

7 Europe Under a Global Pandemic: Can we Consider Quality Education as a “Vaccine” Against Covid-19?

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7.1 Abstract

In seeking the consequences of the pandemic one could refer to a specific aspect of it, one that is primarily its personal field of action and expertise. By attempting in this article a holistic approach to the consequences of the pandemic, in our knowledge that the greatest risk may be oversimplification, this venture, although risky, is a challenge for us (Barnett, 2020).

The most tragic consequence of the pandemic is the loss to date of nearly 1 million people worldwide. This staggering number of deaths essentially creates more than many living relatives who experience the tragedy of death with any psychological and other consequences for themselves (Goniewicz et al. 2020), but also a huge number of other citizens who experience fear in their own way, phenomena that will be the subject of social study and research in the years to come.

Keywords: pandemic, Covid-19, education, e-class, universities and Covid-19, economy.

7.2 The Consequences of the Pandemic: A Holistic Approach

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted, in many cases tragically, how important it is to have public health services capable of responding to the health care needs of the population even in exceptional circumstances such as those we are experiencing today and we will probably live in the years to come, as, it seems, the intensification, particularly of the industrial food complex, combined with the mass population movements, significantly increase the chances of new epidemics.

The modern pandemic highlighted the weaknesses of public health structures around the world. Even in countries with a rich tradition and a rich past of catholic public health systems, such as Britain and Sweden, their long-standing decline from neoliberal policies has had a decisive impact on their effectiveness. Similarly, the World Health Organisation finds it difficult to fulfil its role as a result of a long-term underfunding policy (Mirchi et al. 2020).

Another need highlighted by the modern epidemic is the importance of ensuring continuity in the care of diseases other than coronae. The exclusive focus on coronae sufferers, combined with the dismantling of public health services, and has led, internationally, to the dramatic deterioration of the care of other diseases. On the basis of this negative experience, it becomes clear that in the design of health services in view of new waves of the epidemic, it is also necessary to ensure the care of non-Corona diseases.

The fear expressed by citizens is a consequence of the pandemic affecting themselves, their actions, their social environment, etc. Fear is linked either to a possible exposure to the virus or to the inability to have a proper hospitalization in their country or to the loss of life that the virus can cause at a time when the international medical community has not yet discovered any medicine or vaccine. Citizens' relief seems to be linked to the existence of medicines (Kato

et al. 2020). Until then it has been observed that even in countries where the pandemic is in recession or cases are few in relation to the population (e.g. China), people have not returned at the same rate to their usual activities, shopping, going out for fun, holidays, etc. (Jassi et al. 2020). In the USA the fear of pandemic, psychological stress and insecurity created by this situation has peaked the demand for telephone psychological support, which increased by 1000% compared to 2019, with experts expecting a large wave of suicides in the post-coronavirus era.



Figure 1: The Covid pandemic (source: Google Scholar)

In this situation, international health systems have been tested. No health system, however well organized, has been able to meet the demands of the large number of cases, checks, hospitalizations, treatments, the dead, etc. The response of health systems (public and private) seems to be fluctuating and dependent on the intensity of the pandemic in each country, the prior organisation and staffing, the capacity of beds and ICUs, the availability of medicines and sanitary material, etc. We have observed during this time tragic phenomena, such as patients being treated in tents, patients being treated in floating hospitals (new York case), patients being transported for hospitalization in other countries (case of Germany accepting French patients), patients who were hardly admitted to a country (case of cruise ship travelers who were finally admitted to Cuba), etc. as well as intractable burial issues in systems or hospitals that had to manage dozens or hundreds of daily losses (Hartley et al. 2020). Of course, if these were observed in developed countries, the effects of the pandemic on the rudimentary health systems of poor countries are incalculable and perhaps not recorded in any television lens that let us understand the tragedy of the people there, whether sick or related or even health workers.

The eventual consequence of the pandemic concerns the loss of jobs and the reduction of the individual and family income of citizens (and the collective income of countries), which with recent data published by the international publisher IGI Global concerns 1.6 billion employees worldwide. The consequences in this case are visible around the world where economies are shrinking and countries are looking for resources to meet their increased needs, businesses are closing down or at best operating with shrinking revenues, etc. In this respect, well-known scientific theories of economic growth, sustainability, forecasting, etc., had not incorporated such an unfavourable situation into their models because everything showed that humanity was walking on safe paths of prosperity and progress. What is certain is that the economic

consequences of the pandemic are already of concern to the research community in order to examine and investigate not only the consequences but also the transition to normality.

