



The impact on Covid 19 on young people in and outside education. Drivers and barriers to keep connected with youngsters.

Foundation P&V – Rue Royale 151 – 1210 Brussels

15/02/2023

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to one of the most abrupt interruptions of education in recent history. From March 2020, lockdowns were put in place in most European countries and schools were closed. In the school year 2020-2021 many countries set up hybrid education models, with part-time remote education, part-time face-to-face education. Schools and teachers did their utmost best to organise distance learning while they were venturing into unknown and difficult territory.

Research shows that school systems were not very well prepared for distance learning. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all aspects of young people's lives in an unprecedented way. The overall result was that young people who were living in a vulnerable situation were affected most. In many countries schools struggled to stay in contact with all pupils and stories circulated about pupils who went off the radar. Practical problems such as the availability of a quiet place to study, access to a computer or another device, and access to a stable (broadband) Internet connection, implied that material deprivation could have a much stronger effect on educational outcomes than before and is likely to have exacerbated existing inequalities.

The pandemic was also found to have a negative impact on other areas of young people's lives as well as mental well-being. Although much is already known on the subject, the systematic pooling of research on the impact of COVID-19 remains relevant. Indeed, the impact may be felt for a long time on various life domains of youngsters.

The COVID-19-pandemic, however, has also entailed some new opportunities. The digital transformation, for example, got strongly boosted. What in normal times would have taken years, was now accomplished in a short period of time, and by now there seems to be a clear sense of urgency among governments for further improvements in this context. Teachers, school staff, social

organisations, ... showed high levels of creativity to stay in contact with youngsters and limit learning losses. A lot of materials for remote learning has been developed.

Foundation P&V and the digital divide

The P&V Insurance Group, which originated from the cooperative movement, established the P&V Foundation in 2000 and is its main sponsor. The Foundation operates in total independence and its mission is to fight the social exclusion of young people. The actions and operations of the Foundation P&V are based around 4 principles, inspired by values associated with the social economy: solidarity, empowerment, citizenship and participation. The P&V Foundation was recognised as a foundation for public utility in 2005.

At the beginning of the pandemic, a budget of one million euros was made available to the Foundation P&V by the P&V Group to reduce the digital divide for the most vulnerable youth. With two calls for projects, 65 social organisations received support throughout Belgium. The call for projects “Linking Youth Up” (LYU), in coordination with the King Baudouin Foundation, aimed at giving 1300 socially vulnerable young people a new computer and guidance to strengthen their digital skills via social organisations. With the call for projects “Guiding Youth” (GY) the Foundation P&V supported 20 good practices in the field of school and out-of-school guidance of socially vulnerable youth and/or in their transition to the labour market, during and after the corona crisis.



The Foundation P&V is also one of the partners of the Erasmus+-project KEEP (Key Engaging Practices Practices used by secondary school teachers to keep connected with their students following the COVID-19 pandemic). The aim is to share the good practices implemented by secondary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to maintain contact with young people and combat the risk of dropping out of school. The P&V Foundation was in charge of the Situational Review with the aim of providing an overview of the evolution and challenges of the educational policy and systems in the four partner countries, in order to identify the factors and obstacles to effective distance learning for all. The final conference will take place in Paris on 25-26 May 2023.

Event 15 February 2023

What can we learn from the (long-term) experiences in different countries and how can we align short-term emergency responses with investments into long-term (educational) objectives, so that we can take full advantage of the opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic and learn from them?

On 15 February, we want to give the floor to a number of people from different fields about the (longer-term) impact of Covid-19 on young people (in Belgium). What conclusions can be drawn from the different strategies adopted by schools, teachers, social organisations, policy makers, ? What is still needed to bridge the digital divide? What challenges do we face?

Programme

- 9u** Welcome
- 9u30-9u50u** Introduction European project KEEP + national project LYU by Foundation P&V
- 9u50u-10u** Intermezzo
- 10u-10u20** Kristof De Witte, professor KU Leuven & Maastricht University
The uphill battle: The amplifying effects of negative trends in test scores, COVID-19 school closures and teacher shortages
- 10u20-10u30** Intermezzo
- 10u30-10u50** Ibrahim Ouassari, founder and CEO MolenGeek
- 11u-12u30** Workshops (1 FR en 1 NL): Digital practices, connecting with young people and reducing (school) dropouts during and after the corona pandemic
A teacher who participated in KEEP and an organisation that was a laureate of LYU or GY interact with policy, young people and the public.
- 12u30-13u30** Lunch
- 13u30-14u** Recommendations & concluding words: Margaux Pyls, doctoral researcher VUB, en presidents Foundation P&V, Olivier Servais en Jessy Siongers

Speakers

Kristof De Witte is a full professor in Education Economics and Political Economy at the Faculty of Economics and Business at KU Leuven, and he holds the chair in 'Effectiveness and Efficiency of Educational Innovations' at United Nations University (UNU-MERIT) at Maastricht University. The research interests of Kristof De Witte comprise education economics, performance evaluation, school dropout, and political economy. He conducted several studies on the impact of the corona crisis on education and young people. Kristof De Witte shows a deep commitment to public dissemination of his research. To increase societal impact, he is actively disseminating his research output to field journals, policy journals and media. According to IDEAS (last 10 years publications ranking), he is ranked among the top 5% economists world-wide. He served as an expert in the 'European Commission Expert Group on quality investment in education and training'. De Witte is the recipient of numerous awards and honours. In 2013 he was one of the laureates of the Foundation P&V Prize for 'Research on Integration of Young People Excluded by Early School Leaving and Unemployment'.

Ibrahim Ouassari is the founder and CEO of MolenGeek. After an atypical, self-taught career in technology, Ibrahim profiled himself as a consultant and then an entrepreneur in IT since 1999. It was this experience that prompted him to launch MolenGeek with Julie Foulon in 2015. MolenGeek originated as a social project but has since grown into a breeding ground for start-ups, a co-working space and, above all, a training centre that makes new digital technologies and entrepreneurship accessible to school leavers and those without a formal education. From the start, MolenGeek has broken the codes of traditional education and stood out for its pedagogy that promotes mutual aid, collective intelligence, autonomy and practice. Ibrahim's approach is catching on. Major international companies such as Salesforce, Samsung, Google, Amazon, Facebook... are joining in, and the concept is being rolled out in other places. MolenGeek now has branches in Belgium in Molenbeek, Laken, Antwerp and Charleroi, and abroad in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Padua and Casablanca. MolenGeek was one of the laureates of the P&V Foundation's Linking Youth Up call for project. Through providing devices, training to teachers and support to young people, they wanted to use this project and their pedagogy to smoothen the transition to online and/or digital learning.

Margaux Pyls has graduated in Educational Sciences at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) and works as a doctoral researcher at the VUB. She is also active as a youth activist at Plan International Belgium. At the request of Minister for Development Cooperation Meryame Kitir, she spoke on behalf of Belgian youth at UNICEF's Global Forum for Children and Youth. In 2021 Margaux was one of the students helping the P&V Foundation in the project Linking Youth Up to tackle the digital divide, for the course 'Case Studies Change and Innovation' for the second-year master's students in Educational Sciences at VUB.

National conference – projects LYU, GY and KEEP 2023