# COVINFORM

CORONAVIRUS VULNERABILITIES AND INFORMATION DYNAMICS RESEARCH AND MODELLING

# D6.5 Baseline report: Community and citizen responses - update M24

# Project

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## Deliverable

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# Executive Summary

The COVINFORM project addresses the following top-level research questions within the target countries and municipalities:

- RQ1: How and under which conditions were COVID-19 responses drafted and practiced?
- RQ2: How and in which ways was vulnerability considered in COVID-19 response?
- RQ3: What were the lived experiences of the pandemic/crisis management within certain vulnerable groups across diverse local contexts?
- RQ4: Which barriers, unintended consequences, trade-offs, lessons learned and promising practices can be identified in COVID-19 responses across diverse local contexts?

This deliverable contributes insight primarily to RQ4 by collecting promising participatory practices – defined as practices in which ordinary residents played active, significant roles – across diverse local contexts. N=150 participatory practices in the target countries and municipalities were identified, described, and analysed. The analysis finds that:

- Participatory practices adopted both short-term and longer-term aims. Some emerged in the first phases of the pandemic as stopgaps for overburdened governmental services; however, others addressed areas of life long outside the scope of core social welfare systems, and/or targeted chronic structural inequalities.
- Participatory practices involved numerous configurations of actors. They included practices initiated and maintained solely by self-organised groups of residents; those initiated by self-organised groups, but supported by established civil society organisations (CSOs) and/or governmental organisations (GOs); and those initiated by CSOs or GOs, but which involved large numbers of residents as volunteers, donors, etc.
- Participatory practices ran the gamut from initiatives focused on a single type of service to umbrella programmes that supported initiatives spanning numerous domains (e.g., material and psychosocial support, arts and culture, education, jobs, children and parenting, the environment, etc.).
- Participatory practices typically made use of online channels, but also often involved some type of activity in the field. A prototypical example is the use of online platform to request or offer face-to-face support.

The deliverable finds that participatory practices aimed toward, and often appear to have achieved, a range of positive outcomes: they helped address critical needs during periods of systemic stress; offered supplements and/or alternatives to governmental services; reduced barriers to material and informational support; and helped mitigate the unintended consequences and trade-offs of disruptive policies such as lockdowns. A systematic analysis of practices and outcomes with the participation of both national authorities and the actors involved would constitute a valuable task for future research. Participatory practices can also be seen as contributing to social resilience in a holistic sense by augmenting social capital, advancing social learning, and preserving social memory. The deliverable concludes that participatory practices offer promising lessons for the adaptive management of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## Figures

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## Acronyms & Abbreviations

| Term | Description |
| --- | --- |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| GO | Governmental organisation |
| RQ | Research question |

# 1 Introduction

The COVINFORM project addresses the following top-level research questions, within the target countries and municipalities, across several work packages:

- **RQ1**: How and under which conditions were COVID-19 responses drafted and practiced?
- **RQ2**: How and in which ways was vulnerability considered in COVID-19 response?
- **RQ3**: What were the lived experiences of the pandemic/crisis management within certain vulnerable groups across diverse local contexts?
- **RQ4**: Which barriers, unintended consequences, trade-offs, lessons learned and promising practices can be identified in COVID-19 responses across diverse local contexts?

Work Package 6 contributes insight from a civil society perspective to all four questions. Based on desk research on diverse local contexts presented in Deliverable 6.1 *Baseline report: Community and citizen responses*, as well as a review of the literature on "community" presented in Deliverable 6.2 *Research design: Community and citizen responses*, we identified a range of corollaries to **RQ4 on local contexts** (D6.2, pg. 28-30), of which five stand out:

- **RQ4.1. Locus**: How did spatial system conditions and spatialised practices mediate COVID-19 impacts and responses in the sub-national research sites?
- **RQ4.2. Social ties**: How did social networks mediate COVID-19 impacts in the sub-national research sites?
- **RQ4.3. Joint action**: What roles have CSOs, grassroots initiatives, and residents played in the provision of health and social services in the sub-national research sites?
- **RQ4.4. Sharing**: How did shared attitudes, beliefs, and practices mediate COVID-19 impacts in the sub-national research sites?
- **RQ4.5. Intra-community diversity**: How did intra-community patterns of difference mediate COVID-19 impacts in the sub-national research sites?

D6.3 *Analysis: Community and citizen responses* describes the initial findings of interviews with representatives of civil society organisations, which were guided by these questions. D6.4 *Synthesis and lessons learnt on community and citizen responses* synthesises these questions and findings against the background of the risk and vulnerability assessment model developed in WP2 and the socio-ecological systems framework developed in WP3.

This deliverable updates D6.1 with a focus on **RQ4.3. Joint action**. Specifically, it explores initiatives that involved ordinary residents in a direct and active way. Because the definition of "resident-led initiatives" used in the COVINFORM Description of Action is blurry, the deliverable broadens the focus of inquiry to encompass **participatory practices**, which can mean any practice in which 'ordinary residents' played a substantial role. This focus was chosen because: 1) desk research conducted in D6.1 made it clear that a range of participatory practices had emerged in all target countries, but did not delve into the details of these practices; 2) interviews with CSO representatives circled back again and again to the need to directly engage the target groups of response measures in order to maximise their effectiveness. The deliverable presents the results of desk research on participatory practices in the target countries, as well as specifically in the target municipalities/SMUs. It consists of:

- Chapters summarising the findings per target country and municipality
- A comparative discussion and conclusion

After describing a wide range of participatory practices, the deliverable analyses them on a cross-national basis and situates them with regard to the research questions and theoretical framework developed in prior COVINFORM deliverables.

# 2 Resident participation in COVID-19 responses

## 2.1 Aim and objective of the desk research

This deliverable is based on desk research conducted by the COVINFORM consortium in Q3 2022. Its aim is to supplement the WP6 findings to date with detailed insight on participatory practices, i.e., practices in which 'ordinary people' played an active and substantial role. This broad category includes both 'formal' or 'informal' practices initiated by self-organised groups of residents, established or new CSOs, local or national authorities, or any combination of these and/or other actors. Partners were asked to search for such practices in their countries in general and their target municipalities in specific. Partners were provided with a selection of examples for inspiration, as well as websites on which to search; they were also provided with suggested search terms to use on Google, social media platforms, the websites of local media outlets, etc. The search process was discussed and updates were provided in regular COVINFORM consortium calls.

## 2.2 Research guidelines and definitions

Partners were asked to search for several practices that were carried out specifically in their target municipality, and several additional practices that were carried out on a national level or in sites other than the target municipality, with a focus on collecting a diverse and inspiring set of examples. The following examples of participatory practices were provided to the partners to inspire their desk research:

- **Online mutual aid platforms connecting people in need of support with people willing to provide it**, e.g., the Austrian Corona Neighbourhood Help portal (https://corona-nachbarschaftshilfe.at/) or Kungsbacka, Sweden "digital doer" booking platform (https://utc-mannheim.de/en/kungsbacka-digital-doers-help-you-stay-connected/).
- **Hashtag campaigns** aimed at promoting solidarity, e.g., #HoldingItTogetherApart in Dublin (https://twitter.com/_togetherapart_).
- **Online or F2F forums**, chatrooms, social spaces, etc., e.g., the SW Birmingham neighbourhood forum (https://www.facebook.com/groups/bvoicescommunity).
- **Online or F2F participatory democratic processes** designed to give policy input, e.g., as in various sites in Germany and France (https://www.buergerrat.de/en/news/with-citizens-assemblies-against-covid-19/).
- **Online or F2F living labs**/focus groups/co-creation activities on topics of concern, e.g., as in he Meuse-Rhine Euroregion (https://euprevent.eu/profile/) and Warsaw (https://utc-mannheim.de/warsaw-open-innovation-to-help-restaurants/).
- **Co-production initiatives** for personal protective equipment and other vital goods, e.g., as in Lublin, Poland (https://www.facebook.com/polandin/videos/2651958221596850/).
- **Online platforms combining multiple participatory opportunities**, e.g., the Decide Madrid platform in Spain (https://decide.madrid.es/procesos_covid).

- **Private or semi-private forums** such as Telegram chats for neighbourhoods, groups of friends, families, etc. (researchers may not be able to access such forums, but there may be secondary literature about them).

The following websites, which have gathered examples of good participatory practices, were suggested as places to begin the search:

- https://www.opengovpartnership.org/collecting-open-government-approaches-to-covid-19/
- https://covidnews.eurocities.eu/city-overview-of-measures/
- https://oidp.net/en/covid19/page.php?id=46
- https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org/
- https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/covid-19-special-page
- https://sites.google.com/participedia.net/citizensvoicescovid

Partners were furthermore asked to search both Google (or other relevant search engines) and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter (or relevant national sites) for the following keywords and similar, in local languages and English, with and without capitalisation:

- *"COVID-19" or "Coronavirus" or "Corona" or "pandemic" (etc.)*

AND

- *"Participation" or "participate" (etc.)*
- *"Volunteering" or "volunteer" (etc.)*
- *"Help" or "assist" or "aid" (etc.)*
- *"Solidarity" or "togetherness" or "support" or "peer-to-peer" (etc.)*
- *"Grassroots" or "advocacy" or "empowerment" (etc.)*

AND

- *Neighbourhood name*
- *City name*
- *Region name*
- *Country name*
- *Europe*

Partners were additionally reminded that the COVID-19 landing sites set up by national, state, and local governmental authorities may provide links to participatory practices, initiatives, and opportunities, and that Google searching for the practices listed can sometimes yield news stories or other secondary sources that provide information about backstories (when was it founded, what were the motivations, etc.).

The search resulted in a collection of N=150 participatory practices, distributed as shown in Table 1. Note that the search was exploratory, not systematic; this collection does **not** claim to be representative of the real distribution of participatory practices across the target countries.

**Table 1.** Participatory practices identified per country

| Target country (target municipality) | Practices identified |
|---|---|
| Austria (Vienna) | 6 (3) |
| Belgium (Antwerp) | 7 (4) |

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|---|---|
| Cyprus (not applicable) | 10 (not applicable) |
| Germany (Mannheim) | 15 (5) |
| Greece (Athens) | 22 (2) |
| Ireland (Dublin) | 4 (1) |
| Italy (Rome) | 11 (4) |
| Portugal (Lisbon) | 13 (7) |
| Romania (Bendea) | 4 (0) |
| Spain (Madrid) | 11 (6) |
| Sweden (Gothenburg) | 27 (7) |
| Switzerland (St. Gallen) | 9 (3) |
| UK: England (Birmingham) | 4 (1) |
| UK (Wales) | 7 (3) |
| **Total** | **150** |

For each practice, partners were asked to specify a set of details (see Annex I). Based on these details, partners were asked to write a descriptive overview of the types, context, scope, themes, impacts (if known), and overall significance of participatory practices in their countries as a whole, and their target municipalities in specific. The per-country descriptions were edited for consistency, and searches were performed for additional information when necessary. A cross-country comparative analysis was then performed utilising a set of dimensions developed by Falanga (2020) in an earlier systematisation of participatory practices in N=58 European cities: timeframe, sponsor/actors, scope, theme, and channel. Finally, the conclusions drawn in the comparative analysis were tied back to the project's theoretical framework and research questions, and directions were identified for the further analysis of participatory practices within the ongoing COVINFORM research. Descriptions of the findings per target country and municipality follow.

# 3 Participatory practices in the target countries

## 3.1 Austria

### 3.1.1 General analysis

In Austria, during our current research period, we could not identify many participatory initiatives and barely any new ones in addition to those reported in D6.1. It is possible that 1.) many participatory initiatives already died down/faded out; 2.) the ones that still remain active are mostly private/self-organised, rather than organised via publicly accessible groups or online platforms. However, we have no substantiated sources for the latter claim. As outlined in D6.1, during the first phases of the pandemic, several participatory initiatives were coordinated or rooted in the actions of the City of Vienna. In our current search, we could also identify that many of the still existing Austria-wide initiatives are supported by or organised through established institutions such as for example the **Red**

**Cross**, **Caritas**, and **Diakonie**. We could also identify that some initiatives were temporarily 'repurposed' and shifted focus to support people during the first COVID-19 waves. Examples are clubs and associations such as the **Initiative Pro-Hund**, a club for dog owners, which supported its members with specific information on COVID-19 measures (e.g., am I allowed to walk my dog during quarantine) and provided support (e.g., persons to walk the dog of an infected and quarantined person) through its own Corona Hotline[1].  Another example is **Team Österreich Nachbarschaftshilfe**, discussed below.

An important aspect to take into account is that volunteering changed during the pandemic. A study by Linzer Market Institute for the Ministry of Health reported that 20% of the volunteers stopped their voluntary work because of the pandemic. This is partially due to the COVID-19 measures, preventing e.g., visits to senior homes. Many volunteers are older residents and some of the big organisations working with volunteers decided not to have older people at their venue as a public health measure. However, one-third of those who continued their voluntary work took on additional activities. In addition, certain volunteering activities were moved to the internet, thus excluding some groups[2].

Initiatives identified in D6.1 which are still active are the **Corona Nachbarschaftshilfe** and the **Plaudertischerl**. The webpage of Corona Nachbarschaftshilfe is still active; however, it is not clear how active the community is. The platform connects volunteers, who offer to run errands with vulnerable groups who need help, and is supported by the Team Österreich Initiative, run by Caritas.  The initiative Plaudertischerl is also still active. It is an initiative aiming at connecting people to meet at a cafe and chat with others. However, there is no mention of COVID-19 anymore on their homepage or Facebook group. The initiative was supported by the Diakonie and the Health Ministry. We will describe this more in detail in the following section.

The following section describes three examples of Austria-wide initiatives: first, a volunteering platform that was organised by the Austrian Red Cross and a radio station of the Austrian Public Broadcaster, ORF. Second, a self-help group of people affected by Long COVID. Third, an online support and consultation service for female victims of physical, psychological, or sexual violence, which existed prior to the pandemic but was extended during lockdowns.

**Team Österreich Nachbarschaftshilfe** (Team Austria neighbourhood help) is part of the **Team Österreich (Team Austria) Initiative** which is run by the Austrian Red Cross and the radio station Hitradio Ö3[3], which is part of the Austrian public broadcaster ORF. It represents a platform where volunteers can sign up to support professional front-line workers in various catastrophe and crisis settings such as floods or earthquakes. The initiative was founded in August 2007. Volunteers sign up and receive an alarm once their help is needed. There are various specific topics such as the Team Österreich Tafel (Team Austria Table), where volunteers can pick up food donations from supermarkets etc and organise them to be distributed to people in need. Other teams are: the digital team, the lifesaver team and the neighbourhood help team. The Team Austria Neighbourhood team was set up during the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers could and still can sign up to help people with their groceries if they are in home quarantine or members of a risk group. According to the radio station's

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[1] https://www.facebook.com/Pro-Hund-109078983892678/, see also https://www.heute.at/s/die-haeufigsten-fragen-bei-der-pro-hund-corona-hotline-100116043

[2] We could not find the study itself, but several newspaper articles reported on its outcomes. See https://www.meinbezirk.at/c-lokales/corona-veraendert-arbeit-von-ehrenamtlichen_a5047225 and https://kurier.at/wirtschaft/karriere/wie-corona-die-freiwilligenarbeit-veraendert-hat/401125371

[3] https://oe3.orf.at/teamoesterreich

webpage, the initiative became the cornerstone of neighbourhood support during the COVID-19 pandemic[4]. At some point, the platform counted 85.000 volunteers who signed up for volunteering[5].

**Long COVID-19 Austria** is a self-help group of people affected by Long COVID. It is also the first group of this kind in Austria. The group was founded in January 2021 and had 1.484 members in January 2022. Later numbers are not available. One of the aims of the group is to provide information about Long COVID-19to people who are also affected by it or are interested. By now the self-help group also built a pool of medical practitioners that support them in various ways. The homepage provides much information about the illness and support opportunities[6].

During the lockdown phase of the pandemic, victim protection and support for women and girls was extended through the online portal **HaltDerGewalt** https://www.haltdergewalt.at/index.php, which provides online counselling services (in addition to an existing women's help hotline). Consultation service hours were increased to a daily service between 15.00 to 22.00[7]. During these times, women and girls affected by (physical, psychological or sexual) violence were provided with help and support by several counsellors. Women and girls seeking help could register with a username of their choice and create a password to receive anonymous and free support. While the online service is still available, consultation hours have been reduced again to the pre-lockdown state.

### 3.1.2 Target municipality: Vienna

The three initiatives that we present from our target municipality Vienna vary. We present a very localised participatory initiative that is not centrally organised, as well as a centralised initiative that runs all over Vienna (and Lower Austria), which is however also organised in localised/neighbourhood units. Finally, we also describe a centralised and Vienna-wide hotline that was established to answer questions within the neighbourhood.

During our desk research we could identify that there are still several so-called **Grätzlhilfe Telegram groups** active. Grätzl is a Viennese dialect word for a part of a district/a neighbourhood. These groups were founded mostly during March/April 2020 with the aim of supporting other members in the neighbourhood. The groups call for solidarity in times of COVID-19. Their aim was to connect with others in the neighbourhood to find solutions for COVID-19-related issues, link up if people need help going grocery shopping and so on. It is unclear who founded these groups. However, they are explicitly against the spread of misinformation. We could identify such groups for the 2nd/20st district, the 8th/9th district, the 10th district, the 12th district as well as the 15th/16th district.

While scrolling through these groups, one can find more initiatives such as hotel rooms for people affected by homelessness, multilingual information about COVID-19, Kurzarbeit (short work arrangements), support opportunities, exchange about current political debates and so on. Some of the groups also engage in or at least shared political activities or campaigns supporting refugees in their community or the financial survival of sex workers or the car-free zones in their suburbs, violence against women or antisemitism, to only name a few. A big part of the information was somewhat related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, none of the groups has more than 150 members. It is

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[4] https://www.teamoesterreich.at/corona/

[5] https://oe3.orf.at/stories/3000110/

[6] https://www.longcovidaustria.at/

[7] Currently, in a phase without significant COVID-19 restrictions, consultation is offered for one hour daily, between 18.00-22.00 (9.00-11.00 on Fridays).

unclear if they had more followers at some point. Over the years the conversations and exchange has slowed down and the topics are often not related to COVID-19 anymore.