In this internationally developed environment, many human activities have been modified, not least the educational process that has faced the challenge of exploiting technological tools. In countries where the possibility of education providers existed or was systematically pursued and this challenge has been adopted by teachers, the results seem to be satisfactory and, in some cases, encouraging for the future of education carried out in electronic classrooms and amphitheaters', with electronic examinations and monitoring, and so on, for developed countries although the same is not true in countries where technology is a luxury. In other words, although the disparity in the use of technology in the global community is well known, however in developed societies where otherwise these technological solutions would not be beneficial and would be an "unclaimed" product, they ultimately contributed substantially to education, but also to many other activities such as the management of institutions and organizations, the cooperation of executives and partners, the provision of a range of electronic services to citizens. Etc. Also, work from home for professions that allow it peaked during this period through remote access to platforms and applications of businesses and organizations taking advantage of the high speeds of networks. Strengthening the transition to technology and highlighting the role it can play in such emergencies is already being studied and reflected as the challenge won in our societies in this unequal battle between man and the pandemic.

7.3 The economic impact of the pandemic on the new generation

Millions of young people around the world have been forced to return to their ancestral homes because of the coronavirus pandemic, the closure of universities and the dismissal of young workers. Although young people face less risk of being affected by heavy COVID-19, students and young workers suffer the most from the economic impact of the pandemic, which has reinforced other existing negative trends, such as low wages, labor market stagnation and soaring student debt (Hart et al. 2020).

A global survey by the Financial Times newspaper of 800 young people aged between 16 and 30 showed that these difficulties reinforce young people's dissatisfaction with previous generations, who are better off income and have greater political power. The survey showed that young people under the age of 25 are 2.5 more likely to be unemployed due to the pandemic than the 26-64 age groups, according to OECD data. Of those who continue to work, almost half reported a decline in income, with young women and the low-paid hit hardest. In the developing world, unemployment means the inability to provide financial support for two or more generations of relatives (Tomasini, 2020).

Despite the fear of many respondents about the coronavirus, a significant proportion of young people take a relaxed attitude towards the pandemic (Haji, 2020). This laxity has been condemned by political leaders around the world, arguing that it is one of the causes of the resurgence of the pandemic in Europe and the US after the summer. Many respondents to the study from Europe and Asia argued, however, that it was the elderly who ignored health protection measures. Many young people said they had ceased to trust the political leadership of their countries, considering that pandemic management was inadequate. The phenomenon of young people losing confidence in governments dates back to 2016 in the developed world, according to previous OECD studies.

Mental health experts have warned that the psychological effects of the pandemic will last long, as millions of young people face depression, anxiety and a feeling of isolation. Studies in the US and UK have shown that stress levels among young people between the ages of 18 and 29 are much higher than in other age groups. Many respondents, however, said that the pandemic and its limitations offered an opportunity to reconnect with their family.

7.4 Pandemic and education

Education has two main peculiarities, which in the current crisis of the Covid - 19 pandemic acquire even more distinct content and therefore require special study and analysis.

a) Education is the most general and probably the only Universal institution in our society. It touches almost all Greek families through all its individual expressions (kindergarten, elementary, high school, high school, university, research). It is the main learning, educational, pedagogical, worthy fabric that runs through society. Protection measures are therefore of great importance.

b) Education includes the most sensitive sections of our population – from the age of 4-5 years to the equivalent of the most generalized postgraduate studies. Here there is the early childhood, in which the child takes his first steps of understanding his world and therefore new pedagogical approaches are needed in this extraordinary treaty that we are currently going through. Even deprivation or even shying in his games – in his own world – causes serious changes.

