was easier to follow the work of volunteers and many volunteers were attracted through digital tools*. In terms of youth mobility, focus groups from France consider the biggest disadvantages were *harder concentration of young people during online events, the loss of motivation to participate in the project due to the inability to travel and believe that young people should not spend so much time in front of a computer*. As for networking between organizations, they believe that many organizations do not have updated data online and that there is a possibility of choosing the wrong organization due to excessive description on the platform. With regard to grant applications, they point out that in France such applications have been conducted online for a long time. Much of the administrative work can be done online, and institutions in France are increasingly open to online projects. Accordingly, cooperation with local authorities is transparent, communication is possible online and in general the process itself is much faster.



The focus group from **Greece** was attended by 9 people, of which 5 were women and 4 were men. The average age of the participants was 25 years. The focus group was held live where each of the participants expressed their opinion on digitalization and the work of the organization from this point of view. The **biggest advantages** were *easier promotion of organizations, unnecessary time spent on travel, quick problem solving and quick access to information, introduction to new digital tools, easier communication between organizations from different countries, lower cost of implementing ideas and the like*. The **biggest disadvantages** were *the lack of interaction and social contact, mental exhaustion due to spending a lot of time in front of a computer, inability to perform some activities online, lack of technical knowledge when using digital tools, and some of them said they despised online activities*. As for the implementation of youth trainings, the focus group from Greece believes that they are not so effective when organized online, as there are too many opportunities for online training, while the lack of social contact is also effecting the quality, but they also believe that access to training is easier no matter where you are physically. In terms of participation in the decision-making process, they believe that

team spirit is lost and there is a possibility that participants "drop out" during the discussion. The biggest advantages were that many more participants can take a part in meeting/online training and the unnecessary waste of time going to a meeting in another city or country. Regarding participation in youth organizations, the main disadvantages are spending a lot of time in front of the screen and the lack of social contact. The advantages are easy access to participation and easier networking with other organizations. From the aspect of volunteering, they believe that there is **a lack of motivation and that there are problems in organizing activities for the volunteers, although there is a desire and will for the same**. From the point of view of youth mobility, focus groups from Greece believe that it is impossible to keep it online and that the percentage of stagnation has increased.

From the aspect of networking among organizations, they believe that the main advantages include fast access to digital platforms regardless of the location of the organization and flexibility in terms of time. Regarding grant applications, the main shortcomings are the reduced budget due to the COVID-19 epidemic and the difficulty of applying for tenders due to lack of activity. The main advantages are easier applications due to less bureaucracy. In terms of cooperation with local authorities, the main advantage is easier cooperation due to less bureaucracy, and the biggest disadvantages are ignorance of the use of digital tools and a more difficult approach. On the other hand, regarding the cooperation with sponsors, they cite the reduction of the budget as shortcomings and point out that they themselves are facing financial crises and give up sponsoring non-profit organizations.



The focus group from **Germany** was attended by 8 representatives of youth organizations, of which 4 women and 4 men. The average age of the participants was 23,3 years. The focus group was held live where each of the representatives shared their experiences of the work of the youth association online. The **main advantages** are **cost reduction through reduction of administration and travel costs and decentralized decision-making**. The main **shortcomings** are **the unequal technical infrastructure (internet and mobile network) in Germany and the non-digitalized administration at all**

**levels in the local government.** In terms of the implementation of youth trainings, the main advantage is, as already mentioned, the reduction of costs in the form of administration and travel costs. Furthermore, a quick exchange of ideas and better preservation of documents are also considered as the biggest advantages. The main drawback is the lack of social contacts. Regarding the decision-making process, the main advantages were related to the quick and easy decision-making processes through various surveys and questionnaires, as well as the participation of people in meetings that are geographically more distant. They do not mention any disadvantages in this aspect. Regarding participation in youth organizations, the focus group presented different data, depending on the activity carried out by the participants within the organization. The biggest drawback is ***the lack of social contact, the exchange of experiences with young people from other organizations and the smaller number of participants.*** The main advantage is the benefit of marketing and providing information to the general public. From the aspect of volunteering, the focus groups from Germany pointed out that their associates have stated that digitalization opens new opportunities for volunteering. Namely, in their case, multiple volunteers could work in multiple organizations at the same time, and their tasks were coordinated through digital tools such as Teams, Slack, and Trello.