We already mentioned the initiative **Plaudertischerl** (roughly to be translated as chatting table) in D6.1. Back then, the services of Plaudertischerl were delivered online. Nowadays, the majority of the service takes place in real life. However, there is a zoom option. The basic idea is to connect people from all walks of life, get them to meet up in a cafe or neighbourhood centre and have a chat. The background is that many residents do not have people to chat with. Plaudertischerl creates a place where people can have exchanges with others, be listened to and listen to people from their neighbourhood. The Plaudertischerl is modelled after 'The Chatter Cafe Scheme' running in England. The initiative is run by the Diakonie, the union of support and social organisation of the evangelical church, and is supported by the Ministry of Health.

To make the service more accessible, there is no compulsion to consume anything even if the chat takes place in a Cafe. The initiative runs in Vienna and Lower Austria. Being able to connect with others should also help to strengthen the social cohesion of a neighbourhood. Finally, being connected to others in the community should also benefit the mental and physical wellbeing of community members. It is not apparent since when this service is running. However, it already existed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the 14th of June 2021, the actual catch-ups are again taking place in Cafes and community centres all over Vienna and Lower Austria. However, as mentioned above there is still the possibility to catch up via Zoom.

In March 2020, a service provided by the City of Vienna called **Wohnpartner** (residential partner) which does community and mediation as well as networking in community housing to strengthen the neighbourhood, started a **Nachbarschafts-Telefon** (neighbourhood telephone). People living in Vienna and who need support in their neighbourhood could call the hotline. It answered questions like: how can one help older people in their everyday lives without endangering them or oneself? What can children do without a park and playground? What play, learning and occupational opportunities exist for children and young people?

The service is no longer available and we do not know for how long it was running. There is also no data available regarding the use and uptake of this service.

## 3.2 Belgium

### 3.2.1 General analysis

The participatory practices identified in Belgium were quite diverse in their scope and focus. While some initiatives focused on providing practical support (e.g. Antwerpen helpt, 'T Werkhuys social take-away and Plateforme Solidarité Molenbeek), others focused on the psychosocial impact of the crisis (e.g. Coronababbels) or on communication/information about COVID-19 (e.g. Sensi ambassadors). Key issues addressed by participatory practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in Belgium include loneliness; financial hardship; the need for practical assistance in the face of infection risk and quarantine requirements; and the need for tailored COVID-19 information and active outreach. Although most initiatives succeeded in including the voices of those who engage to discuss their needs and issues, or used cultural mediators, it remains a struggle to truly work in a collaborative and participatory way from the start to the end of the initiative.

**Walk-in vaccination buses (Vacci-Bus)** offer an example of a practice coordinated between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' actors that proved successful on a nationwide level. In September 2021, whilst 83% of adults in Belgium were fully vaccinated, the vaccination rate in Brussels was at 62.5%. As a response to this disparity, walk-in vaccination buses were established in neighbourhoods in Brussels which had a lower uptake. These collaborated with local organisations and volunteers. The buses were used particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods to make vaccinations more accessible and convenient for more vulnerable groups (Keolis, 2021).

Other practices were regional or local in scope. As an example of a regional practice, in November 2020, the Walloon government launched a broad citizen consultation called **Get up Wallonia!** with its inhabitants to help form a recovery plan post COVID-19, aiming to manage the health emergency, minimise the economic and social impacts of the crisis, revive socio-economic activity and strengthen societal resilience. The consultation took place on an online platform, or in the form of a paper questionnaire. Influencers on social media such as TikTok and Instagram were involved in promoting the consultation. Almost 18,000 contributions were received, forming the backbone of a report with 51 recommended actions and 18 measures (Wallonie.be, 2020).

As an example of a municipal practice, the City and mayor of Molenbeek started the Facebook group and website **Molenbeek Solidarity Platform (Solidarité 1080 Solidariteit)**. This platform connects residents who want to volunteer with associations in Molenbeek supporting the most vulnerable. It specifically searched for people to help run errands for sick and isolated people, helping prepare meals and delivering meals for isolating people. An online form was provided for aspiring volunteers, as well as contact information for further information.

An in-depth analysis of several practices located in the target municipality of Antwerp follow.

### 3.2.2 Target municipality: Antwerp

Participatory practices centred in the City of Antwerp mirror those undertaken in other parts of the country with regard to diversity of scope and focus; channels utilised; timeframes encompassed; and range of actors involved.

An example of an initiative relying on active citizen involvement in COVID-19 communication strategies to promote trust and counter the spread of misinformation was the use of **Sensi Ambassadors** in the City of Antwerp. A diverse group of ambassadors — typically people with a broad network in their neighbourhood, religious community or migrant community — were recruited by the City of Antwerp to receive training about COVID-19, distribute multilingual communication materials, and act as a trusted source of information for their network (City of Antwerp, 2020). The programme has been phased out gradually in spring 2021, but the experiences with the Sensi Ambassadors were very positive (ibid.).

In late March 2020, the City of Antwerp launched a platform called **Antwerp helps** (*Antwerpen helpt*) to promote the large number of volunteer initiatives that were blossoming across the city. These included initiatives to help out residents with practical things such as getting groceries, going to the pharmacy and taking out their dog. Residents in need of help could sign up through an online form or using a free telephone number, and Antwerp residents who are willing to help can register as volunteers (Van Berendoncks, 2020). The platform was founded during the first lockdown period, in March 2020.

An initiative set up by the City of Antwerp to address the psychological impact of the crisis is **'Corona chats'** (*Coronababbels*). A total of seven community organizations in the city were involved in organizing activities tailored to their target audience: two aimed at young people, two aimed at sex workers, one aimed at newly arrived migrants, one at people with a migration background, and one at people living in poverty. These projects were set up to provide psychosocial support, strengthen people's social networks, engage in dialogue about these groups' concerns, and provide feedback signals to policymakers. Participants of Coronababbels who need additional support are referred on to specialised psychological or psychiatric care (Stad Antwerpen, 2021).

Among the community initiatives in Borgerhout were several aimed at providing families in financial difficulties with affordable or free food/meals. For example, the **sociocultural meeting house *'t Werkhuys*** launched a neighborhood restaurant where people could enjoy a full take-away meal for three euros (Acke, 2021). The 't Werkhuys team noticed that the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the food insecurity faced by many households in the district, and prioritised the scale-up of providing affordable community meals. They received additional funding for this during the pandemic, and the initiative was such a success that they have now been awarded longer-time financing to continue it (source: WP6 interviews).

## 3.3 Cyprus

### 3.3.1 General analysis

Though small, the island of Cyprus saw a rich variety of participatory practices arise during the pandemic. These included both voluntary initiatives started by existing aid organisations (such as Cyprus Red Cross) and new voluntary initiatives co-founded in response to the pandemic (such as the initiative #SupportCY). These initiatives provided both material and psychosocial support, often supported through crowdsourcing, and sometimes popularized via hashtag campaigns. While these voluntary initiatives often cooperated directly with or indirectly supported governmental response measures, it is important to note that residents also participated in the politics of COVID-19 in critical ways, for instance, by writing open letters that questioned and/or proposed alternatives to official policies and measures. An in-depth exploration of exemplary practices follows.

The primary concern of voluntary aid organisations is to provide psychological and material assistance, facilitated by groups of volunteers. A prime example of a voluntary aid organisation that played a leading role during the pandemic was the **Cyprus Red Cross**. This organization is aimed to the prevention and relief of human suffering, without any distinction (Cyprus Red Cross, n.d.)[8]. During the pandemic, the supply of humanitarian aid to different vulnerable groups was continued through the distribution of clothing and hygiene packages to residents at the Purnara Center, which is in Kokkinotrimithia, close to Nicosia. **Cyprus Samaritans** is another organization, which was founded in 1997 and cooperates with the organization Inter-Net of Befrienders Worldwide, which operates in 38 countries and 6 continents (Cyprus Samaritans, n.d.)[9]. Its trained volunteers offer support and psychosocial assistance by phone and face-to-face at centers in Paphos and Limassol. One primary goal of this organization is to offer confidential emotional support to those who feel lonely with problems and can't cope with them and need someone to listen to them. Cyprus Samaritans is run entirely by volunteers, and accepts donations of both money and goods. The **Social Policy and Action**

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[8] https://www.redcross.org.cy/el/our-news/provision-of-humanitarian-assistance-to-migrants.

[9] https://www.cyprussamaritans.org/help-donations/.

**Organization (SPAO)** is another organization that has been providing assistance to vulnerable target groups. The SPAO is operating an ongoing social program entitled "CARE PACKAGES CY", to collect and distribute food, clothes and other essentials for the most deprived in Cyprus (SPAO, n.d.)[10]. Some of their activities include the collection and distribution of food and other essentials and running an online support line for direct requests for support and reporting cases in which support might be needed.

Municipal-level social organisations and spaces also offered essential assistance during COVID-19. An example is the **Social Supermarket of the Larnaka Municipality** (Municipality of Larnaka, n.d.)[11]. Social spaces have a significant impact on the community: specifically, they meet the primary needs of socially and financially vulnerable people and families by distributing food, other necessary items, and support services. Whereas the Social Supermarket of the Larnaka Municipality is an example of a localised space, nationwide organisations such as the Cyprus Red Cross also operate social spaces across the island. Their volunteers work to help vulnerable people in nearly all the towns and districts of Cyprus, responding to emergency situations, and providing first aid, relief, solidarity, and support to those in need.

In addition to initiatives by established groups, the pandemic sparked the emergence of **new public-private partnership initiatives**. An example is a cooperative initiative of the Labour Ministry, the Commissioner for Volunteerism, the NGO Reaction, and the Bank of Cyprus (in-cyprus, 2020)[12]. Within this initiative, volunteers visit the vulnerable at home to supply food, medicine, and other essentials. Among the people supported are confirmed and suspected coronavirus cases who are in self-isolation at home under the instructions of the Ministry of Health. Others requiring help can convey their needs through local authorities, NGOs active on health and disability issues, and other volunteers.

Several support initiatives were coordinated through social media, and particularly with the use of hashtag campaigns. A prime example is **#SupportCy**, which was created by the NGO Reaction in partnership with the Bank of Cyprus and a supporting network of companies and organizations (inbusiness news, 2020)[13]. The members of the network coordinate to bolster governmental efforts against COVID-1919 through their work, products, and services. The #SupportCy network also supports mobile crews dispatched by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance to serve and support people who cannot move from their home and do not have a supporting environment to supplying them with food, medicine, and other essentials. The action is coordinated out of a space provided by the Bank of Cyprus, which can offer the appropriate infrastructure, while needs for equipment and consumables are met through the #SupportCY network.

Often, voluntary aid organisations and volunteer initiatives took advantage of private and corporate donations. An example of the crowdsourcing of material support is the **Initiative "Volunteers for the Support of Vulnerable Groups during the Pandemic"** (European Economic and Social Committee, 2021)[14]. Immediately after the general lockdown in Cyprus, in March 2020, the group managed in just a few days to mobilize around 1500 volunteers willing to help contribute food, medical supplies, and

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[10] https://www.socialpolicyaction.org/carepackagescy.

[11] https://www.larnaka.org.cy/en/social-solidarity solidarity /social-supermarket/.

[12] https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/news/local/coronavirus-volunteer-teams-to-pay-home-visits-to-support-vulnerable/.

[13] https://inbusinessnews.reporter.com.cy/financials/cyprus/article/244489/ekatommyria-apo-kypriakes-etaireies-sti-machi-kata-toy-koronoioy.

[14] https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/h-protovoylia-ethelontes-gia-tin-ypostirixi-eypathon-omadon-sti-diarkeia-tis-pandimias-apo-tin-kypro-nikitis-toy.

support to vulnerable groups. Within the two months following the start of lockdown, they carried out about 8,000 actions, supplying food and medical material and providing other daily services and assistance to individuals and families in isolation. **Large companies active in Cyprus** also contributed goods and services to the COVID-19 response, the specifics of which depended on their sectors and competences (pharmaceuticals, hotels, supermarkets, etc.) (InBusinessNews, 2020)[15]. An example is PwC Cyprus, which donated financially to reinforce the Cyprus Red Cross efforts to support to people who could leave their homes and did not have a person to purchase and transport necessary goods to their homes, and/or had no money to buy what they needed.

Cyprus also provides an inspiring example of the crowdsourcing of informational, rather than material, support: a **UNHCR Cyprus initiative to engage refugee volunteers** in a race to inform refugee communities and support them in facing the new challenges brought on by the pandemic. Specifically, the UNHCR team of volunteers have been translating key information into their mother tongues and disseminating this information to the diverse refugee communities across Cyprus; the materials translated and distributed have included official health advisories and other information relating to the emergency measures (UNHCR Cyprus, 2020)[16].

Finally, as noted above, it is important to recognise resident participation in the broader politics of COVID-19 is not limited to volunteer efforts to provide support to others. Attempts to influence the trajectory of governmental policies should also be considered participatory practices. Forms of **participatory democracy** online or F2F during the pandemic included **petitions** and **open letters of protest**, which intend to provide policy input, particularly emphasizing gaps. One example is an open letter written by the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Pancyprian Guild "EQUALITY", Kyriakos Kyriakou, to Minister of Health for Child Vaccination. The letter requests answers to a series of questions, such as whether it would not be better to test children for antibodies at regular intervals rather than vaccinating them while ignoring this parameter (AlarmCall, 2021)[17].

### 3.3.2 Target municipality: Not applicable

As Cyprus is a small island, most participatory practices identified took place on a nationwide level.

## 3.4 Germany

### 3.4.1 General analysis

When it comes to initiatives in Germany as a whole, digitalization plays a critical role in enabling citizen participation – and thus, democratic solutions to the COVID-19 health crisis (Falanga 2020, 2). Many nationwide initiatives were conducted online, the most prominent one being **#hackthevirus**, which was led by the German federal government. The Hackathon even made digitalization and its benefits to crisis management on a long-term basis its main topic. The initiative's impact can relatively easily be measured through the over 43.000 residents, scientists and specialists who participated and through the solutions proposed which were published as open source material. It can hence be termed

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[15]https://inbusinessnews.reporter.com.cy/financials/cyprus/article/244489/ekatommyria-apo-kypriakes-etaireies-sti-machi-kata-toy-koronoioy.

[16]https://www.unhcr.org/cy/2020/04/30/refugee-volunteers-in-cyprus-reach-out-to-communities-during-covid-19-lockdown/.

[17] https://www.alarmcall.org/society/anoikti-epistoli-pros-ypourgo-ygeias/707/.

a pioneer project of citizen participation in times of a crisis of this scale. Nevertheless, how many propositions were put into action remains unclear.

In a similar but not identical way, **Post-Coron-A-Mat** exemplifies an online participatory practice which also aims at aggregating knowledge. It is led by a think tank and is thus not governmentally initiated or supported for that matter. Additionally, it is rather designed as a collective reminder of the learnings of the Corona pandemic than a provider for possible solutions. Its impact remains yet to be seen, but it is undoubtedly laid out as a long-term project.

Contrary to both the government's hackathon and the Post-Coron-A-Mat, although with a similar name, the **Impf-O-Mat** is not directed at engaging the public or aggregating knowledge but rather at educating the public, to be more specific at enabling the public to make a well-informed choice about their vaccination status. Its initiators are two scientists, however, the website is run and supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Integration.

**Krisenchat** is a nationwide available WhatsApp chat through which a counselling team takes care of children and young people who need psychological help on a voluntarily and confidential basis. This initiative offers an example of a nationwide participatory practice which firstly is almost exclusively conducted by specialists working in the mental health sector and which is secondly and even more interestingly directed at a specific target group, namely children and young people, defining them as group not increasingly vulnerable to the virus itself but particularly vulnerable to the mental and social impacts of Corona measures like lockdowns and school closures. Its impact can to some extent be measured through its over 50.000 consultations. However, the initiative clearly aims at a long-term affect on young people or to put it differently and possibly more precisely at preventing negative long-term impacts rooted in isolation and lockdown.

Finally, in Germany as in other countries, online mutual aid platforms achieved a wide reach, especially during the pre-vaccine period. Examples are national platforms hosted by **Nebenan.de**, **Flexhero.de**, and **einkaufshelden.org** (organised by the youth group of the Christian Democratic Union), as well as numerous local initiatives: examples in Heidelberg are Tackle Corona, organised by local rugby associations, and QuaranTeen, organised by a group of students (see below). Mutual aid platforms and networks have been aggregated on local government websites (e.g., in the City of Heidelberg: https://www.heidelberg.de/hd/coronavirus_+nachbarschaftshilfe+in+heidelberg.html), and mapped by users of the open-source community knowledge-sharing and action platform Ushahidi (https://redaktor.ushahidi.io/views/map).

From the examples provided above, it can be concluded that a large proportion of nationwide initiatives aims at providing or aggregating knowledge or information. Further, with the exception of Krisenchat they all address the general public without a specific societal target group, which is in stark contrast to local participatory practices. Additionally, #hackthevirus and Post-Coron-A-Mat are both aiming at knowledge sustainability and at producing benefits for crises yet to come.

### 3.4.2 Target municipality: Mannheim

Due to the fact that large cities are more likely to have a higher population density, face dire poverty issues, and have highly variable rates of access to health care, they tend to be a more welcoming environment for the spread and mutation of a virus like COVID-19. Nevertheless, as the case of Mannheim in Germany demonstrates, cities are often centres of political decision making, economic welfare and citizen participation (Falanga 2020: 2). The latter in particular is vital for providing

democratic and participatory solutions for nationwide health crises and their societal impacts (ibid. 3). It is notable that many participatory initiatives - whether induced by governmental actors or grassroot campaigning - have taken place partly or entirely online throughout the COVID-19 crisis, even when they originated in and/or targeted a specific geographical location, e.g., a municipality such as Mannheim. This demonstrates how the realm of (urban) democratic governance and participation is no longer restricted to face-to-face interaction.

Examples of participatory practices in the target municipality of Mannheim include QuaranTeen, Brauchtdich.org, #weRculture, and Gabenzaun.