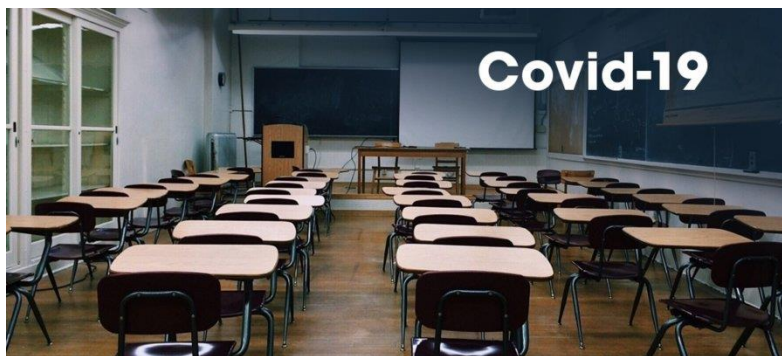
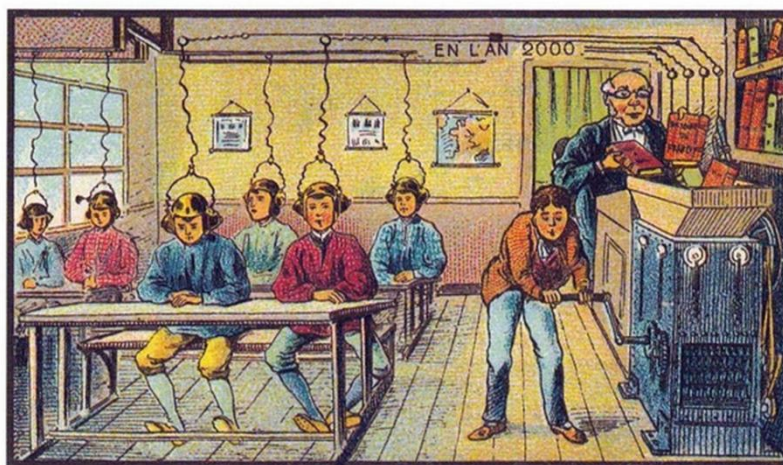


Figure 2: The Covid and its affect in education (source: Google Scholar)

With other characteristic elements accept today's general "manufactured" image of life adolescents and young people. This is where their relationships and friendships are technically "channeled", which are so important for their socialization. Their emotional and erotic concerns and functions are limited – which burdens their mental world and the cultivation of their spirit. Their plans, their ambitions, their dreams, which are the foundations of their lives, are altered.



At School

Figure 3: Futuristic picture by Jean-Marc Côté issued in France in 1899. Jean-Marc Cote and other artists envisioned what France would look like in the year 2000. Presented at the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris, at least 87 different cards were distributed in France from 1899 to 1910. CREDIT: Wikimedia Commons/Jean March Cote.

Uncertainty and insecurity obviously concern all those affected by unemployment, since for them the whole problem becomes a permanent one. But in children and young people, who have not yet mastered basic interpretive tools for understanding reality and have not strengthened their personality; these elements become components of their psych synthesis, their worldview, and their ideology.

However, teachers, in addition to their comments about the state's omissions and their necessary claims to implement all measures to protect schools and universities, have the highest pedagogical duty. In addition to courses and classical teaching, they are called upon to give special weight to the rational interpretation of the pandemic – away from obscurity, etc. – to specialize and stress over and over again the correct application of scientific protection measures in school and beyond, to promote critical thinking and rationality, to cultivate the spirituality and emotion of students. Obviously, all of this (and not only that) is part of the classical responsibility of teachers – only now they are becoming even more critical and necessary.

The world is changing. And it doesn't always change in the direction man wants. But in any case, it is the struggle of life that ultimately gives its meaning. And the school has a say and a role in this struggle, because it is a word of Letters and education, it is an enlightening and humanitarian role!

Although online education has increased over the past decade, the pandemic has taken the higher education sector by surprise. It is true that universities went through traditional, face-to-face teaching on the internet quite quickly. However, the 'remote' teaching adopted from the outset was unregulated and rough from the outset, without taking into account the principles and guidelines of distance learning. New technologies were used without special training and technical support, which – in many cases – were based on information infrastructures that could hardly support the growing demand for internet access (Peyravi et al. 2020). More importantly, however, neither teachers (many of whom had never taught in a virtual environment) nor students were ready to adopt this new virtual world, often ignoring the elementary rules of internet communication (netiquette) (Saleh et al. 2020).

The new reality offers great opportunities to invest in a hybrid and flexible education model. Successful and sustainable delivery of online programs requires careful planning and organisation based on key parameters (e.g., medium, pace, student-teacher ratio, communication synchronization, online evaluation), which should be taken into account together within a single educational ecosystem. Such an ecosystem should facilitate the creation of a digital educational community, supporting students in their learning process and, at the same time, enhancing their socialization and mental well-being. Unfortunately, the concept of such an ecosystem was absent from the "remote" teaching applied by universities worldwide, as for most the new education model was merely a temporary reaction to the pandemic, which did not reflect their long-term strategy (Deckman et al. 2020).



