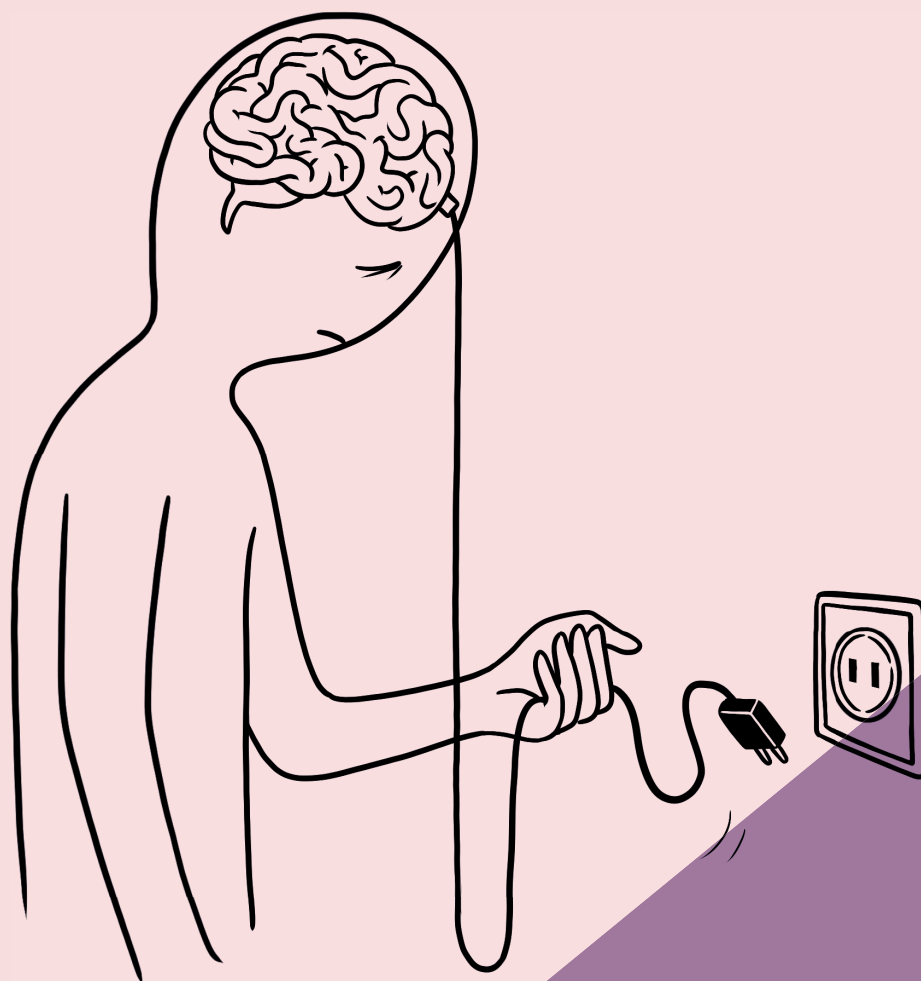
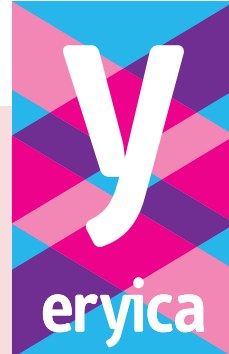


**Youth info #mindmymind**

DISCOVER YOUR INNER SELF. SPEAK UP.



# European Youth Information Day 2021

Campaign & survey report

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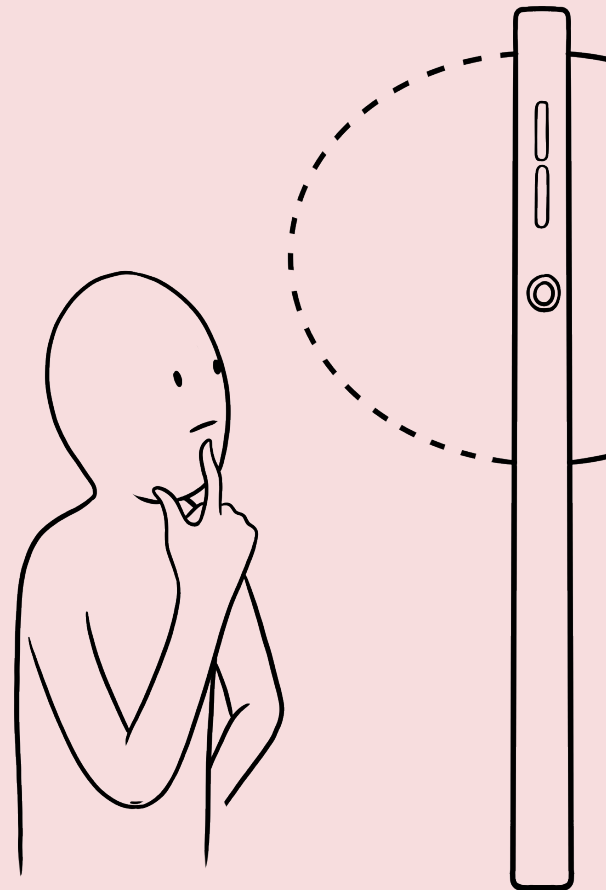
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# What is the European Youth Information Day?

On 17th April, ERYICA and its members all over Europe celebrate the European Youth Information Day and ERYICA's birthday.

The European Youth Information Day is a special occasion to raise awareness about the **right of young people to access complete, youth-friendly and reliable information**, and recognise the work of youth information services.



## The European Youth Information Day 2021

2020 was a year full of challenges.

The entire world was forced to adapt to a new reality in which online gatherings, face masks and social distancing became the new normal. Workspaces switched from face-to-face to teleworking, schools started a digital transformation, and travel appeared to be the last priority on our list.

Significant changes took place at a frantic pace. Fast changes that didn't leave room for adaptation; room to be conscious about the situation and the related consequences. This led to a climate of fear and uncertainty.