Both **QuaranTeen** and **Brauchtdich.org** were designed to provide support in the form of grocery shopping or animal care for at risk groups, like the elderly or the pre-diseased. Further, they both used the benefits of digitalization in order to facilitate organization and communication of those providing support and those in need of it. Accordingly, the actual act of help was executed not online but analogously, on-the-field. The main difference between QuaranTeen and Brauchtdich.org can be detected in the founding of the initiatives. Whereas QuaranTeen was solely initiated by a group of three local university attendees that successfully mobilized fellow students, Brauchtdich.org has a more economic background, as it was founded by two businesses who took the opportunity not only to provide support for those in need but also to combat the economic repercussions of the health crisis by opening the platform to other businesses like delivery services from local restaurants. Although the individual acts of help are short-term, both QuaranTeen and brauchtdich.org both represent sustainable, longer-lasting platforms of support which can be re-launched without difficulty in times of high rising COVID-19 cases.

In contrast to QuaranTeen and Brauchtdich.org, **#weRculture** aims in a different direction. On the one hand it enables artists to produce and publish content with online reach in times where being a self-employed artist in many cases meant being without work. On the other hand, it is a campaign that aims at strengthening and promoting solidarity which can be deduced from the fact that the R in the initiative's name stands for Respect and Responsibility. A further aspect which distinguishes this initiative from others in the Mannheim region is that it was installed by a local responder, the Mannheim UNESCO City of Music, to the global call to creatives by the United Nations and is thus part of an internationally ramified campaign. Although there was only a limited time window for artists to submit their contributions, the initiative may be categorized as aiming at a mid-to-long-term effect, as solidarity and responsibility remained important values throughout the pandemic and all contributions are still available online.

In comparison to the initiatives mentioned above, **Gabenzaun** is one of the few local support services that was solely operated face-to-face. As the name suggests it is a fence where people may leave clothes, hygiene products or donations for homeless people in their town. It is a grassroot initiative put in place by a small group of residents aiming at providing quick and effective help. Gabenzäune could be found all over Germany, there was however no nationwide administrator, leaving the installation up to regional initiators.

The examples above are in line with Falanga's (2020: 3) findings that the majority of local participatory practices aim at supporting specific societal groups, like the most vulnerable as they may rely on residents and local institutions on- and offline for daily needs. Despite their short-term to mid-term approach, in particular online platforms are sustainable in terms of easy re-launch. However, in contrast to what Falanga (2020: 6) claims, the majority of local practices in the Mannheim region were

not governmentally led or initiated, but may rather be defined as grassroots campaigns that were partly inspired by initiatives from different regions (like Gabenzaun) or were later support by other organizations (like QuaranTeen).

## 3.5 Greece

### 3.5.1 General analysis

At the outbreak of COVID-19 and throughout the years of the pandemic until now, multiple CSOs initiatives and citizen-led responses can be identified in Greece, which were intensified as communities became more knowledgeable about the impacts of the healthcare crisis. These responses vary by scope, objectives, and target audiences; nevertheless, all of them orient towards promoting solidarity, providing material and psychosocial support, and reinforcing well-being, as well as adapting to the new status quo. In Greece, existing civil society organisations made good use of online channels during the pandemic, launching mutual aid platforms, hashtag campaigns, and crowdsourcing campaigns. We have identified fewer examples of new initiatives founded specifically in response to the pandemic. An in-depth exploration of exemplary practices follows.

Online mutual aid platforms were among the most visible of participatory practices in Greece. Often, platforms were set up by established civil society organisations. **Diotima**, for instance, a well-known community organization promoting gender equality and offering psychosocial counselling to victims of gender abuse (Diotima, n.d.)[18], was highly active during the pandemic, establishing a Facebook Help Desk (Diotima, 2022)[19] to connect and support victims, through which information could be found and assistance could be requested in a variety of languages (Diotima, 2020)[20]. **Agkalia**, another community organization dedicated to protecting deprived mothers and their children, has established online mutual assistance services for vulnerable residents, including psychosocial support for both mothers and children (Agkalia, n.d.)[21]. Both Diotima and Agkalia provided tailored health and general information to their target groups (Agkalia, 2020)[22]. Furthermore, in addition to providing direct support, both organisations  encouraged peer-to-peer connections between their clients to facilitate mutual aid Agkalia, n.d.)[23],[24],[25]. Other organisations that provided assistance through online platforms during the pandemic include **AMKE Fainareti**, which provides remote psychosocial counselling to groups as diverse as young parents and healthcare professionals (Social Policy, 2020)[26]., and **SynAthina**, which focuses on connecting users to CSOs based on their needs (SynAthina, n.d.)[27].

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[18] https://www.facebook.com/DiotimaHelpdesk/.
[19] https://diotima.org.gr/help-desk-gia-tin-ypostirixi-epizoson-emfylis-vias/.
[20] https://www.facebook.com/NGOdiotima/photos/a.117228345280577/1179424005727667/?type=3.
[21] https://www.agalia.org.gr/help-me.php?title=%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%89%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1-%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1.
[22] https://www.agalia.org.gr/articles.php?title=%CE%95%CE%B3%CE%BA%CF%85%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BD%CE%B7%20%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%20%CE%9A%CE%BF%CF%81%CF%89%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%8A%CF%8C%CF%82%20Covid-19&article=688.
[23] https://www.agalia.org.gr/volunteers.php?title=%CE%B5%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82.
[24] https://www.agalia.org.gr/donation.php?title=%CE%B4%CF%89%CF%81%CE%B5%CE%AD%CF%82.
[25] https://www.agalia.org.gr/programs.php?title=%CF%80%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%BF%CF%87%CE%AE%CF%82.
[26] https://socialpolicy.gr/2020/03/%CE%BA%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%8A%CF%8C%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CF%86%CF%89%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CF%85%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%84%CE%AE%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BE%CE%B7-%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%BA.html.
[27] https://www.synathina.gr/el/%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%82/%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%82-%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%84%CF%8E%CE%BD.html?search_teams=&activities%5Bactivity_8%5D=8#teams-results.

The online platforms active in Greece are not initiated solely by existing CSOs, but also by self-organised groups of residents. An example is **Initiative "Ψ"**, the Initiative for a Diverse Movement for Mental Health, a citizen-led Facebook-based mutual aid group, in which approximately 3.800 members seek and provide socio-psychological assistance and counselling (Initiative "Ψ", n.d.)[28]. During the pandemic, Initiative "Ψ" provided a forum for discussions of mental health effects, which stresses accessibility to both Greek-origin and migrant-origin users, and highlights the connections between mental health and contemporary social issues such as (undocumented) migration.

Online forums also provided fertile ground for citizen-led responses during COVID-19. Examples include the **online forum for business owners** (2020)[29]; a forum facilitated by the **Panhellenic Medical Association** in which both medical professionals and residents can exchange information and opinions on COVID-19 (OnMed, 2020)[30]; a **COVID-19Q&A platform** in which medical experts reply to COVID-19 related questions (iatronet, 2020)[31]; and the forum of the **Medical Association in Kavala** (2020)[32] and the forum of the **Greek Inflammatory Bowel Disease Research Group** (2021 - 2022)[33]. Public forums have a significant impact on the community as they allow residents and healthcare professionals to exchange information and express their concerns on COVID-19 cases, while it has a nation-wide scope.

In addition to providing direct services and disseminating information, online platforms and forums were also used to mobilise donations of money and material for those in need. Several initiatives were hosted by online crowdfunding/crowdsourcing platforms such as **YouBeHero**, which was created by three residents in 2019 and now constitutes of the joint effort of twenty residents; this platform's main objective is to "come closer as a society" by immersing residents in activities that promote mutual assistance, wellbeing, solidarity, and socialization (YouBeHero, n.d.)[34],[35]. One example is a campaign led by the abovementioned CSO **Agkalia** to support the purchase of baby formula and diapers for deprived children (YouBeHero, n.d.)[36].

A number of participatory practices active during the pandemic in Greece intensively used social media, particularly hashtag campaigns. These campaigns were often time-specific, focusing attention on whatever response measures were deemed most critical during a particular phase. An early example is **#ThaKatsoSpiti** (I will stay home), a stay-at-home campaign inspired by a song from Loukianos Kilaidonis and several other well-known artists, which was supported by three well-known organizations of the music industry (2020)[37]; profits from the song were donated to the Ministry of Health to purchase medical equipment to be used against COVID-19 (Municipality of Leukada, 2020)[38]. Similar hashtag campaigns that promoted staying at home as a solidarity measure were **#menoume_spiti** (we stay home) and **#ας_το_κανουμε_ολοι** (let's all do it), the latter of which was shared by figures such as artists, who have influential public profiles (Chatzipanagiotis, 2020)[39]. A prominent hashtag campaign initiated later in the course of the pandemic campaign by the Hellenic

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[28] https://www.facebook.com/groups/316067108586346/.
[29] https://symvoulos.chamber.cloud/t/schetika-me-thn-kathgoria-dhmosio-foroym-covid/23.
[30] https://www.onmed.gr/ygeia-politiki/story/382633/pis-neo-forum-kai-helpdesk-enimerosis-gia-ton-koronoio.
[31] https://www.iatronet.gr/iatriko-forum/orl/question/30739/.
[32] https://www.iskavalas.gr/index.php/forum/pathologikeseidikotites/232-thread-sxetika-me-ton-koronoio.
[33] https://eomifne.gr/gia-tous-astheneis/forum-asthenon?start=12.
[34] https://www.youbehero.com/gr/about-us.
[35] https://www.youbehero.com/gr/cause-category/filanthropikoi.
[36] https://www.youbehero.com/gr/cause/agalia.
[37] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2649630135356241&ref=sharing.
[38] https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/%CE%B8%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%AC%CF%84%CF%83%CF%89%CF%83%CF%80%CE%AF%CF%84%CE%B9/.
[39] https://fb.watch/fuViz3nkl3/.

Association of Pharmaceutical Companies was **#WeWontRest**, a which promoted vaccine availability for everyone (SFEE, n.d.)[40]. Finally, hashtag campaigns were used to draw attention to secondary effects of the pandemic: for instance, the abovementioned gender-focused CSO Diotima has promoted the **#UnlockYourPower** hashtag campaign to raise awareness of and engagement with the phenomenon of domestic violence during COVID-19 (Diotima, 2022)[41].

In addition to online activities, CSOs and groups of residents in Greece organised face-to-face mutual aid initiatives, principally after lockdowns had been relaxed. An example from the municipality of Thessaly was called **Mazi gia mia agkalia** (together for a hug), which highlighted the importance of volunteer initiatives, awareness raising, and prevention in protecting residents from healthcare issues, including COVID-19. This initiative was co-organised by Medical Association of Larissa and the Panhellenic Medical Association, and was supported by the Municipality of Thessaly (News4Health, 2022)[42]. A multi-day event was held in which specific spaces were given to representatives of associations for various healthcare-related issues, such as the national association for kidney disease, the children's well-being CSO, Smile of the Child, etc. The event brought together a number of healthcare-related volunteer activities, raised awareness of blood and organ donations other and healthcare-related issues. During the event, residents could also donate food, toys, and vital goods. Similar co-produced activities have taken place in other sites across Greece, focusing particularly on awareness-raising and volunteer activities such as blood donation (Skai, 2022)[43], as well as on the protection of vulnerable populations such as elderly residents (Greek Care Homes Association, n.d.)[44].

While the abovementioned activities generally sought to bolster or supplement official response measures, as in Cyprus, residents of Greece also used online channels to advocate for policy change. An example was an **open letter** written to all Ministries from the NGO Caring People with Autism, co-signed by 78 other relevant organizations, which highlighted the necessity of implement policy changes in order to ensure that adult residents with disabilities in Greece would not be excluded from specialized treatment, underlining parameters and recommendations (7meres, n.d.)[45]; (IxotisArtas, 2021)[46]. This case demonstrates the magnitude of citizen-led responses, in an organized attempt to influence or shape policies on a nation-wide scale, particularly for vulnerable residents during COVID-19.

### 3.5.2 Target municipality: Athens

Taking into consideration the demographic status quo in Greece, the majority of the above initiatives predominately take place in municipalities of Attica, and especially in the target municipality of Athens, which has a high human density.

An Athens-based initiative that utilised both face-to-face and online activities was **Kropotkin-19**, organized by member of the left-wing/anti-authoritarian movement in the Exarcheia neighbourhood of Athens, who operate collective kitchens (i.e. OneLoveKitchen), self-organized schools, refugee

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[40] https://www.sfee.gr/sfee-update-on-covid-19/.
[41] https://diotima.org.gr/unlock-your-power-endooikogeneiaki-via-kai-covid-19/.
[42] https://www.news4health.gr/health-news/14345/mazi-mia-agkalia-anagnorizontas-tin-aksia-tou-ethelontismoy.
[43] https://www.skai.gr/news/health/oloi-mazi-mporoume-programma-ethelontikon-aimodosion-apo-9-eos-kai-15-maiou.
[44] http://www.pemfi.gr/news/%CE%BD%CE%AD%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%BC%CF%86%CE%B7?start=4.
[45] https://www.7meres.gr/syllogos-quot-agkalia-quot-artas-quot-ochi-ston-apokleismo-enilikon-amea-apo-tis-eidikes-therapeies-quot/.
[46] https://ixotisartas.gr/%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B4%CE%B7%CF%86-%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%B1%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%83-%CF%8C%CF%87%CE%B9-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BD/.

solidarity collectives, "social clinics", and other social solidarity measures (n.d.)[47]. The initiative kicked-off during the first pandemic phase in Greece, particularly during the first lockdown in March 2020, and was active in collecting vital goods such as food and medicine, whilst provided socio-psychological and legal support to migrants, refugees, and unemployed residents. This initiative operated both on-site and via social media platforms and chat services such as Facebook messenger, Discord, WhatsApp, Jitsi and Telegram (Travlou, 2021)[48]. According to Travlou and Berant (2022)[49], this initiative stemmed from prior proven practices that include the mobilization of solidarity groups in that specific geographical area, who shared collective experiences with a variety of crises, forming networks of solidarity and care.

## 3.6 Ireland

### 3.6.1 General analysis

During times when COVID-19 restrictions were most stringent, volunteering opportunities in Ireland were limited due to 'remain at home' rules and reducing physical contacts. Once the COVID-19 virus reached Ireland, **Volunteer Ireland**, a national volunteer development organisation[50], wanted to make sure people could still provide support to organisations in need. These included organisations responding directly to the COVID-19 crisis and those trying to sustain existing services (ibid) At the same time, the organisation believed it was "important for volunteers' mental health and well-being to stay active and involved" (ibid).

On 15th April 2020, the **#VolunteerFromHome** campaign was introduced (ibid). The aim of the campaign was to highlight the different ways residents could continue to volunteer safely, from home (ibid). Volunteering types included micro-volunteering (e.g., the completion of smaller tasks that make up a bigger project), virtual volunteering (e.g., the process of donating skills, time, or knowledge online through various websites or platforms), and to some extent, physical volunteering roles (e.g., being physically present when carrying out volunteering roles). So far, some examples of COVID-19-related volunteering efforts include creating face masks for vulnerable members of the community and writing letters to nursing home residents (ibid). To date, the campaign has been significant in terms of offering residents the chance to take their mind off the COVID-19 pandemic and volunteer in other ways, such as assisting with conservation projects. Such projects included counting flowers and bees in gardens (ibid). Coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the project is typically known as the Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count). John Curran, the Manager of Donegal Volunteer Centre states, the campaign has "*proven to be beneficial for our mental health and well-being – something which is of the upmost important right now"[51].*

Another campaign was the **#SpruceUpYourStreet** campaign, intended to motivate people to assess how they could make small improvements in their neighbourhood (ibid). The campaign has also supported organisations to manage their volunteer programmes remotely and to also consider the different ways they could engage volunteers from home (ibid). Thus far, the campaign has produced stories of volunteering and volunteer management from home, supported with tips and advice (ibid).

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[47] https://www.facebook.com/kropotkin19/.

[48] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17547075.2020.1864119.

[49] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-86897-0_10.

[50] Volunteer Ireland: National Volunteer Organisation. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.volunteer.ie/

[51] McLaughlin, R. (2020). 'Something for everyone' with home volunteering - Donegal Woman. Retrieved 7 September 2022, from https://www.donegalwoman.ie/2020/04/24/something-for-everyone-with-home-volunteering/

While the concept of volunteering is not a new one, the #VolunteerFromHome campaign has had particular relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the campaign's initiation, Louth Volunteer Centre Manager, Gráinne Berrill, said: "*People have been amazing during this crisis, the upsurge of community support and the desire to help one another is a real sign of the solidarity people in Ireland have for one another*"[52]. Berrill further added that there was "*a 140% increase in new volunteers registering with Louth Volunteer Centre*" and that many were "*offering to help out informally in their local communities*" (ibid).  Over 12,000 new volunteers registered on the national volunteering database, I-VOL, during the first few weeks of April 2020[53].

Also in 2020, Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar, an Irish Fine Gael politician, launched a campaign named **In This Together**. The motivation behind the campaign was to help people living in Ireland 'Stay Connected, Stay Alive', and look after their Mental Wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In an attempt to help residents feel healthier and better in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, the campaign encouraged people to take up a new activity. To help people choose a specific activity, "In This Together" provided frequent videos and ideas for people of all ages. Dissemination was predominantly done via social media and partners in the media, and also promoted by the "Community Call" forums which were set up across the country (note that further elaboration on the "Community Call" will be provided later on in this report).  Examples of some of the activities organised include:

- A **Let's Play Ireland initiative**[54] to encourage playtime for children, accompanied by online resources for storytelling, playful learning, and "Play for Play's Sake"[55] coming online;
- Participating in a virtual **Bloom At Home**[56] where acknowledged gardeners, Show Garden designers and Bord Bia Bloom (Ireland's Largest Gardening Festival) staff can share advice and tips, inspiring people to arrange their own plants and gardens, balconies and window boxes for national celebrations. Participation culminated in a final virtual Bloom Day advertising the nation's efforts. The virtual Bloom campaign was supported by Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), the national broadcaster of Ireland.
- **Live concerts** showcased on the internet and social media via **#IrelandPerforms**[57];
- **Virtual classes** teaching traditional skills like weaving, printing, basket making, jewellery, and ceramics;
- **Activities for young people** from Gaisce (self-development programme for young people in Ireland aged 14-25), Foroige (Ireland's leading youth organisation), and Comhairle na nÓg (child and youth councils)[58].