Figure 4: Synchronous and asynchronous training (source: Google Scholar)

Therefore, it is not surprising that the "great online learning experiment" (as described in Great Britain) does not seem to have succeeded. On the one hand, students declare themselves cut off from the academic community and their fellow students and generally disappointed by their entire educational experience. On the other hand, in a recent survey senior official from 172 universities and colleges expressed their serious concern about the increasing rate of student resignation from their studies, but also about the mental health of students, faculty and university administrators (Van der Leeuw, 2020).

7.4.1 But is this 'experiment' completely futile, and what can we expect in the future?

The higher education sector has for decades shown strong resistance to change, despite sustained motivation from the global environment and the market itself. In addition, students and employers have long questioned traditional – often archaic – teaching and evaluation methods (e.g., written examinations), underlining the new requirements for digital literacy, administration and leadership, problem-solving and globalization. The current pandemic has revealed that we can no longer avoid change.

At least 1.5 billion students were out of school at the peak of the pandemic

Number of students enrolled in each country, by school closure status (date: March 27, 2020)

5,000,000 ○ 10,000,000 ■ Closed ■ Closed (in select areas) ■ Open ■ Open with limitations

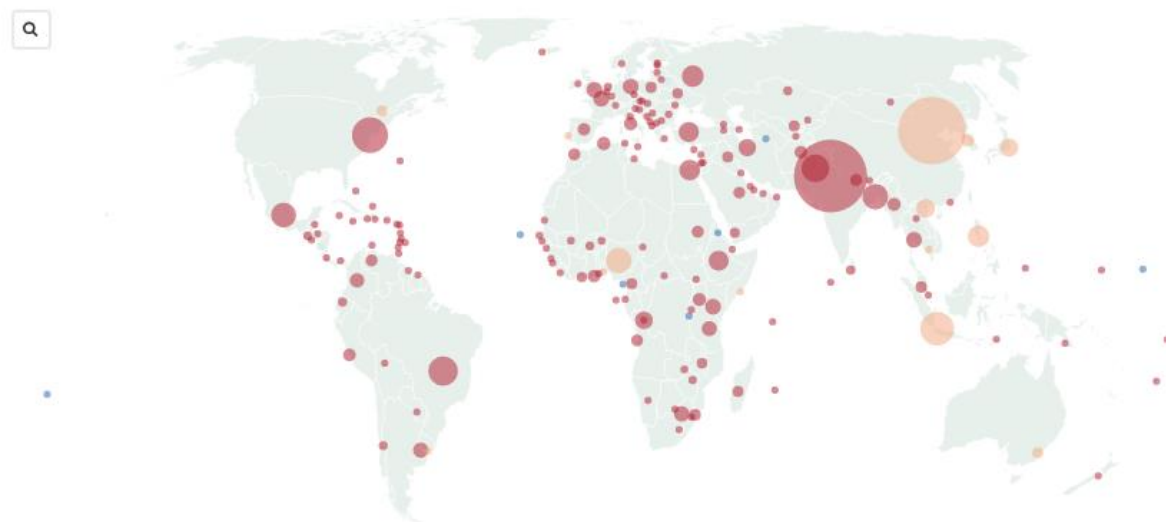


Figure 5: Source: World Bank EduAnalytics; Enrollment data from UIS as of March 17th 2020, downloaded from World Development Indicators • Notes: Data is presented for March 27, 2020 - the day when most students had either full or partial school closure. Enrollment data includes pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary school enrollment numbers. Located at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/2020-year-review-impact-covid-19-12-charts>

The new reality therefore offers great opportunities for education leaders to dynamically adopt "new normality" and invest in a hybrid and flexible education model. Such a model requires a versatile portfolio of products and services, which, together with the required human resources and infrastructure, will be able to adapt quickly to change. Today we have at our disposal digital infrastructures and platforms that facilitate this transformation (e.g., Zoom, Padlet, Polling Tools, and Flipgrid). We can thus build together with our students a shared view of our scientific field, but also work together towards the creation of curricula that meet the needs of the new market and the directions of the "new economy" (diversity, equality, connectivity, global

awareness, social and environmental awareness), leading our universities towards a new educational era (Ganigara et al. 2020).