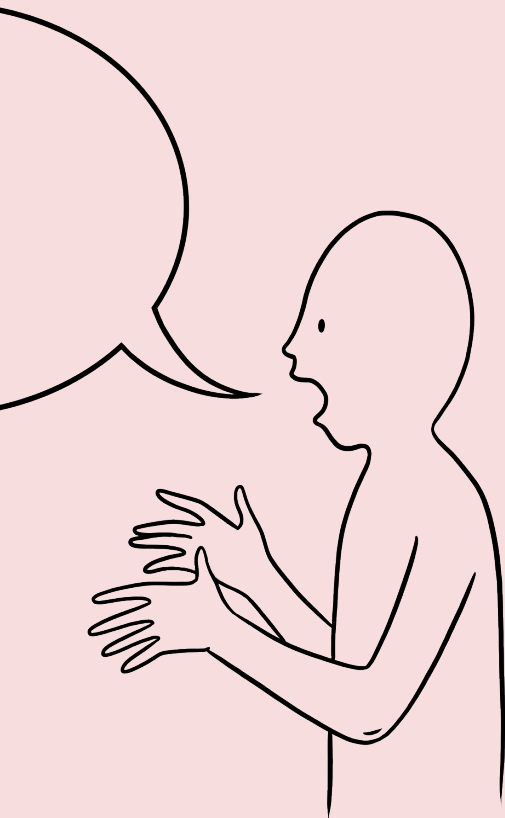
“

*The general situation in the countries and their localities has affected the daily life of young people: 46% of them report having less motivation to do activities they usually enjoyed. 36% feel less motivated to do regular chores.*

*Their perception of the future has also been negatively affected, particularly in the case of young women who have and are facing particular difficulties. 43% of the women feel pessimistic about the future compared to 31% of the male participants.*

*A situation that generates deep concern and is a call to national health authorities is that **73% have felt the need to ask for help concerning their physical and mental well-being.** Despite this, 40% did not ask for help.*

The impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of adolescents and youth by Unicef (2020)



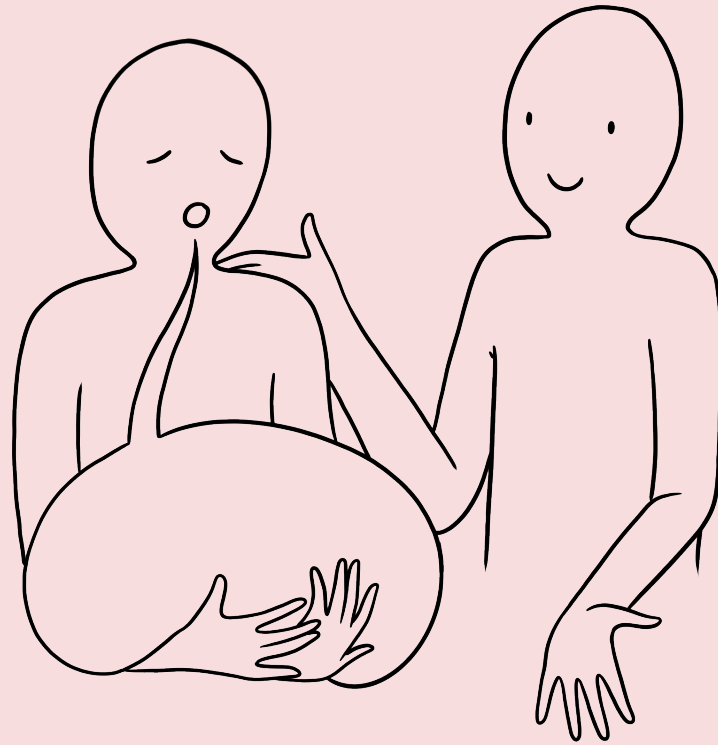
Because of the situation, mental health became less of a taboo and more of a recurrent topic of conversations in the professional and private spheres. However, **there is still a lot to be done!**

Due to this, the EYID 2021 campaign aimed to:

- start a discussion about mental health issues;
- be a speaker to break with the mental health stigma among young people;
- normalise the need of asking for emotional well-being support;
- give a voice to young people to express themselves freely;
- show the professionalism, closeness and experience of youth information workers regarding mental health and well-being support and in providing tools and resources to tackle young people's concerns.

# Youth info #mindmymind

DISCOVER YOUR INNER SELF. SPEAK UP.



This campaign was a joint effort between youth information services and young people. The subtitle was a clear call to action for both:

- **Discover your inner self:** young people must know that it's OK not to feel okay all the time. They should identify the different emotions they have during the day and discover the best way to get the most out of them

- **Speak up:** youth information services should be a safe space for young people to express themselves freely. A platform to make any question and not feel judged. Youth Information workers must be able to address their concerns and requests or advise them on where to ask for professional help.

# Campaign development

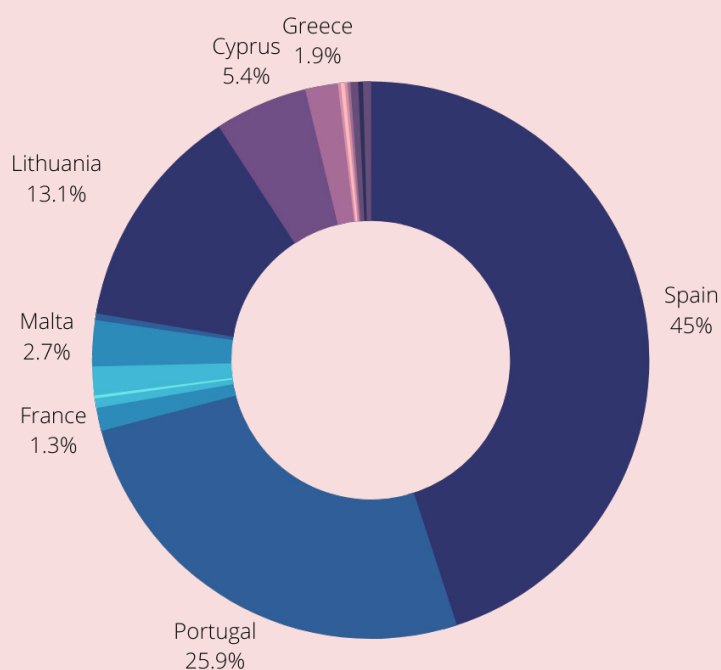
The campaign was developed in two phases. The **first phase**, running from **14 to 31 January 2021**, aimed to know the testimonials and opinions of young people and youth information workers about how the pandemic affected their mental health and emotional well-being. The **second phase** of the campaign ran from **1 to 17 April 2021** and took the form of an awareness raising campaign on the importance of mental health.

## Phase I

**Two different surveys** were distributed for the first phase of the campaign, one aimed at young people and a second one dedicated to youth information workers.

### 1. Young people's survey

The young people's survey included only one open question, and it was translated into 15 European languages. The survey received more than **1,800 responses from young people from 42 countries\*** (23 Europeans and 19 non-Europeans).