52 Drogheda Life | Cabin fever setting in? Volunteer from your home. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://droghedalife.com/news/cabin-fever-setting-in-volunteer-from-your-home

53 As it happened: Monday's Covid-19 developments. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/news/post/103388713/

54 Let's Play Ireland. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/lets-play-ireland/

55 Child Development - Children In Hospital. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://childreninhospital.ie/child-development/

56 Bloom At Home 2021. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.bordbiabloom.com/bloomathome/#:~:text=In%20the%20summer%20of%202021,cookery%20demonstrations%2C%20music%20and%20more.

57 #IrelandPerforms - Culture Ireland. Retrieved 7 September 2022, from https://events.cultureireland.ie/events/

58 Taoiseach launches #InThisTogether campaign for people to Stay Connected, Stay Active and Stay Mentally Well during COVID-19. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/433d0f-an-taoiseach-launches-inthistogether-campaign-for-people-to-stay-con/

Further examples can be found on the gov.ie website (ibid). "In This Together" also collates a tremendous range of advice and support that's accessible online for people of all ages, including:

- Advice on parenting, entertaining children at home and forming a day-to-day routine;
- Cooking and advice on healthy dieting;
- Advice regarding mindfulness and safeguarding mental wellbeing;
- How to care for vulnerable neighbours and family members;
- Online advice for Leaving Certificate students with the latest information on exams, and information on practical and psychological supports available. Information provided forms part of a broad package of supports for Leaving Certificate students (ibid).

The "In This Together" campaign has been significant in raising awareness about the importance of physical activity in overcoming the isolation felt from COVID-19 lockdowns[59]. Overall, the campaign has had a positive impact on Irish residents throughout the COVID-19 crisis. For example, Irish athletes, such as world champion boxer Kellie Harrington, previously said that training at home helped her through the effects of COVID-19 self-isolation (ibid).

Another major initiative launched by the national government, in cooperation with local governments and civil society organisations, was **The Community Call**[60]. At the national level, the work of The Community Call was formed by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) Sub-Group on Vulnerable People, the COVID-19 Senior Officials (SOG) and the COVID-19 Cabinet Committee. The SOG, in particular, were influential in the early stages of the development of The Community Call[61]. At the national level, an oversight group was also formed to organise work across government department and agencies, and, more importantly, to provide a means of addressing emerging problems and issues that cannot be addressed at regional and local levels (ibid). The group consists of senior officials of the Department of An Taoiseach, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), the Department of Health, the County and City Managers' Association, and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). An example of addressing problems and issues include the LGMA searching for advice on how shopping should be paid for, and whether or not volunteers should enter the houses of vulnerable people. The DCRD asked Volunteer Ireland to form instructions on these issues. The Department of Health then evaluated the guidance to incorporate best practice on public health (ibid).

Soon after the formation of The Community Call, the City and County Managers Association (CCMA) representative on the Oversight Group formed a National Representatives Group to grant the national representatives of community and voluntary groups involved in The Community Call "with a means of directly raising and solving issues arising at local level" (ibid). The issues would then be disclosed to the National Oversight Group. The local authority also created new **Local Authority Coordinating Response Fora (Community Call fora)**[62]. These forums primarily consist of a range of members, such as community and voluntary groups, and various statutory bodies, such as An Post and the Health

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[59] #InThisTogether initiative will focus on mental and physical health. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.rte.ie/news/2020/0424/1134638-mental-health-launch/

[60] Ireland launches "The Community Call" in major nationwide volunteering effort. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/ba4e3d-covid-19-ireland-launches-the-community-call-in-major-nationwide-vol/

[61] McGauran, A. (2021). *Community Call: Learning for the Future* (pp. 4-5). National Economic & Social Council. Retrieved from https://www.nesc.ie/publications/community-call-learning-for-the-future/

[62] Government commends the Community Call fora. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/e2a2d-government-commends-the-community-call-fora/

Service Executive (HSE) (ibid). Worth noting is that the Community Call fora organised the work of the local voluntary and community organisations delivering services to those deemed vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid).

Finally, local voluntary and community bodies, both existing and contemporary initiatives, collaborated with each other and local authorities to assist those deemed vulnerable. To date, the organisations have cooperated with private-sector organisations such as supermarkets and pharmacies (ibid). The aim of the "Community Call" in Ireland is to organise community activity, guide community support to where it is required, and organise the volunteering energy of the country[63].

Following the set-up of The Community Call, top priority had been given to the elderly and the most vulnerable. In due course, priority was then given to broadening the wellbeing of society and how communities could collaborate to assist the country during the COVID-19 crisis (ibid). Volunteers were integral to the Community Call, providing many services such as:

- **Shopping** for food, fuel and additional crucial household items.
- **Delivery** of hot meals via local Meals on Wheels services. The service was established in 2015 and the aim of the network is to offer a local, community-led professional service to help people who need services to sustain high quality health, independence with "strong life-extending possibilities"[64].
- **Collection and delivery** of prescribed medication[65].
- **Transport** to medical appointments.

An initiative organised under the umbrella of the Community Call which organised such volunteer activities was **Serve The City.** Operating from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020, this volunteer-led initiative served the practical needs of persons marginalised and isolated within Irish communities. The significant role of the community and voluntary sector in responding to local needs became evident in the work carried out under Community Call. At the time of reporting, work was in progress to help progress the capacity of smaller local groups, and along with larger organisations, provide support following the funding challenges that appeared as a result of the COVID-19 lockdowns[66]. To better understand the impact that The Community Call has had on communities across Ireland, one can draw on the overall lessons learnt following the initiation of The Community Call. As reported by the group:

- "Lesson 1: The more "granular and cross-cutting"[67] way of recognising the vulnerable and their specific needs in The Community Call provided improved services and addressed gaps.
- Lesson 2: The Community Call assisted local authorities to become more involved with communities. This outcome offered a basis for re-examining roles and relationships within local areas.

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[63] Ireland launches "The Community Call" in major nationwide volunteering effort. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/ba4e3d-covid-19-ireland-launches-the-community-call-in-major-nationwide-vol/

[64] National Meals on Wheels Network | Irish Rural Link. Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.irishrurallink.ie/meals-on-wheels-network/

[65] Department of Rural and Community Development. (2020). *HOW IRISH COMMUNITIES STEPPED UP TO THE MARK STORIES OF IRISH VOLUNTEERING DURING COVID-19* (p.5).

[67] NESC Review of Community Call | Social Justice Ireland. (2021). Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/nesc-review-community-call

- Lesson 3: Altered working practices within, and between, statutory and community and voluntary organisations provided improved outcomes. This has had significant longer-term implications for ways of working and funding.
- Lesson 4: Inter-agency arrangements made an important difference to the capability to organise and supply quick responses.
- Lesson 5: The community and voluntary sector played a significant role in recognising and aiding the vulnerable. At the time of writing, it was acknowledged that time should be spent examining ways in which such work could be maintained.
- Lesson 6: The Community Call was able to utilise and adapt existing administrative and IT systems. At the same time, it was acknowledged that there is capacity for how these could be improved" (ibid.).

### 3.6.2 Target municipality: Dublin

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, a community development project supported by Dublin City Council was created to help people sustain mental well-being during the pandemic. The project is best known as **Holding It Together Apart**.[68] Formed by Declan Hayden, community, and social development officer at Dublin City council, and Muirne Bloomer, artistic director and choreographer, the Community Development project was envisioned as a response to emerging community needs following the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions[69].

As was understood at the time of the COVID-19 outbreak, the pandemic created extraordinary challenges for people living alone at home. Such challenges include novel and difficult stresses at many levels (ibid). With loneliness, lack of engagement, and confinement on the rise during the pandemic, the aim of the Community Development project was to develop a variety of activities and interesting projects for all ages and backgrounds (ibid). The activities and projects were designed to be easy to follow and engage in each week (ibid).

Luckily, the capital city has links with many influential artists, creative developers, and professionals, many who have worked in the Dublin City Area on ongoing projects, and who had little work due to lockdown restrictions (ibid). Thus far, classes organised as part of the Community Development project include dance, meditation, movement, and creative practices to ensure that families and households remain active and calm (ibid).

At present, there is little information on the impact that #HoldingItTogetherApart has had on the community in Dublin.

## 3.7 Italy

### 3.7.1 General analysis

Italy has experienced a strong wave of participatory practices since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Online psychological support, healthcare and information services, groceries and home shopping deliveries were offered in almost all regions of Italy. A sense of community and solidarity

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[68] https://twitter.com/_togetherapart_

[69] Dublin launches "Holding it Together Apart" – keeping well-being in isolation. Retrieved 2 September 2022, from https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/dublin-launches-holding-it-together-apart-keeping-well-being-while-in-isolation

has pushed many people to develop practices that can be short-term or long-term and online or face-to-face. The common thread linking most of these practices is the dissemination of information about the COVID-19 pandemic or the services offered during the pandemic to help those in need.

A number of online nationwide initiatives have been conducted on a long-term basis. The most prominent such initiative is **COVID19Italia.help**, which was led by volunteers from different organisations such as ActionAid and EmergenzeHack. COVID19Italia.help aims to connect requests for help and offers of goods and services in the various Italian cities. Thanks to this project, 1578 reports were collected, 1386 of which were accepted and verified. ANPAS, a non-profit voluntary organisation spread all over Italy, has launched a similar project, **anpas.ushahidi.io**, to disseminate information about services of its associations and volunteer networks to people stuck in their homes because of health problems/quarantine.

As in many countries, hashtag campaigns have been used to draw attention to both response measures in general and specific initiatives, as well as to disseminate health and general information. The hashtag **#IoRestoACasa [#IStayAtHome]** served a dual purpose: it was spread across all communication channels to raise awareness of lockdown and quarantine and it is the name of the platform launched as an information service. The platform provides information on hospitals and medical support, home shopping and all the solidarity activities promoted by the Government to facilitate residents in their daily activities while staying at home. At the same time, thanks to funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, the platform **IoRestoACasa.Work** guaranteed free, private and group video calls by volunteers to continue studying, working, socialising in the pandemic time. The IoRestoACasa.Work project, which provided an important service for both training/employment and socialisation, deserves extra attention. At the moment it is still possible to use the platform for anyone who needs it.

In some cities, especially in Northern Italy, the COVID-19 pandemic had a heavy psychological impact: people suffered not only for the deaths of their loved ones, but also for the regret for not having been present, the lack of a shared ritual with others to witness life and emotional bond with the departed person. The **University of Padova and De Leo Fund Onlus Association** provided a self-help group for those who grieved for COVID-19. The service offered free charge and was created to meet the needs of the population in the most affected areas. The meetings with several affected people were moderated by psychologists on online platforms. The results provide information about a situation that is still little known with the aim to offer better service, both to the people directly involved and to all those who may need it in future.

Not only Italian, but also international organisations sometimes contributed to participatory practices in Italy. For instance, with the support of regional governments, **INTERSOS**, an international organisation, took action to provide health screenings, assistance and information on COVID-19 to farm labourers in both the Rome area and in Foggia, where there are numerous informal farm labourer settlements (who never stopped working during the pandemic).

### 3.7.2 Target municipality: Rome

Due to significant regional decentralisation, in Italy, the measures adopted and initiatives promoted both at the national level and from below have differed in number and in terms of resources allocated per region. Even within large cities, there have been some districts more supportive than others, mainly because of higher concentration of vulnerable people, but also depending on whether relevant civil society organisations or supportive networks were already present in a given district.

The city of Rome deserves attention, firstly because it is the largest municipality in Italy and it includes, a few metres apart, very different districts and living environments, and also because Rome suffers significantly from a housing emergency. In fact, during the pandemic, when everyone needed a house, there was a great mobilisation to respond to this problem. The municipality has repeatedly asked for support from associations, both international and grassroot in different areas. One organisation that stepped up to help address the housing crisis was **Binario95**, which launched the online campaign **#VorreiRestareACasa** [I would like to stay at home] to support persons in need of housing, mainly homeless, via an online fundraising. The organisation has increased shelter services in its centres to provide housing and various essential services.

Specific administrative subdivisions sometimes promoted initiatives informed by localised conditions and concerns. For instance, Municipality XIII Roma Aurelio promoted the solidarity service campaign **La Spesa Sospesa** [Suspended Spending] to create a virtuous network to support in difficulty but it was also an opportunity to revitalise and support businesses after the long period of closure. The initiatives involved residents who could leave to vulnerable people basic necessities that they purchased, and also food merchants who collected what has been left to make it available to eventual users.

Similarly, CSOs and cultural spaces that have deep roots in particular districts sometimes dedicated resources to the pandemic response. For instance, **Sparwasser** is a cultural space in a popular district. This cafe closed for COVID-19 measures. Then, with the support of **Nonna Roma**, a prominent organisation in Rome, the café was turned into a shelter with about 10 beds. The initiative was made possible also thanks to people who donated via online fundraising. Moreover, Nonna Roma launched an initiative to support the distribution of food parcels to low-income families through an online fundraising and a collection of the food and other useful goods in the neighbourhood's squares.

It is worth noting that such localised/decentralised 'solidarity from below' has also proved successful in cities such as Naples and Bologna. In Naples, where activists from the **EX OPG occupied space** have set up various assistance services: The Red Phone, to report illegalities and failures in the workplaces; the helpline for the elderly; phone against abuses; and even the guidance phone for spending bonuses. All these activities were reported during the pandemic period on the main communication channels, newspapers and television news.

Similarly, activists from **Laboratorio Salute Popolare** of Bologna, together with Mediterranea and Approdi NGOs, launched a medical-psychological emergency room that allowed people to have free telephone counselling with a volunteer. This initiative was promoted on the association's Facebook channels, especially in Bologna, but it was addressed to all people in need.

## 3.8 Portugal

### 3.8.1 General analysis

A vast body of research demonstrates that COVID-19 has rendered the disadvantaged and vulnerable even more disadvantaged and vulnerable, including in Portugal, where the damaging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on social inequalities have also been confirmed in a very evident and very alarming way (Costa, 2022). Moreover, non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., social distancing, the closure of schools and work, and mass cancellations of meetings) are the primary means of decreasing virus transmission, particularly in the absence of effective vaccines and treatments (Peak et al., 2017). However, people must still have access to essential goods and services (e.g., food and medical supplies), which may mean visiting shops or pharmacies where exposure may be higher. Accessing

these resources can be particularly painful in areas or within population groups that are already chronically underserved (Kobokovich et al., 2020).

Several initiatives aiming to mitigate access barriers to critical goods and services were observed in Portugal. Both nationally and in the Lisbon metropolitan area (AML, Área Metropolitana de Lisboa), there has been multiple initiatives resorting to volunteering work, for instance: **É tempo para pensar (também) nos outros** (It's time to think about others, too) and **Vizinho amigo** (Friendly neighbour). É tempo para pensar (também) nos outros, founded in March 2020, consists of a network of volunteering individuals and organisations from all over the country, who make themselves available to go shopping, to the pharmacy, to keep company, or even to walk the dog. The volunteers' priority has been to disseminate offers of aid not only through digital media, but also through door-to-door flyers and notices posted on buildings or windows. Similarly, the main objective of Vizinho amigo is to at-risk persons with their daily purchases, thus preventing them from being more subject to the virus. Vizinho amigo started on 13 March 2020, and is primarily self-organised, having raised more than 4,000 volunteers in just a few days; however, it has also formed partnerships with several parish councils and public institutions that allow us to go further. It utilises posters and social media (e.g., Instagram) as its main means of communication.

At national level, as well as in the Lisbon metropolitan area, established, donation-supported CSOs sometimes proved unable to scale up their activity of supporting marginalised people and groups to the degree required by the new crisis situation (Mota et al., 2021). For instance, in the domain of hunger prevention, longstanding CSOs such as Refood could not always meet the needs of newly food-insecure households. In order to overcome this constraint, multiple **Despensa Solidária** (Solidarity Pantries) emerged in Portugal, namely in the Lisbon metropolitan area – where people could leave and take what they wanted and needed, in a civilized and respectful way. Some municipalities, such as CMC, supported projects such as the **"We are all diamonds" community** in São Domingos de Rana and Outeiro de Polima (for the delivery of essential goods, such as food), even using incentive methods, such as those previously used in participatory processes like the **Bank of Ideas** (BIC) (Mota et al., 2021).

A related impact of COVID-19 on social participation in Portugal was an apparent shift from formal or organisation-based volunteering to informal or direct volunteering in response to the new and urgent needs and problems caused by the pandemic. Several local governments with volunteering registers have reported high numbers of additional COVID-19 volunteers (26,000-30,000 records). This is present in many of the initiatives that took place in Portugal, for instance **Comvidas** (With lives) and **Ajudar é contigo** (Helping is up to you). Comvidas has been active from March 2020 onwards, and aims at raising and managing volunteers for institutions that house and provide support for the elderly. Potential supporters who don't have the time or possibility to personally volunteer can support the project financially via bank transfers facilitated on the website. Ajudar é contigo was also founded in March 2020, and aims to build a database of organisations and initiatives that facilitate services such as grocery shopping, walking the dog, etc., disaggregated by area of residence.

In addition to causing economic distress and reducing access to critical goods, social distancing and confinement measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have had a profound impact on social lives and mental wellbeing. Many saw their social lives reduced and limited to people with whom they cohabit (e.g., Rodriguez-Rey et al., 2020) and lockdown led to increased loneliness and sedentary activities (e.g., López-Bueno et al., 2020). In order to mitigate impacts regarding these measures (e.g., lockdown), several initiatives have been created both at a national and local level in Lisbon metropolitan area. **Quarantine Chat**, for instance, initiated in March 2020, and still active (as of Q4

2022), is a platform that uses the Dialup application to connect people worldwide for simple ad-hoc chats. Targeted interventions have also been developed in order to intervene and reduce the impacts on mental health, as reported in the Table – e.g., **Saúde mental em tempos de pandemia** (Mental health in times of the pandemic) and **Linha de apoio psicológico** (Psychological support line). The latter, founded by a psychologist, has been operating since 23 March 2020, and focuses specifically on providing teleconsultation and face-to-face care for pregnant women and children up to 2 years old. It has also compiled COVID-19-related information and resources specifically for parents and children.