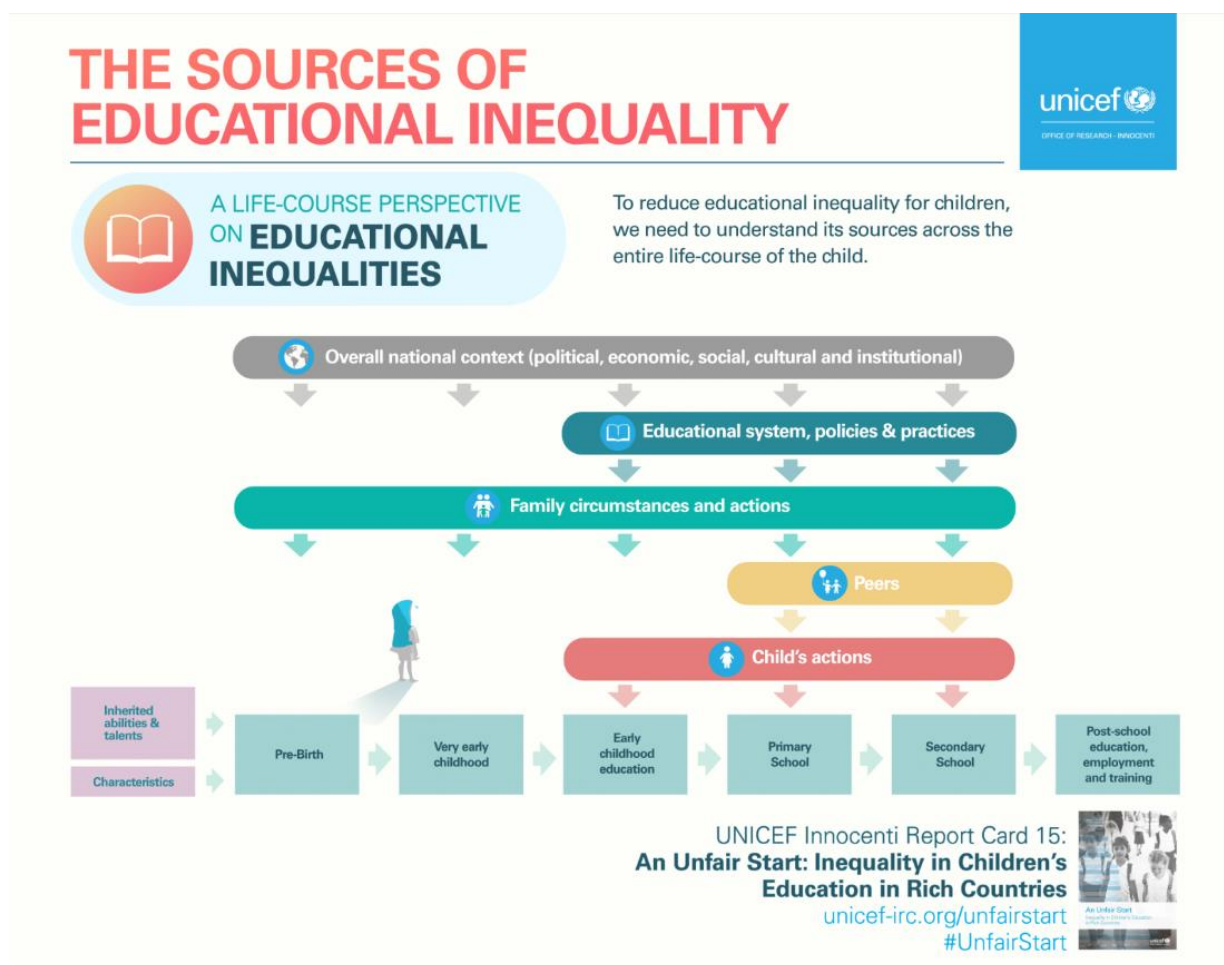


Figure 6: Inequalities in education (Source: UNICEF)

Regarding the impact of the pandemic on education, the closure of schools has created health problems for members of the lower social strata, as some schools also offer meals, and it has also affected their cognitive development, as there are families in Greece who do not have a computer and reliable internet connection (Preschool Education, 2010).

Education is one of the areas that has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, and during the first wave of the pandemic, the education system was suddenly called upon to cope with emergency conditions, without having adequate and appropriate technological infrastructure and equipment (Ren et al. 2020).

There are many challenges to the integration of these children into education: inappropriate living conditions, language barriers and the difficulty of contacting guardians with teachers, inadequate infrastructure for distance learning courses, the reluctance of many unaccompanied children and families to join the country's education system, and the reaction of local communities and Parents and Guardians' Associations to the integration of refugee and migrant children into schools in their area (Rylett et al. 2020).