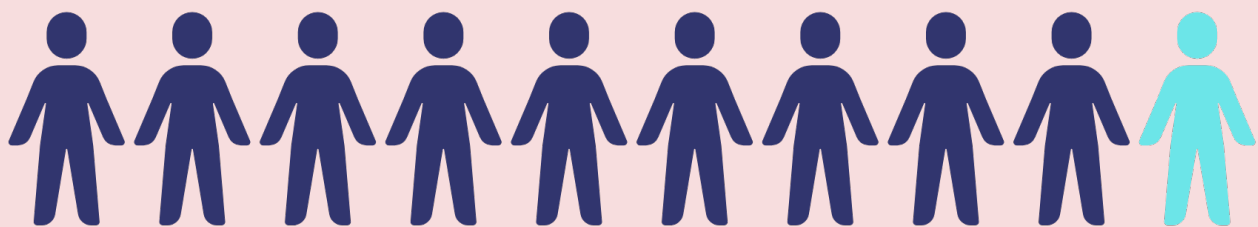
The question asked was the following:

## *How did last year's situation affect your mental health and emotional well-being?*

We decided to go for an open question as we were searching for **honest testimonials** where young people could express freely how they felt and the effects that the pandemic had on them. Therefore, we opted for a **qualitative analysis of the results** that lead us to the following statements:



- 87% of young people said that their situation had worsened
- 3,5% of young people said that their situation had improved
- 5,6% of young people said that their situation had not changed or remained stable
- 3,4% of young people said that their situation had changed slightly
- 2% of young people said that they experienced both negative and positive effects at the same time



**For a significant number of respondents, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on their lives.** Therefore, we analysed these responses by categorising them into two different groups, depending on the reason behind the discomfort and the emotional state caused.



## 1.1 The reason behind the discomfort

### **Difficulties with studies. Cancellation of future plans.**

The pandemic had a devastating effect on me. I was graduating from high school, and all the events and long-awaited moments were gone. (...) Autumn came. University. There is nothing that a freshman should have. What is the university experience when I sit among four walls every day behind a computer monitor and haven't even seen half of my classmates?

It got easier, but at first, it was pretty tough. I missed out on the last few weeks of my degree, and at times it felt like nobody in power actually cared about all the other students that were struggling and me.

My studies are at a standstill because I can't do my internship, and even the professors don't know how we can develop the course properly.

I have no university life, which, as they say, is one of the best stages of life. My Erasmus has been cancelled. I was looking forward to it for years.

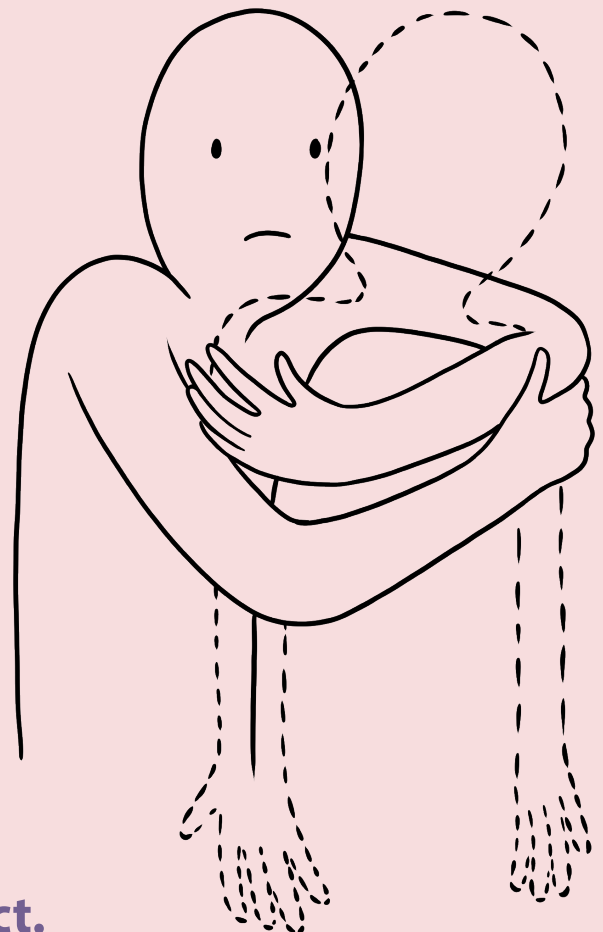
It has left me with no desire to go out and quite depressed. I had the feeling that when classes started, I would have more encouragement, but it hasn't been like that.

I feel the need to socialise and meet people, but I can't, which causes me a lot of anxiety. Being locked up and not being able to see the people I love, or even if I can see them, I can't hug them, has significantly worsened my mental and psychological well-being.

The situation provoked a lot of withdrawal, boredom, isolation and arguments. Currently living abroad, I often couldn't see my family or my partner.

I spent a year not seeing relatives who live outside of my town.

I study and work (at home) and I don't socialise with almost anyone my age. Not socialising, not being able to do anything and being in a state of alertness all the time causes me moments of low mood.



**Difficulties because of social isolation. Lack of human contact.**

## Difficulties because of lockdown. Lack of mobility.

Very badly, my relationship with my partner has suffered as we can hardly see each other or have sex. I have lost many friends. And I find myself closed at home and overwhelmed. I don't know when I will be able to have an everyday life either.

Not being able to leave the house is something that does not seem very harmful at first, but in the long run, it is a very stressful situation.

Due to the lockdown, I could not practice my favourite sport, a fundamental part of my life and essential to keep up my good mood.

Negatively, I had many problems of insecurity, self-esteem, more sadness... I consider that always talking about the same topic and not being able to meet friends and family is detrimental. Besides, not being able to think about positive things such as "I will meet this friend" or "I will go to visit this place" is not having any future projection, therefore, little motivation to move forward...

## 1.2 Emotional state caused

### Demotivation

I used to be a cheerful person. I was motivated by the day to day. Now I am very dull, and I don't feel like doing anything. I let the days go by.

I feel stuck, unable to move forward in my life. Every day is the same.

I just feel like going to sleep and not waking up for a while.

I have felt hopelessness and sadness, some apathy and disinterest.

I've lost the desire to do what I like, to practice the sport I like, and what's more, I've felt that I'm more lonely than I thought.

I've gone from wanting to do everything, from doing a thousand things and always having plans, to not wanting to do anything, to always being discouraged and having a lot of difficulty in making the most of the time and doing things.

As a result, my self-esteem is very low, I don't look good anymore, I dress without really liking it. In short, I'm exhausted and stressed about the future.

## Anxiety/ stress

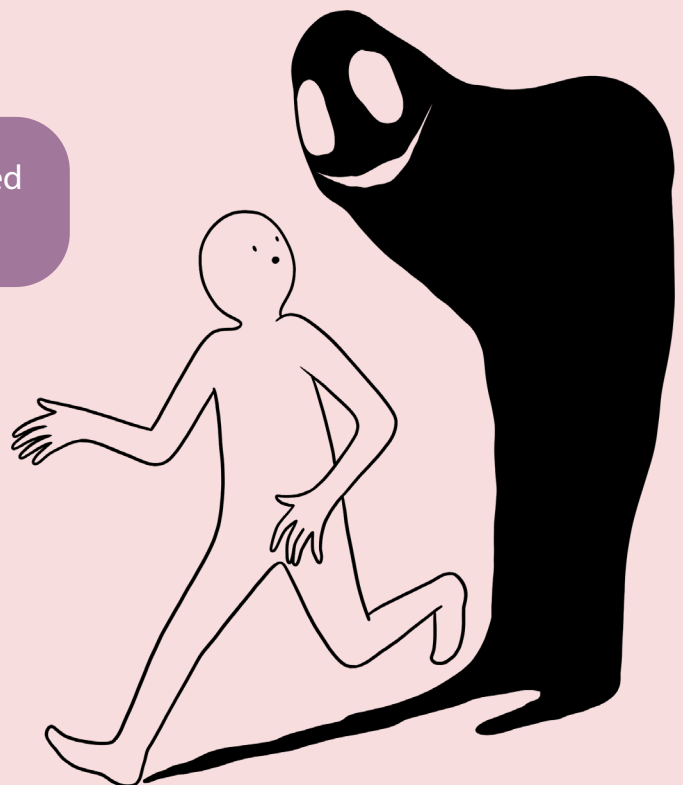
Now, at the slightest unexpected change in anything I'm involved in, I get very anxious.