Many of the participatory processes found in Portugal focus on the need to guarantee support to the most vulnerable groups in society, as well as to affected sectors of the economy; other practices focused on disseminating COVID-19 information or other information pertinent to health, safety, and wellbeing. However, initiatives were also identified that aimed to meet non-material needs and/or needs less directly related to COVID-19, such as the need for intellectual and cultural stimulation. There are also initiatives aimed at enhancing information on the measures necessary to limit contagion: for instance, Portugal was one of the European countries where, during the confinement period, the **cultural offers of museums** were most diversified with digital resources (NEMO, 2020). Finally, as in Cyprus, Greece, and Spain, residents also participated in policymaking processes, albeit in limited ways. For instance, to compensate for the freezing of some participatory processes, new "participatory routines" were opened, such as the **Digital Democracy Call** - an open meeting of the Mayor of Cascais with residents on the city's Facebook platform (Mota et al., 2021).

While the wellbeing impact of such cultural and political initiatives is more difficult to quantify than, for instance, vaccination campaigns or economic stimulus measures, exploring their emergence and outcomes could prove a promising direction for future research on the long-term significance of the pandemic in the European social fabric.

### 3.8.2  Target municipality: Lisbon

The course of the pandemic in the Lisbon and Tagus Valley region serves as an example of management of the disease on a local level (Niccolai et. Al., 2021). This example shows how it is at a local level that the greater or lesser difficulty in containing the chains of transmission is understood (e.g., it is known that the combination of high population concentration, large households, job insecurity, and low income make it difficult to contain the chains of transmission). We can also find on a local level in the Lisbon and Tagus Valley region: infrastructures to support people in isolation or quarantine; support networks that contribute to restoring some social and psychological normality in disruptive times; and individual preventive behaviours that can reduce the rate of virus transmission. In short, certain key structures, resources, and behaviours for health promotion and disease prevention are found on a local level. Furthermore, it is on a local level where civic participation by both professionals and 'ordinary residents' can take centre stage (Blakely, 2011). A wide range of participatory practices and initiatives were identified specifically in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (Lisbon metropolitan area). Some are discussed above: e.g., **Linha de Apoio Psicológico** (Psychological Support Line) and **Despensa Solidária** (Solidarity Pantry). Other notable Lisbon metropolitan area-based initiatives include:

- **Caixa solidária** (Solidarity box): an individual and voluntary initiative created in Lisbon in April 2020, based on the simple idea of setting up donation boxes, following the motto of "take what you need, leave what you can". During the pandemic it spread across the country; while solidarity boxes have closed in some places, the movement continues online, with 93,500 members in its Facebook group.

- **Semear para colher** (Sow to reap): a free psychotherapeutic support service provided via teleconsultation by the Union of the Parishes of Cascais and Estoril; created in October 2020, and still active (although the specific initiating project has ended).
- **Estuário Coletivo** (Collective Estuary): an arts and community engagement initiative created in 2018, which during the first lockdown created a garden library with free multicultural arts and culture events, as well as a solidarity fund. The project mobilised the realisation that outdoor activities were safer than indoor activities toward its overarching goal of sustainable urban environmental and cultural rehabilitation.
- **Hortas Urbanas** (Urban Gardens): founded in April 2020 by users of the Amoreiras Municipal Nurseries community garden, this initiative organised a Christmas 2020 delivery of more than 40 kilos of vegetables produced in the urban gardens to families in need, and continued donating essential goods and protective equipment to social institutions and needy people in the municipality. A box was placed at the entrance of the garden so that everyone could donate goods.

Although this health crisis is global and transversal to all age groups, old age was early considered as a factor of higher-risk of mortality, particularly people aged 60 years or above with comorbidities (e.g., chronic cardiovascular and respiratory diseases; Caramelo et al., 2020). In the Lisbon metropolitan area, several initiatives have been created, such as the **Sintra Senior Line** - a free service available 24 hours and every day of the week. This service directs residents in issues related to older people living in the Lisbon-area municipality of Sintra, assisting with home visits and appointments with other municipality services (CM-Sintra, 2021). Such services can help ease the care burden aggravated by the pandemic, which has fallen disproportionately on vulnerable families; other initiatives regarding these aspects were born at a local level in Lisbon metropolitan area, for instance the abovementioned initiative **Ajudar é contigo** (Helping is up to you).

## 3.9 Romania

### 3.9.1 General analysis

Different types of services were provided in Romania by volunteers and organizations in various fields - social, health, defence of rights - in the period since the outbreak of the crisis. Fields in volunteers were active included fundraising for hospitals, distribution of help in communities, opening telephone lines, creating and distributing informative materials, etc.

A number of initiatives were begun by established CSOs. An example is the **Shopping at Your Door** voluntary initiative, started by the small CSO Geeks for Democracy, which delivered urgently needed food packages to the homes of elderly or immobile people, enabling them to can stay at home safely.[70]

Facebook was widely used by small CSOs as 'core infrastructure' to raise awareness, offer services, connect with potential volunteers, and network those who needed help with those who could offer it. Examples of groups that ran actions using Facebook during the crisis include the cultural-creative CSO

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[70] https://www.romania-solidara.ro/initiative/

**Daisler Asociatia**[71], the **Center for Peace and Violence Prevention - CPVP**[72], and the environmental and social justice CSOs **Clujul Sustenabil**[73] and **Civic Suport**[74].

Facebook and other social media platforms were also used by influential individuals to raise awareness and offer support to society as a whole: for instance, the **actresses Monica Davidescu** and **Dana Rogoz** read stories to children daily in videos on their Facebook pages: Ms. Davidescu stated that her motivation was to ensure children and parents had access to "something pleasant, because, rather than watching the news that panics you and induces a bad mood, you better look for and do something pleasant for yourself and for the others in such a way that you get rid of the anguish"[75].

Donations were also a significant help. Romanians chose to donate during the lockdown mainly to non-governmental organizations that have helped hospitals and front-line practitioners. Thus, the field of health registered an increase of 33% in the number of donations and 55% in the total amount collected, compared to the previous year. Another area that saw significant growth during this period was environmental protection, a segment that registered an increase of 88% compared to 2019.

### 3.9.2 Target municipality: Bendea

According to COVINFORM partner the Romanian Red Cross, during the lockdown of the Bendea neighbourhood in Babadag, the city hall was the motor for organising local initiatives. The local counsellors belonging to different political parties found, for the first time, the interest to work together. Daily support visits to the isolated community gave the counsellors the opportunity to work as a team and to get to know each other.

The Romanian Red Cross reports that civil society organisations were well-represented in the town, and tried to keep up especially in providing people with basic needs items such as food, medicine, etc. Local entrepreneurs joined as well, contributing food that was directed to the isolated communities through the city hall.

Finally, in the Red Cross' experience, timely, location-specific information was sometimes scarce in Bendea/Babadag, as most crisis communications were transmitted from the central authorities in Bucharest. With regard to contextually-appropriate messaging, CSOs such as the Romanian Red Cross and its partners helped work to ensure that local governmental organisations and front-line practitioners could make the best of whatever credible and timely information was available.

## 3.10 Spain

### 3.10.1 General analysis

The Spanish participatory practices and initiatives mentioned here cannot be considered representative of the full spectrum of resident-led initiatives that emerged in the context of the COVID-19 crisis; rather, they represent mostly participation practices reported by the stakeholders

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[71] https://www.facebook.com/daisler.asociatia/

[72] https://www.facebook.com/cpvp.org/

[73] https://www.facebook.com/ClujulSustenabil/

[74] https://www.facebook.com/CivicSuport/

[75] https://www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2020/03/17/monica-davidescu-si-dana-rogoz-citesc-povesti-pentru-copii-pe-paginile-lor-oficiale-de-facebook--468345

interviewed in WP4-7, as well as initiatives covered by the media either for their innovation, their impact, or their popularity.

Across the country, online and face-to-face solidarity initiatives manifested and multiplied at different levels and areas of social life, from neighbourly conversations on balconies or in chat rooms to social media campaigns or collaborative projects on online platforms. One of the initiatives promoted by self-organised ordinary people through social networks in Spain was the **Cartas venceremos al COVID-19** (We will beat COVID-19 letters). These were letters of solidarity and encouragement addressed to COVID-19 patients, which were read by doctors and nurses to people hospitalised and isolated in intensive care units. Although it started in a WhatsApp chat of family and friends, this petition was later spread via Twitter where it was retweeted 179.200 times. This initiative was replicated as a good practice by many Spanish hospitals throughout the health crisis.

At the national level, a relevant aspect of the participatory practices of ordinary residents during the pandemic was the rise of initiatives by specialists or experts in certain subjects who self-organised to develop collaborative and social innovation projects on a wide range of topics, such as those grouped in the online platform **Frena la curva** (Slow down the curve), an online repository of more than 900 initiatives of Spanish social innovation and resilience laboratories (but also from other countries) mobilised as a result of the confinement.

Some of the most innovative initiatives were dedicated to the online and decentralised co-production of goods or resources that were scarce at the time, such as the co-production of health materials and equipment. This was the case of the **Coronavirus makers initiative**, a collaborative project, born on Telegram, in which volunteer engineers, designers, researchers, doctors, and techies dedicated themselves to making facial masks and automatic respirators for hospitals with 3D printers during the quarantine. The project was supported and sponsored by some private sector companies, who provided part of the material resources. Through a massive social media campaign, this collaborative and decentralised project made and delivered up to one million impressions and received up to 200.000 retweets.

Another relevant aspect, at the national level, was the commitment of ordinary people as volunteers. An emblematic example of the role of volunteers was the **Plan Cruz Roja RESPONDE** (Red Cross RESPONDS Plan), an initiative aimed at mitigating the social and health emergency, which involved public-private collaboration and more than 12.000 volunteers mobilized throughout the country, through whom aid was channelled to assist 1.350.000 people through the delivery of more than 80.000 bags of food and medicines, 540.000 masks and protective equipment and 27.000 kits of basic personal hygiene products during the peak months of the pandemic. The role of volunteers was crucial, especially throughout the State of Alarm, for many national NGOs to scale up their intervention plans to contain the crisis caused by COVID-19.

Volunteers also assisted public administrations, especially in the early stages of the State of Alarm. The rapid spread of the disease and the increase in COVID-19 infections caused the National Health System to collapse in the first months of the pandemic. In March 2020, the Ministry of Health took the unprecedented **initiative to call up to 50.000 medical resident Interns, final year medical students, and retired doctors** under the age of 70, to be ready and available in case their services were required to support hospitals. The work of these volunteers, however, was specifically regulated by government authorities through recommendations limiting the performance and scope of volunteering during the COVID-19 crisis (Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, 2020).

### 3.10.2 Target municipality: Madrid

During the peak months of the pandemic, as in most parts of the world, the social context in the target municipality of Madrid was determined by situations of uncertainty and scarcity. In the early stage of the COVID-19 crisis, health resources were not guaranteed, and local social services administrations lacked protocols to safely attend the public, which led to a blockage of its services.

Paradoxically, the health and economic crisis experienced in many neighbourhoods of Madrid opened a window of opportunity for the deepening of the city's community associative network. In the first months of the pandemic, the social crisis at the local level in the city of Madrid was contained by the initiatives of self-organised residents in solidarity networks and neighbourhood community associations, as well as by the street work of some NGOs and volunteers who supported them.

The urgent need to provide basic needs, mainly food, to this population, at the local level, was solved at the beginning of the pandemic by face-to-face participatory initiatives or practices such as community mutual aid networks, such as the **Despensas de comida solidaria** (Solidarity Food Pantries), of which up to 76 of these pantries were self-organised in many neighbourhoods and districts of Madrid, such as Vallecas, Aluche, or Carabanchel, helping more than 15.000 families.

The progressive increase in the number of people requesting this aid gave rise to the so-called "hunger queues" in some areas. To avoid their stigmatisation and guarantee a dignified attention, from August 2020, the Madrid City Council channelled the provision of food through the **Tarjeta Familias** (Families Card programme). This is a financial assistance programme similar to a bank card that allows low-income families to buy food and hygiene products in supermarkets and shops in the Community of Madrid. Previous programmes in social services refunded applicants for the products they had already bought, establishing ex-post criteria of eligibility, and leading to conflict with some auditors. This programme stablishes a control of applicants, and once given the card, there are very few products they cannot buy with it (for example, alcohol). This benefit is managed through the Social Services of the Madrid City Council. So far, the programme has been found as so successful that it has remained active ever since. To date, around 18.000 cards have been issued, benefiting mainly families with an annual per capita income of less than 4.200 euros and with a profile that "tends to be mostly a woman, aged 42, with one child and living in a household of three people" (Madrid City Council, 2022).

Hybrid participatory initiatives also emerged, carried out simultaneously through both online platforms and face-to-face mutual aid networks, such as **#Dinamiza tu cuarentena** (Dynamise your quarantine), which gave visibility and organised the actions of many neighbourhood networks that emerged to help other neighbours in risk population groups (such as elderly people or people with reduced mobility), or the **#YoTeAyudoConLaBasura** (I help you with the trash) campaign, in which young students from University Rey Juan Carlos organised themselves to help those neighbours who needed to shield to carry out everyday tasks that required leaving their homes (such as throwing out the rubbish or bringing in the shopping).

The collaboration between public institutions, NGOs, and ordinary residents was particularly effective in reaching the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach target population, such as people living or sleeping on the streets. The channelling of social and health care to this population during the State of Alarm was carried out - among other things - through the collaboration between **SAMUR Social, Madrid Salud, the Social Services of Madrid City Council**, and some NGOs with active work on the streets. An example is the **campaign to vaccinate homeless people or women in situations of sexual exploitation**. This vaccination campaign was carried out between May and June 2021 and immunised homeless

people both in shelters in Madrid "reaching a total of 1630 [vaccinated] users" (Madrid City Council, 2021) and on the streets where a further 650 people living on the streets were immunised. All these people were inoculated with Jansen vaccines in single-dose modality, with the aim of maximising the effectiveness of their immunisation by simplifying the logistics needed to vaccinate this group.

As in Cyprus, Greece, and Portugal, the pandemic also gave rise to participatory political processes. Despite the closure of the local administration to the public, in the first months of the State of Alarm, citizen political participation continued through the online platform **Madrid decide**. This platform facilitated both communication of residents with the Madrid City Council and deliberations in citizen forums about local issues that rose during the confinement. Some of these initiatives are still ongoing.

## 3.11 Sweden

### 3.11.1 General analysis

A number of Swedish participatory practices were identified, representing a sample of all the initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic taken at national, regional and local levels. The sample does not claim to be representative, but provides a relevant picture of spontaneous efforts made to meet unforeseen consequences and problems in handling and communicating the pandemic in Sweden.

The initiators of the activities and social media pages/groups reported are to be found among public authorities, interest groups, and single individuals. Many are based on spontaneous voluntary efforts, others on already established institutions. Initiatives taken by public authorities, such as the municipality of Gothenburg, often target vulnerable groups (e.g., vulnerable women, addicts, and the homeless). Likewise, initiatives taken by organizations mainly target specific groups or segments in society: for example, specific professions and industries (healthcare workers, artists, tech and IT sectors) or specific demographic groups (migrants, youths, children, elderly). Conversely, activities initiated by individual residents are often aimed at the local community or even at a single neighbourhood (e.g., help with shopping, exchange of domestic services, informal FAQs on COVID-19, exchange of experiences from infection).

With regard to practices that target vulnerable groups, the largest group includes people affected by COVID-19 infection: either by being sick, belonging to groups susceptible to a severe progression (elderly), having suffered long-term effects of the infection, being in quarantine, or by being relatives of people who have contracted the disease. Practices encompassed a range of purposes, such as:

- **Helping with groceries and other essential goods**: e.g., **God Hjälp** (Good Help) [76], an initiative founded by established CSO Good Cause, which organised volunteers to deliver food to the elderly for free, and **Corona - Hjälp till med inköp av livsmedel till riskgrupper!** (Corona - Helping to buy food for at-risk groups)[77] and **Coronahjälp Fyrstad** (Corona Help Fyrstad)[78], Facebook groups founded by self-organised residents where people could ask for and offer help with everyday tasks like shopping for groceries.
- **Providing health information**:, e.g., initiatives to disseminate accurate COVID-19 information within migration-background communities, such as an informational meeting in Ljungby

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[76] https://godhjalp.se/

[77] https://www.facebook.com/groups/689025571839843/

[78] https://www.facebook.com/groups/643758689775861/about

> Municipality proactively organised Arabic-speaking assistant nurse **Hanin Mshenesh** in cooperation with the regional government and a local Islamic association[79].

- Enabling **sharing of experiences**: e.g., **Vi som har/har haft corona** (we who have/had Corona)[80] and **COVID-19, Vi som är drabbade** (COVID-19, we who are affected)[81], self-organised Facebook groups for people currently sick with COVID (or with relatives/friends who are), as well as **Covid-19 Långtidssjuk** (COVID-19 long-term sickness)[82], a Facebook group for sufferers of 'long COVID'.

- **Offering social interaction**: e.g., **Mobila Mötescykel** (Mobile Meeting Bike)[83], a local initiative in a district of Gothenburg to gather people outdoors who were afraid of isolation, which used a bike as a traveling meeting-point for conversations and coffee.

Other practices target people vulnerable due to isolation caused by the pandemic. An example is **Kvinnojouren Online** (Women's Shelter Online)[84], a support hotline for victims of gender violence, which expanded their operations during the pandemic and proactively disseminated information on gender violence in cooperation with local authorities. Several practices were directed at youth and children, who have suffered socially and educationally due to lockdown. **Kids Hack the Crisis**[85], organised by UNICEF Sweden, invited children on a global level to participate in a hackathon to find sustainable solutions to challenges posed on them by COVID-19 pandemic. Other practices targeted a wide range of psychologically and socially vulnerable groups: for instance, **Gatans lag** (Law of the streets)[86], an organisation that works with drug addicts, ex-criminals, and people suffering from mental illness, arranged activities outdoors during the pandemic for their members to meet and talk.