As regards the impact of the pandemic on the process of integrating refugee and migrant children into education, there has been an increase in violence in accommodation centers due to the reaction of refugees to restrictive measures. At the same time, refugee and migrant children are witnessing stress, which does not help them to adapt smoothly to any educational process, while children who are positively identified in the coronavirus experience traumatic experiences due to containment conditions.

In UNICEF's annual report on education in 2020, we read: "The large number of children whose education has been completely suspended for months is a global educational emergency. The impact of this can be felt in economies and societies in the coming decades. The COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools completely deprived at least a third of the world's pupils, or 463 million children, of education, as they were unable to train, according to a UNICEF report(<https://www.unicef.org/reports/annual-report-2019>)".

The UN estimates that nearly 1.5 billion children in the world have been affected by the closure of schools or the quarantines imposed because of the new coronavirus. Not all of them had the opportunity to access distance learning, and the differences in e-learning from continent to continent are glaring. The UNICEF report is based on data collected from around 100 countries and on internet, television or radio access (<https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/covid-19/>).

At the same time, even for children who had access to technology, their schooling could be under adverse conditions, due to pressures from the various jobs that would have to be done at home, teleworking or lack of support in the use of IT tools, according to UNICEF.

Students worldwide who did not have access to tele education amounted to 67 million in east and south Africa, 54 million in west and central Africa, 80 million in the Pacific and East Asia region, 37 million in the Middle East and north Africa, 147 million in south Asia, 25 million in eastern Europe and central Asia and 13 million in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As many countries prepare for a return to schools in the new school year, UNICEF "calls on governments to prioritize reopening schools with all safety when restrictions begin to ease". It also calls, when the reopening of schools is not possible, for authorities to make provision to meet the specific learning needs of pupils caused by the time they have lost from school, UNICEF also notes in its communication (Hodge, 2020).

Also important are the consequences for frontline workers, such as medical & nursing staff, health system rescuers, police officers, firefighters, emergency call center workers, workers in prevention and rescue units, as well as volunteers supporting some of the above services (e.g., Red Cross). Workers and volunteers from specific frontline groups are risking their lives to protect the community. Their role is socially recognized and recognized. However, what is less internationally recognized are the negative psychological effects experienced by these people (Gulati et al. 2020). As is understood, these groups experience an "anxiety", which is defined as the feeling that one has to manage on his own, "swimming upside down in the current" in order to respond to an emergency mission.

7.5 COVID-19: THE EU's reaction to the economic impact of the pandemic

The EU and its Member States have taken measures to limit as far as possible the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy. Together with the existing FUNDS of EUR 540 billion, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) will be € for the three safety nets (for workers, businesses and Member States), the total EU recovery package amounts to EUR 2 364.3 billion. €.

The European Parliament and the Council reached a preliminary agreement on the package on 10 November 2020. The European Council of 10 and 11 December 2020 addressed the concerns expressed about the agreement and removed the obstacles to the adoption of the package.



Figure 7: EU and Covid-19 (source: Google Scholar)

On 23 April 2020, EU leaders decided to work out the establishment of an EU recovery fund to mitigate the impact of the crisis. They called on the European Commission to draw up an urgent proposal clarifying, inter alia, the relationship between the fund and the EU's long-term budget. The proposal, a recovery plan for Europe, was presented by the European Commission on 27 May 2020.

7.6 The effects of the pandemic

High incidence of pandemic in stress, loneliness and anger, but also improvement of socially beneficial behavior showed the first results of the World Health and Functionality Study in Periods of Communicable Infections (COH-FIT Study) in the population of Greece.

According to the first results announced by the research team of the Study for Greece, the majority of participants (72%) reported a worsening of stress in the last two weeks prior to completion of the questionnaire compared to the corresponding period prior to the pandemic. 21% reported small changes in stress levels, while 7% reported improved stress levels (Gulati et al. 2020).

Remarkable is the fact that older people (over 65 years of age) experienced the highest rate of deterioration in stress levels, which reached 96%. The survey found no differences between men and women in stress worsening rates, however in terms of rates of improvement in stress levels, these were higher in women than in men (12% vs. 9%).