I developed anxiety before the confinement and, during it, became more acute.

I have started to have anxiety, anguish and general discomfort. I become obsessed with issues, and I think a lot about the future as a society and the planet's future. I fear what will happen when it will end and if something similar will happen again. I think the world is over, and I find it hard to sleep.

Anxiety increased sharply as I lost my job at the very beginning of the quarantine.

I live with anxiety. It has never happened to me before.

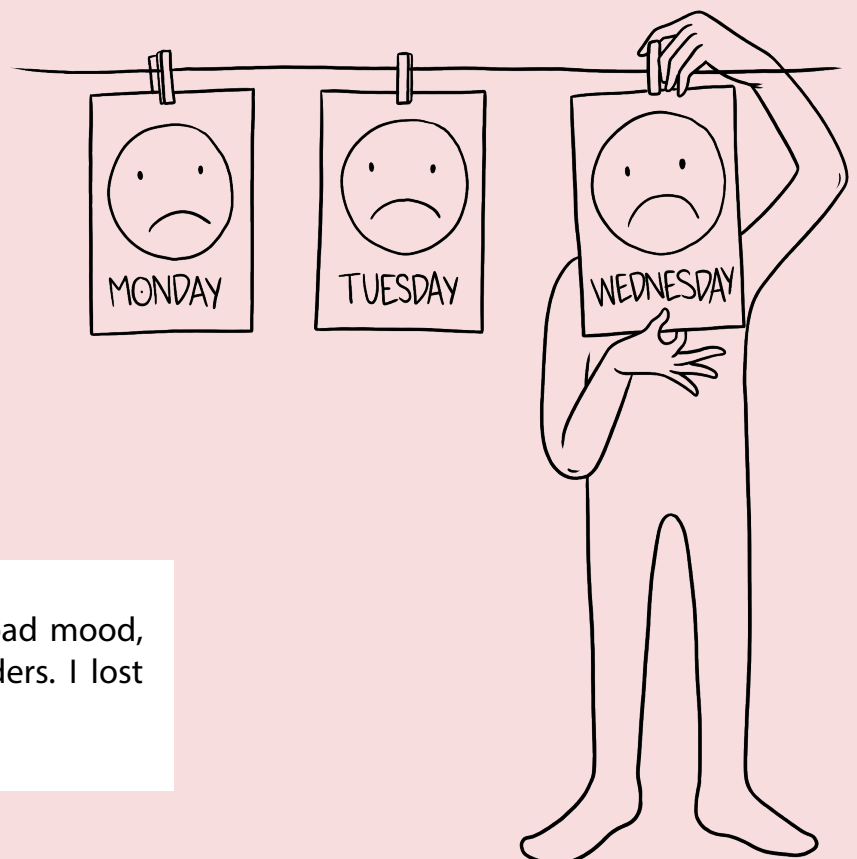


## Depression

I still feel lonely. The stress has turned into depression. Sometimes I think about wanting not to exist in this dimension

Standing still or doing nothing made me feel depressed in confinement. I felt trapped

Right now, I am seeing a psychologist and taking anti-anxiety medication. She has detected depression. I have a lot of uncertainty and insecurity, and I don't know how this will end.



I felt signs of depression, a bad mood, lack of strength, sleep disorders. I lost the desire to communicate.

## Emotional instability

Every day has been a rollercoaster with different emotions, and I was unable to control them.

My sleep schedule was completely changed. I slept during the day and not at night. I had mood swings and increased alcohol consumption.

A lot, I have become more bipolar AND weaker, among others. My emotions run high. I haven't had an in-between level. I'm either very sad or very happy.

I feel very unstable, insecure and vulnerable. It has made me question the meaning of all my actions and way of life: housing, consumption, the usefulness of my professional career.

Very strongly, I have had many ups and downs, and currently, I feel very lost. It has affected me at work, my relationship with my partner, self-esteem, life process, etc. I feel like I have one wing that wants to fly strong and the other broken. I also feel somewhat broken inside.

## Insecurity/ Uncertainty

I simply lived in denial of the situation for a few months, followed by a period of self-pity and quite anxious thoughts about the present and the future.

I have anxiety about the future. How will we get through this crisis? Who will pay the debt? We, the young people of today?

As my physical condition worsened, so did my mental disorder, creating a lot of insecurities.

## Sadness/ melancholy

I feel sad, empty inside. I can't make sense of anything that happens around me.

It has caused me a lot of sadness, resentment, pain, anguish, loneliness.

I cried for everything and for nothing, I didn't feel like anything.



Finally, there is a group of youngsters that, due to the intensity of the emotions they have gone through, deserve special attention. These young people represent a **risk group** who didn't always have the chance to count on professional help. We grouped them into different groups:

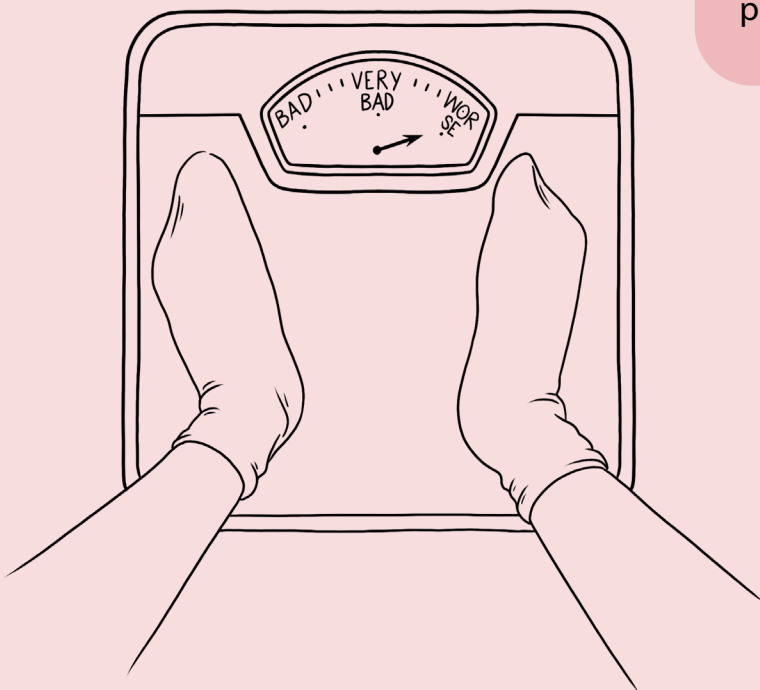
## Youth who has somatised their psychological distress

I developed anorexia

Binge eating, feelings of guilt and obviously weight gain, therefore lower self-esteem.