A third category of participatory practices addresses different professional groups and businesses. The main focus here is on health professionals. One practice, **Sjukvårdsutbildning för SAS-personal** (Medical training for SAS staff)[87], offers laid-off staff from the airline SAS retraining to work in healthcare; another, **Tillsammans för Växjö** (Together for Växjö)[88], offers lunch vouchers to healthcare workers, a third is a call for better working conditions in healthcare and a fourth practice is an initiative to gather medical supplies. Another specific target group is artists. A page on FaceBook, **Låt Live Leva** (Let Live Live)[89], founded by the arts agency Jubel, invites musicians to play in a digital festival, giving them the opportunity to perform and earn income. Three more practices address businesses more generally. One practice, **#vitecherupp** (#quicksearch)[90], gathers examples from the tech and IT businesses that contribute to fighting the pandemic; another, **GP hjärta GBG** (GP heart GBG)[91], is

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[79] https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/smaland/fortsatt-behov-av-ratt-information-om-covid-19-pa-arabiska

[80] https://www.facebook.com/groups/883341072109820/

[81] https://www.facebook.com/groups/498890450992682/

[82] https://www.facebook.com/groups/256356588982248/

[83] https://rednet.rodakorset.se/nyheter/verksamhet-med-mobila-motescykeln-i-tynnered/

[84] https://kvinnojourenonline.se/

[85] https://blog.unicef.se/2020/10/02/kids-hack-the-crisis-global/

[86] https://centermothemloshet.goteborg.se/vagar-ur-hemloshet/recovery

[87] https://sjukhus.sophiahemmet.se/press/sjukvardsutbildning-for-permitterad-personal/

[88] https://www.vaxjots.se/2020/03/21/hjalp-oss-att-hjalpa-tillsammans-for-vaxjo/, https://www.instagram.com/tillsammansforvaxjo/

[89] https://www.facebook.com/latliveleva/

[90] https://www.techsverige.se/vi-ar-en-bransch-som-mojliggor-tillsammans-ar-vi-viktigare-an-nagonsin/

[91] https://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/gp-f%C3%A5r-tungt-internationellt-pris-f%C3%B6r-coronainitiativ-1.28747811

managed by a newspaper offering regional and local enterprises free adds, and a third one, **Action Against Corona**[92], invites companies on a global level to engage in solutions for problems created by the pandemic situation.

Most of the initiatives to participatory practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden were active during 2020 and 2021, when many fell ill and died, and restrictions were imposed on the residents. However, some practices, e.g., the Facebook-group for people with long-term effects of the infection, is still active in 2022. One conclusion to be draw, is that digital technology and social media were essential for public authorities and organisations, as well as for the public, to communicate, locate individual needs and offer support. Another conclusion is that spontaneous civic initiatives emerged where authorities and established organisations failed to reach, mostly at societal micro level.

### 3.11.2 Target municipality: Gothenburg

All of the above types of practices could be found in the target municipality of Gothenburg. Examples identified over the course of the CSO representative interviews and following desk research include:

- **COVID-19 Frivilliga i Göteborg med omnejd** (COVID-19 Volunteers in Gothenburg and surroundings)[93] and **COVID-19 Frivilliga i Majorna-Linné** (COVID-19 Volunteers in Majorna-Linné)[94], self-organised Facebook groups on which people can request different types of everyday assistance and reply to requests; the former is active city-wide, while the latter is limited to the west Gothenburg areas of Majorna and Linné.
- **GP hjärta GBG** (GP heart GBG)[95]: see above.
- **En ganska vanlig vardag** (A fairly ordinary everyday life)[96]: The youth center Fryshuset expanded their opening hours during the pandemic to enable for more activities when the schools were closed.
- **Initiatives by the Gothenburg gambling addicts' support group**[97]: isolation during the pandemic increased the risk of gambling problems; the non-profit organization Spelberoendes förening Göteborg (Gothenburg gambling addicts' association) expanded their operations during the pandemic, with more information and meetings with their members.
- **Mobila Mötescykel** (Mobile Meeting Bike)[98]: see above.
- **Sommarverkstan** (Summer Workshop)[99]: A culture organisation did arts and crafts events on two places in Gothenburg during the summer for kids and their parents.

## 3.12  Switzerland

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[92] https://volunteer.actionagainstcorona.org/en/

[93] https://www.facebook.com/groups/229632021498294/

[94] https://www.facebook.com/groups/618973692287473/about

[95] https://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/gp-f%C3%A5r-tungt-internationellt-pris-f%C3%B6r-coronainitiativ-1.28747811

[96] https://www.goteborgdirekt.se/nyheter/fryshuset-tryggar-ungas-vardag-under-corona/repted!cbXWRZEzcDNoL8GGj57hmA/

[97] https://nsphvastragotaland.se/medlemsforeningar/spelberoendes-forening-goteborg/

[98] https://rednet.rodakorset.se/nyheter/verksamhet-med-mobila-motescykeln-i-tynnered/

[99] https://www.facebook.com/rodastenkonsthall/posts/3440820425972300/

### 3.12.1 General analysis

Citizen participation in Switzerland as a whole was highly diverse, meaning that initiatives were not only directed at providing instant support to vulnerable groups, but also at offering platforms of information to retailers like the one from the University of St. Gallen and platforms of visibility and financial support for creatives in the country like **Make Some Room: Electronic Relief** in Switzerland and **Le marché de Noël des petits artisans**. The first two of these initiatives were brought to life by pre-existing institutions and all three can be categorized as having a short-term to mid-term impact as they provide financial support or recommendations to groups that were starkly affected by the economic repercussions of the health crisis. **Long COVID Kids** represents an example of a nationwide grassroots campaign as its roots lies in a self-help-group. It is further unique as it defines children as a group particularly vulnerable not to mental health or educational issues but to health risks as a result of a COVID-19 infection.

In conclusion it can be said that participatory practices in Switzerland that were not restricted to a specific area, in many cases, however, targeted a specific population group like artists, children or economic operators. Moreover, they were principally directed at providing support rather than aggregating knowledge or information through citizen participation. As an on-the-field practice proved difficult throughout the pandemic on a nationwide level, democratic citizen participation initiatives were primarily online. In fact, a lot of Facebook groups were installed for the purpose of quick support throughout the pandemic and the help was mainly conducted on-the-field, even though the perks of digitalization facilitated communication and organization.

### 3.12.2 Target municipality: St. Gallen

The majority of St. Gallen participatory practices were aimed at providing support for daily needs, like grocery shopping or animal care, to at-risk groups, like those aged 65 and older and those with pre-existing health conditions. Initiatives ranged from the government's official website inviting residents and organisations to provide their contact data in order to get connected to those in need, to the same service being put in place by a popular football club (namely FCSG) or by a grassroots campaigns of the residents' of St. Gallen – namely **Gern-Gscheh,** which initially started as a Facebook group. The Gern-Gscheh initiative could be found in further municipalities throughout Switzerland, mostly with slightly alternated names, adapted to the local dialect like **Gärn-Gschee** in Basel.

In the case of the St. Gallen municipality, it can thus be claimed that Falanga's (2020) statement that local participatory practices were mainly aimed at providing short-term support for vulnerable groups (2020: 6) holds true. Further, although the research conducted suggests that a majority of support was government-led, some services were founded by residents or by associations or institutions which were established prior to the COVID-19 pandemic with little to no connection to governmental actors.

## 3.13 UK: England

### 3.13.1 General analysis

Promising participatory practices in a number of domains were identified in the UK. Particularly striking were the efforts of diverse local governments within the Local Governments Association to organise locally attuned, yet well-coordinated and synergistic volunteering and solidarity endeavours under the "Community Action Response" programme, and the the formation of mutual aid groups nationwide tracked by the COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK website.

Responding directly to the COVID-19 pandemic, many town councils in the UK recruited volunteers to offer aid to the most vulnerable parts of the population"[100] **Local Governments Association (LGA)** websites gather all the required information for local entities to "prepare in this regard" (ibid). Furthermore, many associations and NGOs at the local and neighbourhood levels coordinated the combined campaign **Community Action Response,** whose goal was to strengthen awareness of the requirement to be "attentive to those around us and help the most vulnerable (ibid). The Community Action Response campaign was launched by Eden Project Communities and associated partners; The National Lottery Community Fund, Nextdoor, Neighbourhood Watch, Campaign to End Loneliness and Eco Attractions Group in 2020[101]. Led by a group of organisations from a range of sectors, the overall goal was to encourage members of society to do as much as they can to help their communities, particularly vulnerable and isolated people, both during the COVID-19 crisis and onwards, as described below. The organisations have called for people to act on measures (stated below) that will assist communities manage the most damaging effects of the virus. In order to have a positive impact on vulnerable communities and isolated people, the Community Action Response encouraged the following measures:

1. It was acknowledged that people in every community would witness the challenges of COVID-19 in some form – from requiring basic provisions to needing help while unwell. Given these circumstances, thinking of others, considering personal actions and being kind was encouraged.
2. Connecting and reaching out to neighbours: following the rise of self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was encouraged to find alternative ways of remaining connected and checking in on one another for both physical and mental wellbeing. One recommendation provided was exchanging phone numbers.
3. Making the most of local online groups: Keeping up to date, sharing information and being a positive part of the local community conversations by using platforms like Nextdoor, an app for neighbourhoods where users can obtain local tips, buy and sell items, and more.
4. Supporting vulnerable or isolated people: it was recognised that different groups in certain communities are known to be at increased risk. Social isolation and loneliness in particular were vital worries for all ages. Ways of helping included volunteering for local support services or handing out food banks to help.
5. Sharing accurate information and advice: Supporting anyone who may be concerned about COVID-19. Ways of overcoming such fears included signposting people to accurate advice from Public Health England and also encouraging people to follow reliable hygiene practices (ibid).

Worth noting is that the Eden Project Communities is a UK-wide network that has appeared out of the community building campaign The Big Lunch, which reaches over six million people in communities annually.

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[100] Cooperation experiences between civil society and local/regional governments. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://oidp.net/en/covid19/page.php?id=46

[101] Community Action Response. (2020). Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/community-action-response

Across the UK, a variety of **mutual aid groups** were created to give residents the opportunity to help provide specific forms of assistance during the COVID-19 outbreak[102]. Key motivations for the set-up of mutual aid groups (MAGs) during the COVID-19 outbreak include organising support efforts for people who are self-isolating, particularly if those doing so are part of a more at-risk demographic, such as the elderly and people with pre-existing health conditions[103]. Operating at a local level to support those who were and still are impacted by the COVID-19 virus and associated social restrictions, the groups predominantly prioritised keeping everyone safe during the pandemic[104]. At present, all COVID-19 related MAGs in operation can be found on the **COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK website**[105]**.** There are 59 existing MAGs providing COVID-19 support in the West Midlands[106], a region where Birmingham constitutes a major city.

Other, more specific and targeted initiatives were also launched on both the UK level and local level by proactive civil society organisation and individuals in specific fields, like technology and ecology. For instance, the **Coronavirus Tech Handbook**, launched in March 2020, is a website created to crowdsource data concerning the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus[107]. The website was developed at Newspeak House, a makerspace for politics in London and has been used by doctors, teachers, researchers, doctors and manufacturers discussing ventilators and personal protective equipment, and more[108]. The current layout of the handbook makes it a wiki, which is a website, database or online community that is guided and editable by its users. Therefore, any user is able to insert, modify or remove data. As of October 2020, the website was further developed to provide tools for consumers, businesses, local governments, and developers, etc., to help tackle the COVID-19 pandemic[109]. As mentioned in the official Coronavirus Tech Handbook, the aim of the handbook is to provide: "*a space for technologists, civic organisations, public & private institutions, researchers and specialists of all kinds to collaborate on a rapid and sophisticated response to the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent impacts*" (ibid). To date, the handbook has already helped:

- Doctors residing in the UK offer advice to doctors living in Ecuador on how to develop safe personal protective equipment;
- MAGs in the UK to share ideas of organising volunteers and their finances;
- The exchange of dashboards to store and shed light on important data relating to COVID-19.

By forming a library for technologists, civil organisations, public and private institutions, researchers and specialists of all types, the handbook has been significant in terms of minimising the duplication

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[102] Access to support. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.bvsc.org/covid-19-pathways-for-accessing-support-in-birmingham

[103] Covid-19 Mutual Aid – Local organising to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://covidmutualaid.org/

[104] Access to support. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.bvsc.org/covid-19-pathways-for-accessing-support-in-birmingham

[105] Covid-19 Mutual Aid – Local organising to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://covidmutualaid.org/

[106] Mutual Aid - West Midlands. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.mutual-aid.co.uk/area/west-midlands

[107] Keck, C. (2020). Technologists Are Crowdsourcing a 'Coronavirus Tech Handbook' to Track Resources. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://gizmodo.com/technologists-are-crowdsourcing-a-coronavirus-handbook-1842291959

[108] Coronavirus Tech Handbook. Retrieved 7 September 2022, from https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/coronavirustechhandbook

[109] Coronavirus Tech Handbook. (2020). Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://coronavirustechhandbook.com

of work, encouraging re-use, spotting gaps in knowledge, and sharing best practice[110]. According to Nesta, the global innovation foundation, the availability of the handbook averts experts and volunteers "*wasting energy on individually solving the same problems, over and over again*" (ibid).

**Trees for Cities** is a UK charity which has an aim of planting urban trees and creating greener cities. Since 1993, the organisation confirmed that 125,000 volunteers planted over 1,200,000 urban trees in parks, streets, woodlands, schools, hospitals and housing estates[111]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the **#GrowYourLove** campaign was formed and run by a partnership between search engine Ecosia, tree planting charity Trees for Cities and the NHS Forest, who work with healthcare organisations to open up their green spaces to local communities and encourage improved use of the natural environment. In addition, this project was coordinated by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare to improve the health and wellbeing of staff, patients and communities by planting trees and forming green spaces on or near to NHS land[112]. The planting of trees commenced in October all the way through to April 2020, which would be the most appropriate months for UK tree-planting[113]. In a November 2021 press release, it was reported that since November 2020, over 2,000 trees were planted by Ecosia at more than 30 hospitals and trusts around the UK, including Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; Aintree University Hospital in Liverpool; Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in Greater London and Newcastle University Hospital Trust in Greater London and Newcastle University Hospital Trust via the initiative[114].

Despite limited information available regarding the positive impact the project has had so far, Jane Hopton, Programme Director at NHS Lothian, said: "*Green spaces have been shown to have a positive impact on both our physical health and mental wellbeing. We are delighted that Ecosia chose to plant trees close to the Royal Infirmary site. These trees will not only be enjoyed by our staff and patients, but by the local community as well*"[115].

### 3.13.2 Target municipality: Birmingham

In relation to Birmingham-based groups providing help via the COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK network, examples include the **Birmingham Mutual Aid and COVID-19 Community Response Group**[116]**.** The main priority of this group has been to support the elderly, isolated, and immunocompromised when

[110] 'Coronavirus Tech Handbook' - technologists around the world are crowdsourcing ideas to combat COVID-19. (2020). Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.nesta.org.uk/press-release/coronavirus-tech-handbook-technologists-around-the-world-are-crowdsourcing-ideas-to-combat-covid-19/

[111] Working with local communities across the UK, including Racecourse Estate in Ealing, London, Trees for Cities unites people together to form high quality green spaces and encourage long-term change in neighbourhoods – whether that may be reinvigorating abandoned spaces, establishing healthier environments or inspiring people to grow, forage and eat healthy food.

[112] Early, C. (2020). "A living monument" – new campaign will plant trees for NHS. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.yourweather.co.uk/news/trending/a-living-monument-new-campaign-will-plant-trees-for-nhs.html

[113] Mason, N. (2020). Trees for Cities and Ecosia launch new campaign for NHS workers - Pro Landscaper Magazine. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://www.prolandscapermagazine.com/trees-for-cities-and-ecosia-launch-new-campaign-for-nhs-workers/

[114] Tree planting in Craigmillar to say thanks – and provide a space for wellbeing. (2021). Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2021/11/tree-planting-in-craigmillar-to-say-thanks-and-provide-a-space-for-wellbeing/

[115] Stephen, P. (2021). Tree planting in Craigmillar to say thanks – and provide a space for wellbeing. Retrieved 6 September 2022, from https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2021/11/tree-planting-in-craigmillar-to-say-thanks-and-provide-a-space-for-wellbeing/

[116] Birmingham Mutual Aid and Covid-19 Community Response Group. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.mutual-aid.co.uk/group/birmingham-mutual-aid-and-covid-19-community-response-group

self-isolating[117]. Another example of a group providing self-isolation support is the **COVID-19 Mutual Aid Harborne B17**[118], a group which brings separate streets and small areas together to look out for and support one another (ibid). Support has come in the form of food banks, advertising opportunities to take part in COVID-19 research and joining online social groups such as art groups. A further example of a MAG that has provided self-isolation support is that of the **Acocks Green Together: COVID-19 Community Support Volunteers group**[119]. The group explicitly supports those that live and/or work in the Acocks Green Ward, an electoral ward in south-east Birmingham. Thus far, the support provided particularly to those self-isolating and are elderly and/or immunocompromised has involved access to food and completing errands[120].

UK-wide, the country has seen a significant expansion of mutual aid networks during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Oli Mould et al., this is because "*the overarching capitalist system has proven to be largely incapable of providing for those with particular vulnerabilities, at least in the short term*"[121]. As Springer (2020, p.113) notes, it is "*reciprocity that is saving us from complete catastrophe*" (ibid) during the pandemic. In terms of impact, MAG support is noteworthy. As stated in a The Guardian article published in April 2022, MAG support in Birmingham has reconnected "*the threads that run through Britain's societies*." For those who helped with the volunteering efforts, mutual aid support has provided the opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with the entire community and be an active part of it. Also mentioned in the article, "the *incredible number of people who volunteered across the country (and continue to do so) reflects a desire for purpose and action, meaning and connection*".[122]

Another inspiring example of community response in the Birmingham area is the **B31 Voices forum**, an initiative founded in 2010 to connect communities across Southwest Birmingham and keep Birmingham-based residents informed and engaged[123]. Prior to the pandemic, B31 Voices predominantly supplied information on news, public services, traffic updates, lost and found items and pets, stolen items, and crime; however, the platform quickly leveraged its existing digital infrastructure and user base to begin disseminating information on COVID-19 and connecting stakeholders and concerned residents[124]. In terms of support, the forum assists local community groups and partners, together with charities, West Midlands police, schools, churches, council and local businesses, by offering a platform to access a huge cross section of the local community (ibid). The forum also assists residents by offering a platform to address issues and advertise events. The forum website and

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[117] Birmingham Community Solidarity: Coronavirus Response. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/groups/3234138479933658/about

[118] Covid-19 Mutual Aid Harborne B17. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/554228111881191/

[119] Acocks Green Covid-19 Mutual Aid. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.mutual-aid.co.uk/group/acocks-green-covid-19-mutual-aid

[120] Acocks Green Together: Covid-19 Community Support Volunteers. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/groups/495622924442944/

[121] Mould, O., Cole, J., Badger, A., & Brown, P. (2022). Solidarity, not charity: Learning the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic to reconceptualise the radicality of mutual aid. *Transactions Of The Institute Of British Geographers*. doi: 10.1111/tran.12553

[122] Shabi, R. (2022). Mutual aid was a vital safety net during Covid. Britain's about to need it again. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/02/mutual-aid-covid-britain-volunteers-cost-of-living-crisis

[123] https://www.facebook.com/groups/bvoicescommunity/. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/groups/bvoicescommunity/about

[124] B31 Voices - Bigger and Better. Retrieved 7 September 2022, from https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/b31voices

Facebook and Twitter platforms offer a space for free discussion and information distribution, inspiring individuals to cooperate with one other and community partners (ibid).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the forum set up four groups dedicated to specific needs during the virus outbreak. The four groups are as follows:

- **Southwest Birmingham Community Chat and Coronavirus Support**: A space to distribute information, converse about day-to-day developments, provide and ask for assistance.
- **Southwest Birmingham Community Classroom Resources for Parents and Carers**: A space to distribute resources, seek advice and help for those with children at home.
- **Southwest Birmingham Community Together Mental Health and Wellbeing**: A private space to assist one another and distribute resources for mental health and mental wellbeing.
- **Southwest Birmingham Community Kindness #POSITIVESWBRUM**: A place to celebrate acts of kindness and compassion across various communities[125].