7.6.1 Deterioration and loneliness

In terms of loneliness, most participants (70%) in the survey reported a worsening of loneliness in the last two weeks before completing the questionnaire compared to the corresponding period before the pandemic. The highest rate of worsening levels of loneliness - reached 96% - was experienced by the elderly (over 65 years of age), according to the RES-IPA. 27% reported small changes in loneliness levels, while just 3% improved (Breitbart, 2020a).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme poverty is likely to increase sharply

Number of people in extreme poverty

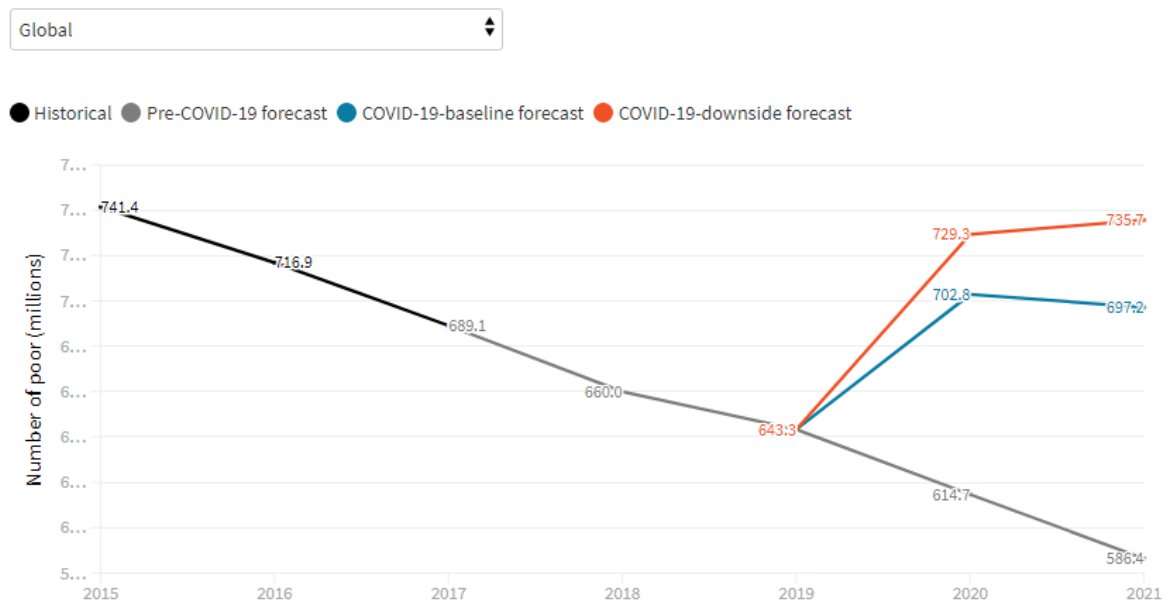


Figure 8: Global poverty (source: World Bank)

Young adults (18-39 years) reported higher rates of worsening loneliness compared to middle-aged adults (40-64 years). With regard to anger, 71% of participants experienced deterioration in the last two weeks before completing the questionnaire compared to the corresponding period prior to the pandemic (Breitbart, 2020b). Rates of worsening anger were higher in the elderly (96%) but also among young people (57%) compared to middle-aged people (53%). 26% reported small changes in anger levels, while 3% improved anger levels; the survey recorded differences between men and women in rates of small anger changes (42% in men versus 39% in women) but not in rates of worsening or decreased anger levels (James, 2020).

7.6.2 Improving socially beneficial behavior

In terms of socially beneficial behavior, 66% of participants improved, small changes were observed in 26%, while 1% of participants experienced an increase in the last two weeks prior to the completion of the questionnaire compared to the corresponding period prior to the pandemic (Greig, 2020). Differences in rates of improvement in socially beneficial behavior between young adults and middle-aged people were not found, while older people improved their socially beneficial behavior by 96%.

7.6.3 Internet, social media and media

With regard to the Internet, social media and the media, an increase in their time of use was reported in 85% of participants from Greece. The increase was greater among women compared to men (77% vs. 72%). and the elderly (98%) compared to middle-aged people (72%).

7.6.4 Ways to manage

The most effective strategies for dealing with the particular conditions brought about in everyday life by the pandemic were exercise or walking (63%), internet use (61%), hobbies (61%), direct social contact or social interaction (60%), study or learning something new (49%), social media and social interactions from a distance (48%), work at home or at home (42%), information on the Covid-19 pandemic (41%), the media (41%), time with a pet (36%), as well as physical proximity and sexual activity (36%).