Since March, I have been suffering from chest pains and have no hope of regaining my former health. In addition to the somatisation of various illnesses, my coeliac condition has come to light, which adds to the daily stress.

Sleepless nights, addiction to mobile phones and checking the virus data.



Suddenly, I stopped eating.

## A disorder or problem they were suffering has aggravated

For months I could do nothing but cry, I ate much less, and I was always tired no matter how much I slept. This no longer happens to me, but I am still experiencing a mental block that prevents me from doing activities that I used to do or liked to do and now just imagining it makes a mountain out of a molehill. Insecurities that I used to have and that I had worked on have reappeared.

I have suffered from an anxiety disorder and social phobia for years. Before the lockdown, I had improved a lot and was starting to socialise. The lockdown itself did not cause me any problems, but it was distressing to think about going out and interacting with other people.

I have an eating disorder, and the situation made it much worse.

I had to go back to therapy because of anxiety problems.

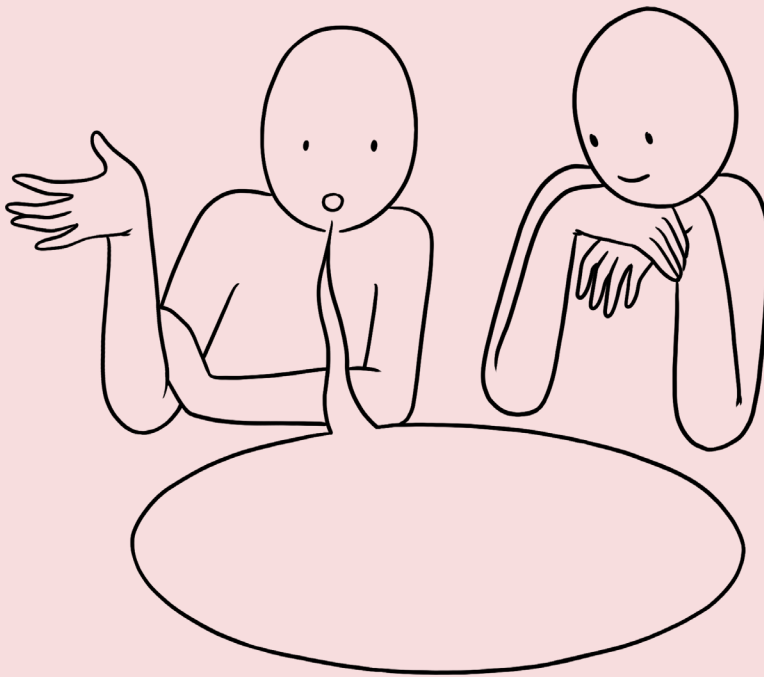
It has affected me a lot. It worsened a significant depression from which I was recovering with psychological and psychiatric treatment, producing a state of constant anxiety, discouragement and loss of hope concerning the near future.

I have lost self-esteem, and I have two mental disorders that have increased with the situation.

## They have searched for psychological help

I have more episodes of anxiety and depressive behaviours, so much so that it blew up last summer, and I needed professional help.

I have had obsessive thoughts and anxiety attacks, which have led me to seek private therapy as the social security system cannot treat it.



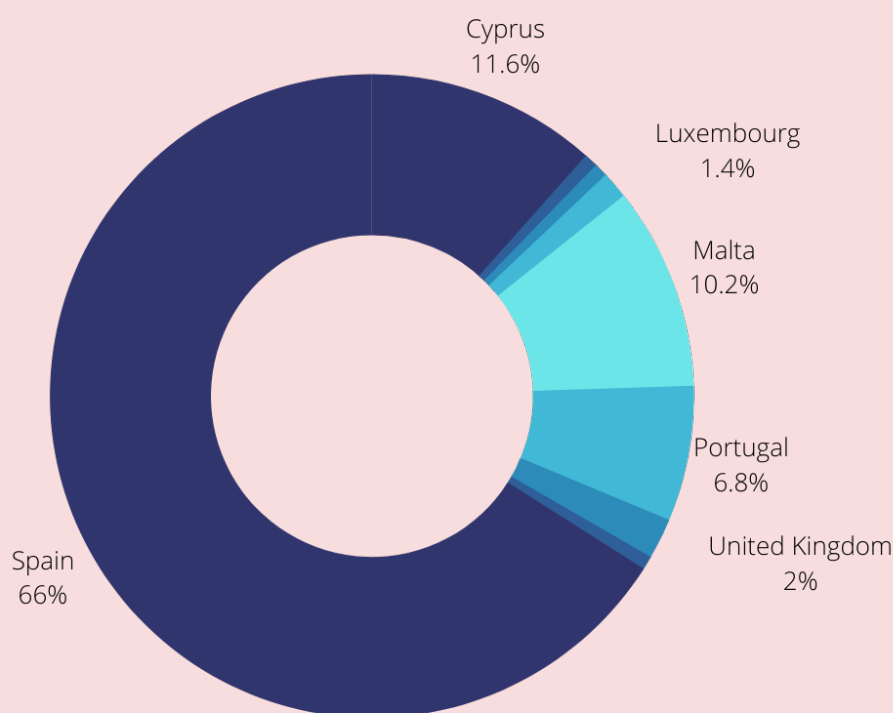
## They attempt suicide

I thought about suicide, and well, these thoughts do not abandon me even now

I have attempted suicide twice, and my depression and anxiety have increased dramatically

## 2. Youth Information Workers' survey

Parallel to the survey for young people, we developed a second survey targeted at youth information workers. This survey received **150 responses from 9 European countries\***.



The survey aimed to dive into the way that **youth information services approach mental health** issues and doubts with young people. For that purpose, several questions were introduced:

*How do you support young people that get in touch with you regarding mental health or emotional wellbeing issues? Which steps do you follow?*

The responses to this question varied depending on the country and if the service was autonomous or supported by other structures. Several youth information services have a special line for mental health problems or count on the support of external mental health experts or institutions.

\*Consult "Annex 2- Responses by country" to see the complete table of responses

Young people reach youth information workers by social media, phone, face-to-face visits or group sessions. Most youth information workers agreed that their primary concern is to **offer a safe space to the young person** to express themselves freely and with no judgment. Many of them have a follow-up chat after the first consultation to check how the young person is doing.