Touching on examples of COVID-19 support in further detail, the forum has proved to be significant in a number of areas. First, the forum has helped businesses and organisations connect with South Birmingham communities. Specifically, support has involved assistance with advertising to help campaigns get enhanced exposure, "with minimal effort"[126]. B31 have included advertising on their website, social media platforms, sponsored articles, social media post shares, and competitions (ibid). Some examples of the companies and organisations the forum has helped include Digbeth Dining Club (operating in the West Midlands region), and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens (ibid).

The forum is described as '*an award-winning, volunteer-led, and non-profit community organisation'*.[127] Moreover, the forum is also listed as one of the largest and most engaging online communities of its kind in Southwest Birmingham (ibid). It has worked closely with Northfield Community Partnership, a charity assisting people and community groups in Southwest Birmingham[128]. Together, they have built a list of businesses delivering food and other key items in Southwest Birmingham during the COVID-19 pandemic (ibid). As stated on the B31 Voices website, "this will enable people who can afford to buy food to source services to do so, enabling food parcel support to be directed to those most in need" (ibid). The main modes of communication are social media platforms and the B31 Voices website.

## 3.14    UK: Wales

### 3.14.1 General analysis

According to the overarching Wales-based volunteering organisation network WVCA, the number of **people who registered to volunteer** in the early stages of the pandemic shot up from 459 registrations in February 2020 to 10,336 in March 2020. (Walls, 2020). It is plausible that this spike reflects many people wanting to volunteer for doing pandemic-related social work, rather than more general forms

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[125] COVID-19 Coronavirus resources | B31 Voices. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://b31.org.uk/covid19/

[126] Advertise | B31 Voices. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://b31.org.uk/advertise/

[127] Advertise | B31 Voices. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from https://b31.org.uk/advertise/

[128] COVID-19: Find local food and essentials deliveries PLUS tradespeople | B31 Voices. Retrieved 26 August 2022, from http://b31.org.uk/covid19/covid-19-find-local-food-and-essentials-deliveries/

of volunteering. A UK-wide study into pandemic-based social work suggests how different people in the UK gravitated towards different volunteering roles:

- More likely to engage in formal volunteering: older people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, key workers, people with a mental health condition.
- More likely to engage in social action: women, people in employment or students, those with a household income >£30,000 p/a, people with a mental health condition or physical disability.
- More likely to engage in neighbourhood support: women, married/cohabiting couples, key workers. (Wan Mak & Fancourt 2020, cf. Boelman 2021, p8-9).

On an individual basis in Wales, Boelman (2021) points out that volunteering was often found to help volunteers navigate living through the pandemic themselves, because it altered ideas about what support provision and receipt means to people, retrieving the latter from its mildly stigmatised position. As such, volunteering seems to have created new connections between people in communities and widened them through social diversification and joint actions that are location-based, interest-based, and/or identity based. However, volunteering could also have psychological consequences: Boelman (2021) mentions that some volunteers were prone to reporting heightened anxiety levels, especially those who were "exposed to more traumatic situations: facing people in crisis at foodbanks or on their doorstep; speaking to people directly affected by COVID-19; or working in clinical and social care settings" (p37).

With regard to the **structural context of volunteering**, according to Havers et al. (2021), small council grants have been crucial in turning grassroots ideas into practical projects during the pandemic[129]. Technical and infrastructural support were also critical: for instance, the development of GDPR policies and safety and security regulations that organisations could take up, mitigating the need for internal competence in these areas. Whilst at the local level, **new community initiatives had good experiences** with bringing their ideas to fruition, **existing civil society organisations sometimes had difficulties**. Morrison et al. (2021) recognise that funding for emergency initiatives at pre-existing CSOs was oftentimes insufficient. Indeed, some Welsh CSOs felt overlooked by local councils in their organisation of a response to the pandemic; especially in the earlier stages (Building Community Trust 2020). Similarly, Havers et al. (2021) show that CSOs sometimes felt that councils had unrealistically high expectations for the work they could do, and seemed to be waiting for these organisations to effectively lead in support (cf. Boelman 2021). Taylor-Collins et al. (2021, p35) would even go as far as stating that the lack of collaborative outreach from the national Governments (Wales and UK) "represents a potentially significant structural undermining of the social infrastructure that supports volunteering and community wellbeing".

### 3.14.2 Target municipality: Swansea

In the county and city of Swansea, the target municipality in Wales, voluntary participative action strongly increased at the beginning of the pandemic (late March 2020). From averaging at 80 new sign-ups for volunteering I the 2 years prior, the March-April 2020 sign-up list stopped just short of 1600 new volunteers (Urban Foundry 2020). The **Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (Swansea CVS)** is the umbrella organisation for the third sector in Swansea, which connects with the local Swansea Council and served as a central hub for information provision. The Swansea CVS connects organisations and initiatives, and provide support for volunteers. A report (Urban Foundry 2020) about their

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[129] A list of Case Studies of community projects can be found in Taylor-Collins (2021), page 32-36.

pandemic work mentions that they saw participative practices from existing and new community organisations primarily organised around:

- **Information provision** on the Swansea CVS website. Their efforts also included reaching out to eligible groups for government grants and furlough schemes.
- **Food and pharmacy collections and distributions**. For instance, the 'Swansea Together' initiative that organised hot meal distribution of food that was suitable, which "included providing ready meals to people who were unable to cook from the food provided" (p. 8). In particular, BAME community organisations seemed to have been active in food distribution networks.
- **Psychological and emotional wellbeing support** over the phone or online. For instance, the 'Wassup' project that a listening ear and advice to children and young people who needed support.
- **Hospital discharge**. For instance, in collaboration with Swansea Bay University Health Board, 'Community Wellbeing Pathway' was developed to ensure that people who were discharged from the hospital had everything they needed at home and could remain at home whilst they convalesced.

The grants Swansea CVS issued reflected these themes, providing an indication of where groups of people recognised need and organised themselves to receive and spend financial support. Specific grants reported by Urban Foundry (2020) include:

- **4x4 Response Wales - South Wales**: £2000 - Delivery service;
- **Pontarddulais Partnership**: £3000 – foodbank;
- **Welsh Hearts**: £5000 - Defibrillators in the community;
- **GSP Partnership:** £500 - Contribution to core costs during COVID-19 lockdown;
- **Morriston Tabernacle:** £500 – Newsletter to local residents;
- **Iberian and Latin American Association:** £200 - To support refugees and asylum seekers;
- **South Wales MSTC Ltd:** £577 – Staff training in preparation for restarting service;
- **Race Council Cymru:** £2000 – To support international students in Swansea.

Two addition groups were funded using Comic Relief VSEF Fund in July 2020:

- **Llamau**: £3000 – IT for remote working for outreach staff;
- **National Autistic Society - Swansea branch**: £2825 – Costs of online training.

Furthermore, the Urban Foundry report mentions that "new organisations, including spontaneous groups, have been supported with advice and help to constitute and review their governance to respond to the new emerging needs during the crisis, such as food banks". As such, it seems that in Swansea in the early stages, pandemic-specific need was mainly addressed by newly-formed groups of people relatively new to volunteering. The currently-running Swansea-based **Coordinated Community Support Programme** concluded after its second year (January 2022) that voluntary organisations had improved in their collaboration had adopted a more 'holistic' approach, in which individual people and their intersectional needs are centralised (2022).

In conclusion, motivations for participative practice in Swansea seems to largely mirror Wales-wide and UK-wide volunteering action in the pandemic, although in Swansea there is less evidence that community organisations faced the level of difficulty in collaborating with the authorities as elsewhere in the UK (or Wales). It is unclear if volunteers' backgrounds were similar at both geographical scales.

Nonetheless, it seems like the grants that were warranted were organised by and spent on similar social groups: people experiencing poverty and in particular disabled people, minority ethnic groups, and women.

# 4  Discussion

## 4.1 General comparative discussion

Since its emergence in December 2019, COVID-19 has had far-reaching consequences for societies around the globe. It is unanimously recognized by policymakers and public health experts that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic go far beyond physical health. Consequences of the pandemic and the measures enacted to contain it have included  depression, suicide, domestic violence, and disruptions of family and community systems and relationships (Valent, 2021); worsening of chronic health problems, fears related to infection and health, exacerbation of social vulnerability, changes in eating patterns, concentration/attention difficulties, and increased substance abuse and gambling (Oliveira & Fernandes, 2020; Panchal et al., 2020); mental health issues such as increased boredom, frustration, and fear (e.g., Fleming et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Bitan et al, 2020); and financial worries, pervasive anxiety, and loneliness (Sher, 2020; Tull et al., 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable persons: even in upper-income countries, the aggravating impacts of the pandemic on social inequalities have been confirmed in alarming ways (Costa, 2022).

The COVINFORM project has investigated these impacts through the secondary analysis of quantitative data within a vulnerability assessment framework covering the physical/health, social, economic, informational, and environmental domains (WP2). Based on desk research and qualitative interviews with governmental, public health, and civil society stakeholders, we have also delved into the decision-making and implementation processes behind governmental responses (WP4), public health system responses (WP5), responses by civil society organisations (WP6), and communications initiatives by a range of actors (WP7). In doing so, we have sought to deliver insight and ground actionable recommendations on response planning; the consideration of vulnerability in responses; the role of cross-group and cross-region difference in mediating responses; the barriers that have impeded the success of responses; and promising ways of overcoming such barriers.

Our research has made it clear that public perceptions of and reactions to COVID-19 responses – across domains, and by governmental and civil society organisations alike – are critical to their success or failure (cf. COVINFORM D2.3; D4.4; D4.5; D5.4; D6.4). The baseline reaction required of the public is compliance with regulations and recommendations; however, 'ordinary residents' have often gone well beyond this baseline, not only actively supporting governmental and civil society responses through advocacy and volunteering, but also organising new initiatives on a grassroots level. This deliverable explores the role of participatory practices initiated by governmental organisations (GOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and residents themselves in the management of the pandemic across the COVINFORM target countries and municipalities (see Introduction: research question 4.3).

In a December 2020 white paper, Falanga (2020) conducted a review of participatory practices related to COVID-19 that had been reported in the English language on the OECD, Open Government Partnership (OGP), International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), and/or Participedia websites and platforms. In addition to several global practices, N=58 practices in the same number of European cities were identified and systematised along the following dimensions:

- Timeframe: short, medium, and long term;
- Sponsor: public authorities, organisations [CSOs], grassroots groups;
- Scope: information, knowledge sharing, support provision, public campaign, recommendations;
- Theme: solidarity, health/care, environment, food, culture/sport, youth/education, mobility, tourism;
- Channel: on-the-field, online.

Falanga's review was the first of its kind to be conducted during the pandemic. While exploratory rather than representative, it yielded valuable insights as to the depth and breadth of resident participation in COVID-19 responses across Europe, as well as the wide variety of actors involved in participatory practices.

The search strategy utilised for the present deliverable differed in several ways from the strategy used by Falanga: e.g., it was limited to the COVINFORM target countries and cities, but more than one practice was collected per site; it was not limited to the English language; and it was not limited to practices that had been registered on particular websites/platforms, but rather, took into account practices written about in local media, discovered through Google and social media platform searches, suggested by COVINFORM interview participants, etc. As a result – and due to the fact that new initiatives have emerged between Q4 2020 and Q3 2022 – a larger number of participatory practices were identified (N=150). Like Falanga's sample, however, the present sample is exploratory rather than representative. Falanga's dimensions provide an appropriate framework along which to analyse the sample on a cross-country basis.

All of the participatory practices referenced below are described in greater detail in the respective country chapters in Section 3.

### 4.1.1  Timeframe

The majority of practices collected by Falanga in Q4 2020 focused on short-term goals, i.e., "immediate responses aimed at curbing contagion, scaling medical treatments and care, and providing safety nets to the most vulnerable" (2020, p.4). Only a few of those practices adopted medium- or long-term goals corresponding to the phases of "recovery – advancing i.e. advancing economic stimuluses, strengthening the health systems, enhancing transparency and accountability of aid flows – and reform – i.e. planning new goals for institutions, re-empowering citizens, and restoring civic freedoms" (ibid.).

Many of the participatory practices identified in the present research also focused on short-term goals. Some of these appeared to have diminished or ceased altogether. Examples were hashtag campaigns encouraging compliance with specific regulations or recommendations, such as physical or social distancing regulations, which were themselves time-limited (e.g., *#stayathomeandbecreative* in Germany, *#ThaKatsoSpiti* in Greece, *#IoRestoACasa* in Italy, etc.). Other practices that embraced short-term goals were the myriad of initiatives and platforms established primarily to assist with everyday tasks that were difficult under lockdown, quarantine, and social contact regulations, such as grocery shopping, pharmacy visits, walking the dog, etc.). These included Solidarité 1080 Solidariteit in Belgium, QuaranTeen in Germany, COVID-19 Frivilliga i Göteborg med omnejd in Sweden, Gern Gscheh in Switzerland, etc. Many such informational and material support initiatives appear to have been set up very rapidly, and responded to urgent needs before governmental organisations, or even formal civil society organisations, were able to do so (El Khalfioui, 2020).

On an anecdotal level, some partners report that engagement with such initiatives appears to have decreased as social and economic life have normalised; however, this would have to confirmed through focused research.

A notable number of practices identified in the present research, however, adopted medium- and long-term goals as well, with some having pivoted during their lifespan from a short-term to a longer-term focus. Examples of practices that pursued medium- or long-term goals from the start included:

- Large-scale umbrella campaigns that aggregated, sponsored, or promoted a range of support and information initiatives that evolved in response to the course of the pandemic, its socioeconomic impacts, and the regulatory environment, such as The Community Call in Ireland, and Community Action Response and COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK in the United Kingdom.
- Practices established to leverage the crisis as a spark for sociotechnical innovation, such as Hack the Crisis worldwide, Kids Hack the Crisis worldwide, #hackthevirus in Germany, and the Coronavirus Tech Handbook in the UK.
- Practices established to leverage the crisis as a spark for environmental intervention, such as *#GrowYourLove* in the UK, Bloom At Home in Ireland, and The Sky Over Corona in Switzerland.

Post-Coron-A-Mat, initiated by a German CSO, offers an interesting example of an initiative founded early in the pandemic that explicitly imagined its end, seeking to curate experiences in a manner that promoted "social learning" (cf. Folke et al. 2005).

Finally, the aims of certain practices defy easy categorisation into short-, medium-, or long-term. An interesting example is *#VorreiRestareACasa* [I would like to stay at home], a hashtag campaign launched by the Rome CSO Binario95 to support people without stable housing, which linguistically references the popular lockdown-era hashtag campaign *#IoRestoACasa* [I stay at home]. The immediate aim of the practice was to crowdsource funds and garner institutional support to increase shelter services during the pandemic. Houselessness and housing precarity, however, are long-term issues in Rome, which (like many European cities) is suffering from an endemic housing crisis. The *#VorreiRestareACasa* hashtag can be interpreted as a means of leveraging the short-term sense of vulnerability experienced by the general population during lockdown into awareness of the long-term vulnerability of a particular population group.

In 2020, Falanga noted that "it is difficult to argue whether short-term responses to the current pandemic will be developed through longer-term strategies in the future" (p.4). By 2022, we see several examples of practices that have successfully pivoted from primarily short-term to medium- or long-term goals. Examples include discussion groups set up under the Plaudertischerl scheme in Austria, some of which no longer reference COVID-19 but have shifted to counter loneliness in general, and food distribution programmes set up under the 't Werkhuys scheme in Belgium, which have received long-term funding to continue their activities even as the immediate impacts of COVID-19 have become less severe. Conversely, some initiatives founded with government funding have not always been able to sustain their activities when this funding dropped off: an example is Get Up Wallonia in Belgium, which suffered from a redirection of public funds in response to the floods of July 2021. The capacity to pivot from short-term to medium- and long-term goals appears to depend upon a combination of factors: whether or not the needs addressed are pandemic-specific or more general; the configuration of sponsors/actors involved, and their capacities and motivation; and the availability of dependable (governmental/public) resources.