For men, the most effective pandemic management strategies were internet use (61%), exercise or walking (59%), hobbies (56%) and hobbies (56%). and direct social contact or social interaction (55%). for young adults, the most effective management strategies were direct social contact or social interaction (65%), exercise or walking (65%), hobbies (65%) and social interaction (65%). and internet use (62%). and direct social contact or social interaction (57%). and direct social contact or social interaction (47%).

The research project is promoted in our country by the 2nd University Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Athens in collaboration with more than 200 researchers in research institutions and Universities of at least 40 countries. The study involved 7,467 people until 31 August, with most responses relating to the period from 26 April to the end of June. The median age of people from Greece who responded to this survey was 41 years.

7.7 Conclusions

The crisis affects almost all economic sectors horizontally, but some will be hit the most and others will be dragged in by their sinking or will find themselves at the center of large-scale acquisitions by companies with a stronger economic base. Only if brave and targeted rescue measures are combined with a green change in the economic activity model and production base overall, is there the possibility of rescuing a large part of the economy. In other words, rescue and recovery must support not outdated models of economic activity but a rapid and targeted transition to a new, green, resilient, socially responsible and sustainable economy model.

The recovery of the economy requires strengthening research particularly in green and socially important sectors and linking research results with real needs of society and the economy. This does not mean that research in the humanities and social sciences is becoming redundant and that all research should focus only on technological and economic issues. It is simply recognized that technology, and especially digital technology, contributes within the right framework, to combating social discrimination and inequalities, facilitates everyone's access to health, strengthens democracy and facilitates distance learning. Without context, however, technological applications could lead to more authoritarian regimes, centralization of power, control of citizens, degradation of democracy, the face of discrimination and inequality. It is therefore very important to monitor the application of technology.

Modern research is more knowledge-intensive and based on flexible shapes. Even a small country with limited resources such as Greece could be, through synergies and participation in networks, an important center of research and dissemination of research results. Some critical research areas for the future are combined and interdisciplinary health synergies.

We tend to talk about digital reform in public administration or now even more so in the crisis for teleconferences or tele-work that will surely change the way we communicate and work. But there are many other areas where digital technology plays an important role in reducing inequalities and improving everyone's access to basic rights (e.g., tele-medicine, remote service to citizens by the authorities, tackling tax fraud, energy democracy, decentralization in production, exchange and storage of energy from RES, participation in the process of shaping and decision-making, etc.).

However, digitization must be linked to a more general simplification of bureaucracy, not simply the use of technology in a bureaucratic and multi-role system that ultimately leaves out those who are not trained (digital illiteracy) and creates further obstacles in the absence of policies and tools that solve problems for those left behind. The role of the social economy is recognized at international and European level as particularly important, as experience in many countries shows, both during crises and during recovery (Thoma et al. 2020).

Cooperative schemes of different organizational types, sectors of activity and legal forms as well as partnerships between them and/or with other small and medium-sized enterprises and local authorities can (re)-integrate effectively into decent work and innovative sectors young

and long-term unemployed, migrants, seasonal workers, workers in precarious and informal working conditions but also contribute to green and social transformation with resources from the recovery fund.

This implies a transition from subsidizing extreme forms of unemployment to integrated labor integration policies and tools through social entrepreneurship by exploiting programs, promoting reliable education and training in new social and green professions, as well as the practical work of 'community work' programs in order to create decent working conditions rather than fill public sector gaps (Thunström et al. 2020).

As European and Greek bodies put forward to the European Commission, entitled 'How can we reactivate the European Youth Employment Policy following the CRISIS of the COVID-19 pandemic', education and training are crucial factors in the transition to a green economy model and the creation of new jobs. In the view of these bodies, youth employment policies in general, and in particular the European Youth Guarantee, should focus on the increasing preparation of young people for tasks and professions that are important, and really necessary, for the sustainable and environmentally compatible future of businesses and society (Lipsky, 2020).

Therefore, support should not be provided only to integrate young people and young people into existing labor frameworks. Nor waste resources on training or employment without a clear result. On the contrary, the emphasis should be on employment in innovative, emerging professions that are important for a sustainable Europe and on job creation with a focus on Green Skills. Activities that contribute to de-carbon and quickly achieve climate neutrality are central in this direction. However, in most European countries, existing training and related measures do not meet the demand for 'Green Skills' and the needs of modern labor markets. Jobs and services related to sustainable development need to be created and existing professional profiles need to be redefined.

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