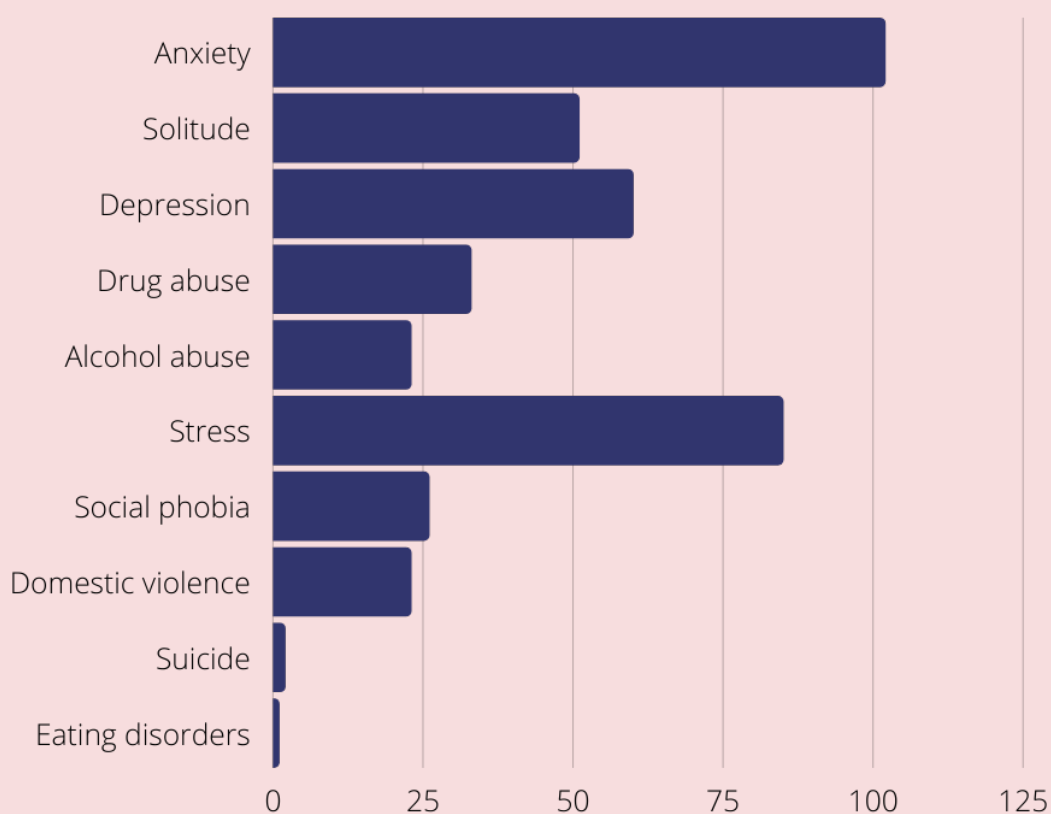
The **steps followed** can be summarised as follows:

1. Show ourselves close and available to young people
2. Listen actively without making judgments
3. Contrast the young person's narrative with personal experiences or hypothetical situations to validate and not detract from their feelings.
4. Support in the process of naming the emotions.
5. Support in the process of identifying conflicts and needs
6. If the problem is very serious, we will refer the case to specific services
7. If this is not the case, we will seek more informal support

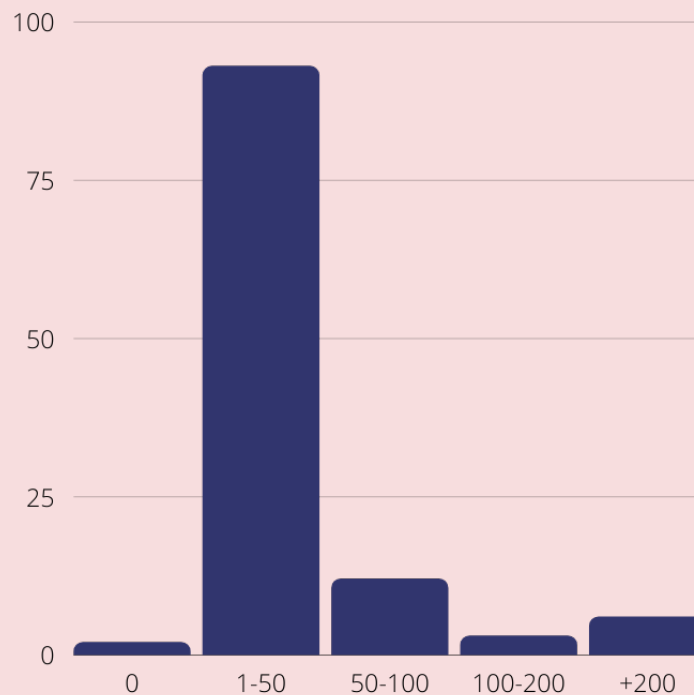


## *What are the mental health issues more addressed at your Youth Information Service?*

A large number of youth information workers reported that **anxiety and stress are two of the most addressed issues** when talking about mental health with young people. This coincides with the young people's survey responses in which 80% of the respondents admitted that they suffered from anxiety during the pandemic, and many of them faced it for the first time in their lives.



## *How many young people have reached your service asking for support on mental health issues or emotional wellbeing since the outbreak of the pandemic (March 2020)?*



The responses to this question shouldn't be taken as an exact figure but rather as an approximation since the respondents work in youth services and centres of different sizes and backgrounds.

## *Do you want to tell us something else about your work with young people and mental health?*

With this question, we wanted to give youth information workers the chance to express their concerns and share their sincere opinions about the topic. The responses are varied, but there is a clear criticism of the **lack of training and resources** to deal with these issues professionally. We grouped the responses into three groups:

## Lack of professional, free and accessible resources

There are few resources to address these issues in a professional manner, and there is still a lot of prejudice. That is why it is an excellent idea to raise campaigns like this and collaborate in their dissemination. It would also be great to have more training, organise workshops, conferences, round tables with professionals and young people, and create a space to share the resources we know and use.

Many of the young people cannot resort to private service; it is too expensive! And what does this lead to? Either not receiving the assistance needed or, even worse, engaging in other deviant behaviour, which allows them to get the money they need for the service and what !? They get into a vicious circle which is one of the circles which is very hard to break.

It is tiring! Yes, it is to listen and learn that so many young people are going through such things, and services are not satisfying their needs. It is essential that youth information officers are given the support needed as well, because it can be very daunting for them, hearing such realities.





## Lack of training on mental health for youth information workers

Sometimes I feel unable to know how to help, or the feeling of not knowing if what you have done and what you have said will be right or not. Sometimes outside of work, the problems of the kids come to my mind. It happens to me that sometimes I can just listen to them, is that all? I know that having someone to listen to you is crucial, but I would like to do more.

Youth workers urgently need to go through personal growth processes in order to be able to attend to any young person, whatever the demand they make.