As for youth mobility, they point out **that most participants do not see a future in which online activities replace live activities.** It was particularly difficult to handle the team building activities as some participants stated that they did not have enough resources to share. Regarding networking among organizations, participants stated that digitalization brings the most benefits in this work process. Reducing costs, reducing travel costs, reducing errors due to misunderstandings are cited as the main benefits. From the aspect of applying for a grant, everything is more or less online in Germany. Applications can be submitted via e-mail or via a digital tool. However, when it comes to applying through an online application, a copy of all documents with a physical signature must always be sent which diminishes all the positive aspects of a digital application. Regarding cooperation with local authorities, the focus group from Germany points out that most local authorities are not "digitalized". Furthermore, many institutions are skeptical about video calls or video meetings. As for working with sponsors, they



point out that many companies still aspire to live events because they believe that banner promotion achieves a greater advertising effect. On the other hand, members of the focus group pointed out that there are more opportunities through online sponsorship and that the reach of the audience can be more easily tracked through links and statistics. The focus group from Germany believes that all participants at the local level, especially the government, should be digitalized in the future. They also believe that in the future, the number of views and clicks should be a measure of the success of the activity, not the number of volunteers and visitors to the event. The organizations from Germany are big proponents of volunteering and they believe that additional volunteering programs and ways to attract new members should be developed in this area.



The focus group from **Serbia** was attended by 13 participants, of which 6 women and 7 men, aged 25-35 years. **They believe that digital tools should be used to organize events but not for the event itself.** They also believe that **youth organizations are late with digitalization for at least 5 to 10 years.** As for the implementation of youth trainings, they believe that more people have the opportunity to participate, but that this type of event requires live interaction. In terms of participation in decision-making processes, they consider that this is simpler but not more effective because there is no debate or additional exchange of information. Regarding youth mobility, they pointed out that with the onset of the epidemic, it has become more difficult to engage young people in youth mobility projects. Young people do not want to take part in virtual exchanges because they lack the cultural component that turns virtual mobility into another online training. Networking between organizations is said to be very good, and when it comes to grant applications, people who have never implemented online trainings have pointed out, they are now making decisions to improve in this topic. For EYF, they state that they are interactive and that they have a good platform, and as for ERASMUS+, they pointed out that there is no possibility for feedback. The focus group from Serbia did not express their opinion on volunteering and cooperation with local bodies and sponsors.



## CONCLUSION



With the arrival of the COVID-19 epidemic, many activities of youth organizations were abruptly interrupted. **Unfortunately, many organizations were not ready to digitalize their activities due to the lack of digital tools (lack of budget) but also due to lack of knowledge of their use.** According to the focus groups, most members did well in the application of digital tools, but they certainly think that live events are much better. The digital tools most of them used were **Zoom, Teams, Google meet, Email, Google spreadsheets, LinkedIn, Doodle and the like.**

According to the results of the focus groups, it can be concluded that the participants of the focus group from France have the best relationship with local authorities as these authorities carried out a lot in digital form even before COVID-19. The focus groups from Serbia and Ukraine did not express their views on co-operation with local authorities, while the focus group from Germany stated that there was a digitalization of the application system but that copies of documents still needed to be provided, which diminishes the positive aspects of digital applications.

On the other hand, the focus group from Greece is of the opinion that the mobility of young people during the COVID-19 epidemic does not exist and that the percentage of stagnation has increased.



Taken as a whole, for all 5 focus groups it was concluded that the biggest **disadvantages** of digitalization of youth work are ***reduced social contact (highlighted as the biggest shortcoming), inability to maintain some activities, difficulty retaining the attention of young participants during meetings / training, loss of the cultural component of the exchange, insufficiently developed technical-technological infrastructure, lack of budget for digitalization of the system and mental exhaustion due to spending a lot of time in front of the computer.***

The biggest **advantages** of digitalization of the work of youth organizations are ***the participation of all persons regardless of geographical area, reduction of***

*administration and travel costs, fast and efficient decision-making, quick access to information.*



In the area of networking among organizations and the decision-making process, *the introduction of digitalization has proven to be a good decision mainly due to the speed of information exchange and access to young people from different parts of the country.* In the field of participation in youth organizations, volunteering and youth mobility, the introduction of digitalization is not presented as a good solution mainly due to the loss of social contact with other participants, loss of cultural component of exchange and reduction of activities. The biggest problem with applying for a grant is the budgeting and lack of activity. Regarding the recommendations for the future regarding digitalization, the general conclusion is that **digital tools should be available to everyone, but also the knowledge and skills to use them.** Participants of focus groups also believe that in the future, local and national authorities should focus more on the digitalization of their own systems to make the application process as simple as possible.