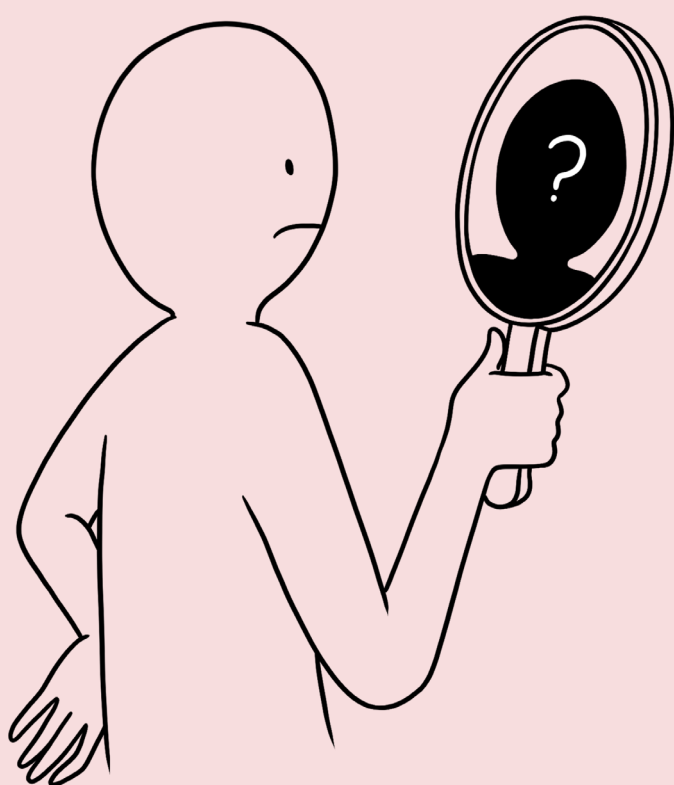
More professionals and specific services are needed to address mental health in young people.

We aren't specialist in mental health issues solving but as youth workers, we need to be prepared for any situation regarding emotional instability. However, the most important is to have other professionals like psychologists to address these youngsters if required.

## Need to take a different approach to mental health

Our work is based on counselling and leisure for children and young people. Still, the work carried out involves many more aspects. It goes much further, covering to a large extent the emotional refuge and much-needed support required by the people who need it. Leisure is also an essential factor and forms part of the therapy to achieve psychological and emotional well-being, and even more so in such a complex and changing stage of development as adolescence.

In the meantime, we have sessions going on with schools and other youth organisations about bullying, stress including breathing and mindfulness techniques, career paths, and how to be fine online, especially during this time, which deals with young people's virtual well-being.

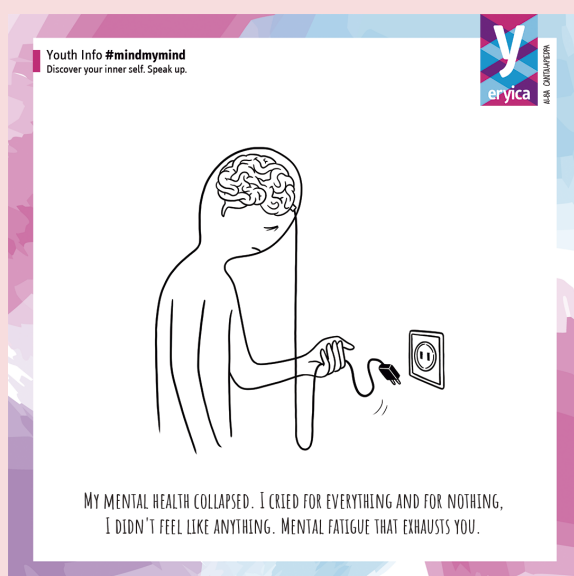


As a youth worker, I am just the middleman between young people and professionals. All I can do (as a general rule) is to listen, support, provide information and develop new competences for young people.

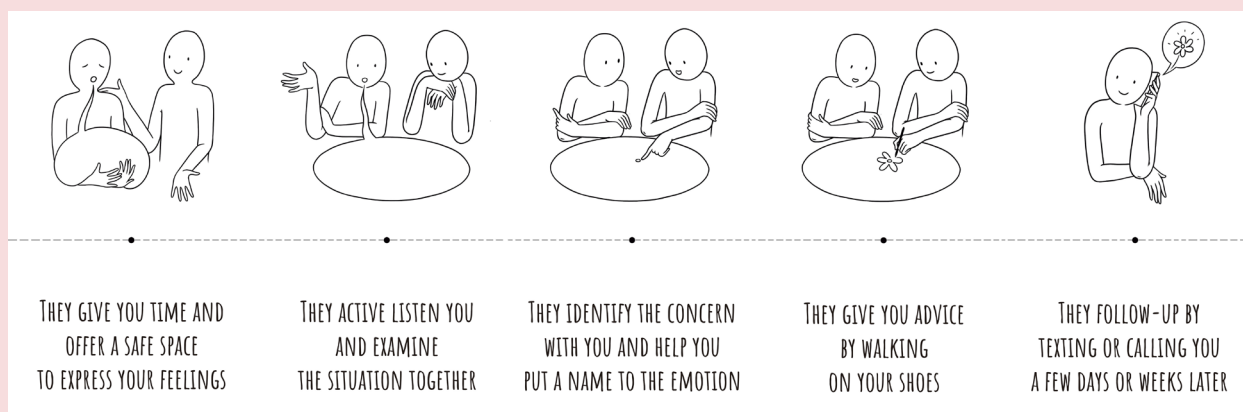
### 3. Awareness raising campaign

In the **second phase**, running from **1 to 17 April 2021**, a young illustrator (@albaricoque\_acg) transformed some of the testimonials from young people into ten universal drawings that didn't represent any gender, race or age. The next step was creating different templates in several formats for social media use. Moreover, we used the testimonials from youth information workers to create various graphics and give visibility to them.

## Phase II



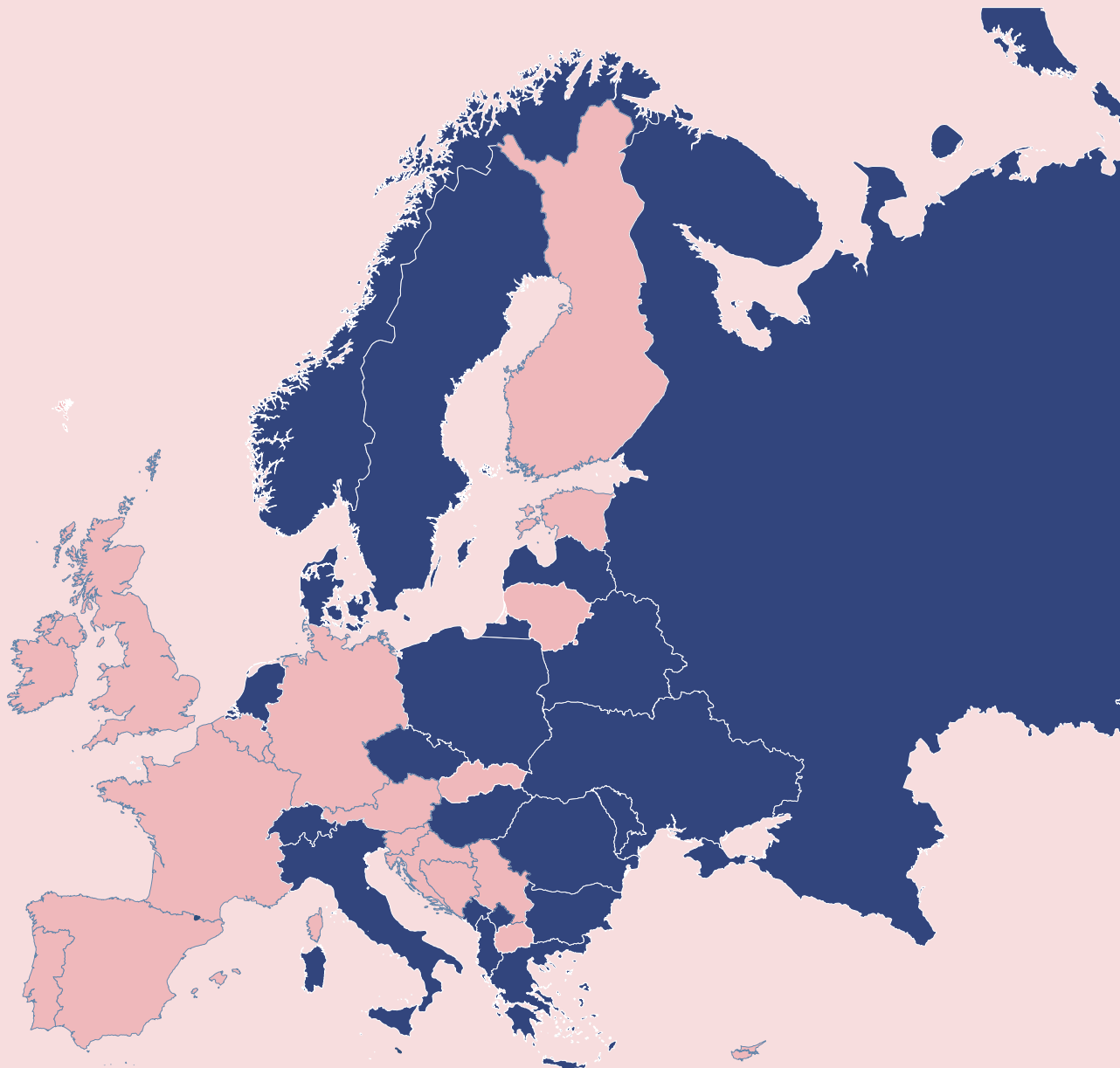
The steps provided by the youth information workers were also transformed into a timeline that served to illustrate easily **how young people can seek help** regarding mental health issues when needed.



Finally, the page [eryica.org/eyid-2021](http://eryica.org/eyid-2021) was created to redirect all the traffic and provide more information about the campaign.

# Results and conclusions

The campaign was translated into **16 languages** and shared\* more than **1,200 times** in **21 countries**.



The site [eryica.org/eyid-2021](https://eryica.org/eyid-2021) received more than **1,100 unique visits** during the second phase of the campaign.

The campaign served as a boost for ERYICA social media channels that saw an increase of **793 new followers**. More than **170,000 impressions** were reached with it; meanwhile, the hashtag **#EYID2021** was used more than 1,000 times.

\*Number of shares natively. We just include here those shares that could be able to be tracked via hashtag or direct mention.

Considering these figures, we can conclude that **the campaign was well welcomed** among youth information providers and young people and achieved the proposed objectives. Several parallel activities and initiatives were carried out in different parts of Europe related to the campaign.



The campaign served as a base to start a broad discussion about the **importance of mental health, emotional well-being and mental health literacy** among youth work professionals. Besides, it put on the table the need to train and empower youth information workers and provide them with updated resources in order to be able to offer a better and more professional service to young people.

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, mental health and emotional support have become a high priority among young people and a global need. **Young people are demanding to be heard and supported.**

# Annexes

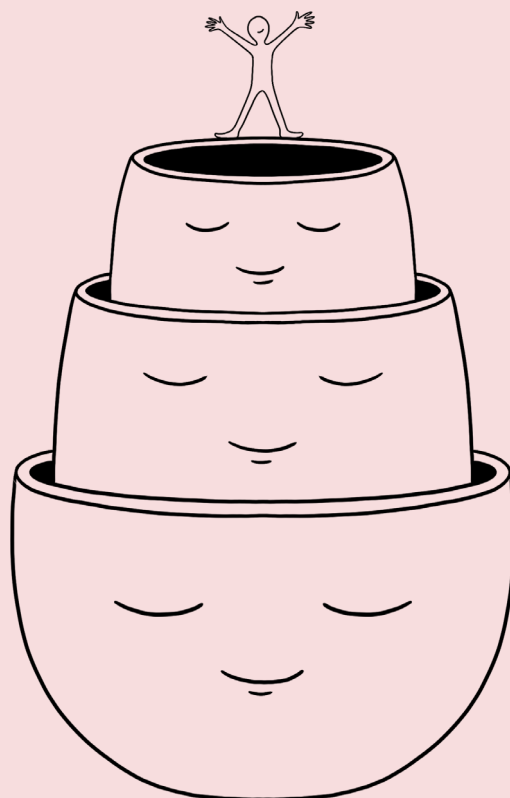
## Annexe 1: Responses by country of origin- Young people's survey

European countries	
Austria	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8
Bulgaria	1
Croatia	3
Cyprus	97
Estonia	30
Finland	19
France	24
Greece	34
Ireland	7
Italy	3
Lithuania	236
Luxembourg	10
North Macedonia	5
Malta	48
Portugal	466
Romania	1
Slovakia	1
Slovenia	3
Spain	809
Switzerland	2
Ukraine	3
United Kingdom	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,817</b>

Non-European countries	
Angola	2
Argentina	2
Bangladesh	1
Brasil	13
Cape Verde	1
China	1
Colombia	2
Ecuador	2
Egypt	1
El Salvador	2
Kazakhstan	1
Macau	1
Mali	1
Marruecos	2
Mexico	2
Mozambique	1
Nigeria	1
Tanzania	1
Venezuela	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

## Annexe 2: Responses by country- Young information worker's survey

Cyprus	17
Estonia	1
Finland	1
Luxembourg	2
Malta	15
Portugal	10
Slovakia	1
Spain	97
United Kingdom	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>



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and counselling agency



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