### 4.1.2  Sponsors/actors

The majority of practices identified by Falanga were sponsored by public authorities, with only a few under the direction of civil society stakeholders – though some of these government-run practices "actually aggregate initiatives implemented in the field by a wider range of agents, including local organisations and associations, neighbourhood groups, and informal groups of citizens" (2020, p. 6). In this regard, the present sample is significantly more diverse, with all of the following configurations of actors appearing:

- Practices led by governmental organisations (GOs), with participation by individual residents. An example is Sensi ambassadeurs in Belgium, in which the City of Antwerp recruited and promoted community ambassadors to fight misinformation surrounding COVID-19.
- Practices led by GOs, with participation by both CSOs/private sector organisations and individual residents. An example is The Community Call in Ireland, which was initiated by national-level bodies established to manage the pandemic, but engaged local GOs and CSOs via umbrella organisations such as the Local Government Management Agency and Volunteer Ireland; through these local GOs and CSOs, The Community Call reached and mobilised individuals and groups of residents. Similarly, Coronababbels was a City of Antwerp initiative, but relied on the expertise of various Antwerp-based CSOs that each have their own unique networks and target groups.
- Practices led by CSOs/private sector organisations, with participation by individual residents. An example is Nebenan.de in Germany, a mutual aid portal maintained by the private company Good Hood GmbH that connects residents seeking and offering mutual aid, as well as community-oriented organisations.
- Practices led by self-organised groups of residents, with formal support from GOs and/or CSOs/private sector organisations. An example of a GO-supported residents' initiative is Antwerpen helpt in Belgium, which was initiated by a network of self-organised groups, but supported by the City of Antwerp. An example of a CSO-supported residents' initiative is QuaranTeen in Germany, which was initiated by university students, but supported by the CSOs Red Cross Germany and Diakonisches Werk Heidelberg.
- Practices led by self-organised groups of residents, with informal support/advocacy (but no financial or infrastructural support) from GOs and/or CSOs/private sector organisations. An example is *#YoTeAyudoConLaBasura* in Spain, which was initiated by university students and promoted – but not financially supported – by the City of Madrid.
- Practices led and carried out exclusively by self-organised groups of residents, positioned as a supplement to GO/CSO responses. Examples are the numerous resident-led Facebook support groups found in most target countries (e.g., @caixa.solidaria in Portugal, Rețeaua 2.0 in Romania, Corona - Hjälp till med inköp av livsmedel till riskgrupper! In Sweden, etc.).
- Practices led and carried out exclusively by self-organised groups of residents, positioned as a critical alternative to GO/CSO responses. Examples are Kropotkin-19, which aggregated a range of mutual aid activities organised by left-wing/anti-authoritarian collectives in Athens, and Initiative "Ψ", also based in Greece, which frames itself as an autonomous, horizontal, and egalitarian "(anti-)institution for mental health"[130].

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[130] https://www.facebook.com/groups/316067108586346/.

In several cases, the stakeholder configuration of a given practice evolved over time. QuanranTeen in Germany and Antwerpen helpt in Belgium, for instance, were initiated at a grassroots level, but were then 'picked up' and institutionalised by established civil society and/or governmental organisations. As noted in the above section on Timeframe, institutionalisation can support the sustainability of a given initiative by providing access to dependable funding and the capacity to pivot and/or scale in response to changing circumstances.

### 4.1.3  Scope and theme

The majority of practices identified by Falanga in 2020 encompassed relatively narrow aims: e.g., provision of material support to those in need, dissemination of COVID-19-specific information, or facilitation of what could be called bottom-up 'support networking' (p.4). Some practices identified in the present deliverable were similarly tightly focused. Examples include dog-owner networking facilitated by Initiative Pro-Hund in Austria; grocery shopping and animal care offered by QuaranTeen in Germany; food distribution services such as Despensa Solidária in Portugal and Despensas de comida solidaria in Spain; and information and knowledge-sharing about long COVID provided by Long Covid Austria, Covid-19 Långtidssjuk in Sweden, and Long Covid Kids in Switzerland.

A number of practices, however, adopted a broader, cross-theme scope. Examples include:

- Large-scale umbrella initiatives, such as Team Österreich Nachbarschaftshilfe in Austria, Community Action Response and COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK in the United Kingdom, #VolunteerFromHome and The Community Call in Ireland, etc. The latter, for instance, encompassed online storytelling and play initiatives for children, online concerts, arts and crafts classes, a home gardening campaign, and informational resources on topics as diverse as parenting, cooking and diet, mindfulness, home caregiving, and home study.
- Practices that bridged the health/care sector with other sectors, such as Sjukvårdsutbildning för SAS-personal in Sweden, which retrained furloughed or laid-off Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) employees to support the health system, and Coronavirus Makers in Spain, which mobilised engineers, designers, and technology hobbyists to design and self-manufacture health equipment.
- Practices that explicitly promoted cross-sector sociotechnical innovation, such as Hack the Crisis, the Coronavirus Tech Handbook, etc.
- Practices that promoted resident involvement in political processes, including:
    - Participatory democracy initiatives launched by authorities, such as citizen consultations held under the Get Up Wallonia initiative in Wallonia, Belgium; a Facebook mayoral consultation held under the Digital Democracy Call in Cascais, Portugal; and deliberations in citizen forums on the Decide Madrid platform in Madrid, Spain. Such initiatives were designed to interoperate with formal governance processes.
    - Social interventions organised by politically-oriented CSOs and self-organised groups, such as the Kropotkin-19 initiative in Athens and initiatives carried out by the EX OPG occupied space in Naples. Such initiatives did not necessarily interoperate with formal governance processes.
    - Protest actions organised by individuals or grassroots groups, such as the *#vägrasänkahygienkraven* hashtag campaign launched by Swedish health care workers to draw attention to hygiene deficiencies in hospitals, the *#WalesCovidInquiry*

hashtag campaign launched by the COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru group to generate support for a public investigation of governmental measures, and critical open letters written to authorities by the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Pancyprian Guild "EQUALITY" in Cyprus and the NGO Caring People with Autism in Greece.

It is also worth noting that even practices that focused tightly on a particular theme or type of activity may well have had indirect cross-sectoral effects. For instance, volunteer initiatives to assist vulnerable individuals with everyday tasks like grocery shopping allow these individuals to reduce their own risk of exposure, thus reducing burdens on the health care system (Kobokovich et al., 2020).

### 4.1.4 Channel

Like Falanga (2020), the present research identified numerous online, face-to-face, and mixed-mode practices. Under heavy social contact restrictions, most practices were exclusively online (e.g., numerous mutual aid platforms and Facebook groups), with a few taking place exclusively in the field (e.g., the Gabenzaun initiative in Germany). As social contact restrictions were relaxed, mixed-channel activities became the norm: extensive examples are discussed above.

## 4.2 Lessons learned from participatory practices

The findings presented in this deliverable contribute insight to the research question *RQ4: Which barriers, unintended consequences, trade-offs, lessons learned and promising practices can be identified in COVID-19 responses across diverse local contexts?* Many of the participatory practices described above can be identified as promising practices, insofar as they:

- **Addressed critical needs** that may otherwise have gone unmet. For instance, during the first phase of the pandemic, when established public sector services were often overtaxed and access was often limited, participatory practices were often spun up quickly by self-organised groups of residents and/or CSOs as stopgap or supplementary measures. The most common examples were initiatives to provide basic goods to those in need (e.g., Despensa Solidária in Portugal and Despensas de comida solidaria in Spain; Gabenzaun in Germany). However, initiatives with more complex aims also arose, for instance, filling material and human resource gaps in public health systems (e.g., Coronavirus Makers in Spain, Sjukvårdsutbildning för SAS-personal in Sweden).

- **Offered supplements and/or alternatives** to governmental services. Examples of the former include initiatives targeting areas of life that are not directly addressed by core social welfare systems (such as artistic and cultural activities, outdoor and nature-oriented activities, etc.), as well as umbrella programmes that sponsored/enabled such initiatives. Examples of the latter are initiatives with a socio-politically critical stance (e.g., Kropotkin-19 in Greece), which could help maintain alternative pathways to support for population groups without a high level of trust in government.

- **Reduced barriers** to material and informational support: for instance, by delivering services directly to vulnerable individuals and population groups in the field (e.g., Gabenzaun in Germany, Vacci-Bus in Belgium) and bridging language and culture gaps (e.g., UNHCR Cyprus initiative to engage refugee volunteers to disseminate COVID-19 information)

- **Mitigated unintended consequences and trade-offs** of disruptive policy responses. The most notable examples here were initiatives to address the complex, deleterious psychosocial

impacts of lockdowns and other social contact restrictions (e.g., Plaudertischerl in Austria, Coronababbels in Belgium, arts and culture initiatives in Sweden and Ireland), as well as the simpler but equally critical logistical impacts of such restrictions (e.g., grocery-shopping and pet-walking initiatives in all target countries).

In addition to these specific benefits, participatory practices offer important lessons on the adaptive governance of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Folke et al. (2005) define adaptive governance as a mode of multilevel governance that is attuned to "social sources of resilience", namely, social capital, social learning, and social memory (p. 444). Here, we return to the sub-question *RQ4.3. Joint action: What roles have CSOs, grassroots initiatives, and residents played in the provision of health and social services in the sub-national research sites?* COVINFORM D6.4 argues that CSOs played a critical role in the adaptive governance of the pandemic as "bridging organisations" which can connect stakeholders on various levels to each other and to residents (Folke et al. 2005, p. 461-462). This deliverable makes it clear that residents themselves have also played a range of important roles: they have initiated and maintained practices solely via self-organised structures; they have initiated practices that were later supported or institutionalised by GOs or established CSOs; and they have participated in practices initiated by GOs or established CSOs by contributing time, effort, skills and expertise, money, goods, and/or ideas. Which is to say, residents were not mere objects, but also active subjects in the multilevel procedures of pandemic governance.

## 4.3 Directions for further analysis

In addition to addressing the above research questions, the findings presented in this deliverable offer two directions for further analysis. First, the findings contribute to the elaboration of a socio-ecological systems model of adaptive crisis governance and social resilience. Drawing on prior studies in community health, COVINFORM D6.4 proposes that "joint actions" directly involving residents, CSOs, and GOs are particularly effective means of enhancing social resilience (cf. MacQueen et al. 2001). This is because successful joint actions can reinforce the "social sources of resilience": social capital, social learning, and social memory. Among the participatory practices analysed in this deliverable, we find clear examples of:

- **Practices that augmented social capital**: anti-loneliness and social networking platforms and initiatives, mutual aid and 'support networking' platforms and initiatives, solidarity pantries and boxes, etc.
- **Practices that advanced social learning**: hackathons, online courses, arts/culture/sports and play initiatives, child and parent initiatives, etc.
- **Practices that preserved social memory**: participatory and deliberative democracy initiatives, storytelling and memory-sharing initiatives, etc.

These practice examples substantiate Folke et al.'s concept of adaptive governance, as well as prior studies which show how civic participation can promote resilience by aligning individual and collective perceptions of risk, cultivating sustainable patterns of interaction with the physical and natural environment, and promoting societal self-understanding (cf. COVINFORM D3.4 *Case study reports and comparative report [phase 1]*).

Second, the findings intersect with an ongoing inquiry into experiences of social exclusion during the pandemic. According to several studies, the most vulnerable persons in society are often more at risk of feeling socially excluded (e.g. Maestripieri 2021). Building on the realisations that COVID-19 impacts

were generally socially patterned, it is possible that the pandemic exacerbated social exclusion among vulnerable groups (Bambra et al., 2020). As social exclusion is a longstanding target of EU policy[131], the COVINFORM WP6 partners have begun investigating this question through a secondary analysis of data collected in the Eurofound survey "Living, Working and COVID-19"[132]. Starting from Round 2 of the survey, conducted in Summer 2020, self-perceived social exclusion is captured through the question, "to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'I feel left out of society'" (five-point Likert scale: strongly agree / agree / neither agree nor disagree / disagree / strongly disagree). During Summer 2020 (Round 2), self-reported social exclusion averaged 14.1%, ranging from 7.9% in Austria to 26.6% in Sweden. By Summer 2021 (Round 3), self-reported social exclusion had increased to an average of 19.3%, ranging from 11.5% in Italy to 33.2% in Cyprus. We observe values above 20% in the majority of countries. Critically, in both Summer 2020 and Summer 2021, self-reported social exclusion was highest among vulnerable groups: women, young people, and especially respondents whose gender identity was neither male nor female (see Annex II).

Based on qualitative interviews conducted with CSO representatives (cf. D6.3 and D6.4), as well as the desk research presented in this deliverable, we can plausibly ask whether involvement in participatory practices – whether as a provider or recipient of aid – might help counteract social exclusion. One means of addressing this question is the ongoing secondary analysis of the Eurofound data. In addition to questions aimed at capturing the quality of life of respondents during the pandemic, the survey also includes questions on receipt of various types of support from public services (GOs); receipt of support from NGOs and/or relatives/friends; the helpfulness of such support; and the quality of support offers from public services (clarity and transparency of rules, ease and efficiency, fairness, relevance to needs). Investigating correlations between these data points may ground broad conclusions on an EU-wide level. Another means of addressing this question is the ongoing analysis of qualitative interviews conducted with low-socioeconomic-status women living in the research sites. Two focal points within the interview topic guide were social networks and support networks, including support respondents received from others and support they provided to others. The findings on these points, while qualitative and exploratory rather than representative, may provide insight on the phenomena of social exclusion and participation as experienced by vulnerable women in specific sites over the course of the pandemic.

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[131] EU policies have long sought to address social exclusion, with the Commission's 1992 Communication 'Towards a Europe of solidarity' (COM (92) 542) describing social exclusion as the result of "mechanisms whereby individuals and groups are excluded from taking part in the social exchanges, from the component practices and rights of social integration and of identity. Social exclusion goes beyond participation in working life; it is felt and shown in the fields of housing, education, health and access to services".

[132] The survey, which collects information on different aspects of everyday life of individuals living in 27 EU countries during the pandemic (e.g., well-being, paid and unpaid work, trust, support from institutions, etc.), was launched in April 2020; to date, five different rounds of the survey have been completed. The fieldwork of the rounds took place in different moments of the pandemic and represent a valuable source of information. Round 1 was launched on 9 April 2020, when most Member States were in their first lockdown. Round 2 was launched in July 2020, when economies and societies were gradually reopening. Round 3 started in March 2021, as countries were still dealing with various levels of lockdown. Round 4 took place in October–November 2021, recontacting panel respondents only, to track developments since the start of the pandemic. Round 5 was carried out between 29 March and 2 May 2022, in order to look at how life changed in Europe after two years of pandemic. In parallel, a pilot survey was fielded in 10 neighbouring countries using an adapted questionnaire. However, we only had access to cross-sectional data on EU Member States contained in Round 1, 2 and 3 of the survey.

# 5 Conclusions

This deliverable explores the participation of individuals and self-organised groups of residents in COVID-19 responses within the target countries and municipalities. It is based on a collection of N=150 participatory practices, defined broadly as practices in which ordinary residents played active and significant roles. These included practices initiated and maintained solely by self-organised groups, as well as those that also involved civil society organisations and/or governmental organisations in various ways. After describing several exemplary practices per target country and municipality, the deliverable conducts a comparative analysis along the dimensions of timeframe, sponsors/actors, scope/theme, and channel. It concludes that participatory practices offer promising lessons for the adaptive management of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Such practices can help address critical needs, supplement core social welfare systems, reduce barriers to material and informational support, and mitigate the unintended socio-economic and psychological consequences of disruptive regulations. Furthermore, they can contribute to social resilience in a holistic sense by augmenting social capital, advancing social learning, and preserving social memory.

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**Romania**

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See footnotes.

**UK: England**

See footnotes.

**UK: Wales**

[SEE ALSO FOOTNOTES]

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# Annex I. Details asked on each practice collected

For each participatory practice collected, partners were asked to specify the following details:

- Name (or an equivalent short description);
- Source (e.g., project's own website, news media, whitepaper or scientific report, etc.)
- Website or contact information, if available
- Sponsors and actors involved
    - Public authorities
    - Civil society organisations
    - Residents/self-organised or grassroots groups
    - Others
- Description
    - Any available details on the practice's sponsors/founders
    - A brief description of what the practice does, including:
        - A general overview of scope and themes
        - Whether or not the practice appears to target specific vulnerable groups
        - Whether or not specific vulnerable groups appear to participate in the practice themselves (e.g., peer-to-peer support by vulnerable persons)
- Timeframe
    - When the practice was initiated
    - When it ceased, or whether it is still active
- Suggested keywords

# Annex II. Self-perceived social exclusion by demographic group

Descriptive statistics for the variable "self-perceived social exclusion - Feeling left out of the society" by socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents within EU countries.

| | | Round 2 | | | | Round 3 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Total | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Total |
| **Gender** | Female | 15.6 | 20.0 | 64.4 | 100 | 21.3 | 19.7 | 59.0 | 100 |
| | Male | 12.0 | 19.9 | 68.0 | 100 | 16.5 | 23.1 | 60.5 | 100 |
| | In another way | 42.3 | 21.9 | 35.8 | 100 | 45.7 | 11.7 | 42.6 | 100 |
| **Age** | 18-34 | 17.1 | 20.0 | 63.0 | 100 | 24.5 | 20.2 | 55.3 | 100 |
| | 35-49 | 13.8 | 21.2 | 65.1 | 100 | 19.0 | 23.3 | 57.8 | 100 |
| | 50-64 | 12.5 | 19.8 | 67.7 | 100 | 17.3 | 21.4 | 61.3 | 100 |
| | 65+ | 12.5 | 19.8 | 67.7 | 100 | 17.3 | 20.2 | 62.5 | 100 |
| **Education** | Primary | 13.9 | 26.7 | 59.4 | 100 | 14.5 | 21.9 | 63.6 | 100 |
| | Secondary | 15.3 | 20.7 | 64.0 | 100 | 20.7 | 22.1 | 57.2 | 100 |
| | Tertiary | 11.4 | 15.8 | 72.8 | 100 | 16.4 | 18.4 | 65.2 | 100 |
| **Place of residence** | City/suburb | 14.7 | 17.6 | 67.7 | 100 | 19.2 | 17.12 | 63.7 | 100 |
| | Medium to large town | 14.3 | 19.3 | 66.4 | 100 | 18.9 | 21.65 | 59.4 | 100 |
| | Village/small town | 13.6 | 21.0 | 65.4 | 100 | 19.2 | 23.76 | 57.0 | 100 |
| | Open countryside | 14.5 | 22.5 | 63.1 | 100 | 19.7 | 20.94 | 59.3 | 100 |

| Employment status | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Employee | 10.4 | 17.1 | 72.5 | 100 | 15.6 | 19.7 | 64.7 | 100 |
| | Full time homemaker | 19.4 | 27.3 | 53.3 | 100 | 27.3 | 17.4 | 55.3 | 100 |
| | Retired | 12.9 | 20.5 | 66.6 | 100 | 17.4 | 20.8 | 61.8 | 100 |
| | Self-empl. with employees | 11.0 | 22.1 | 66.8 | 100 | 10.4 | 16.5 | 73.0 | 100 |
| | Self-empl. without employees | 12.2 | 19.3 | 68.5 | 100 | 16.9 | 24.4 | 58.7 | 100 |
| | Student | 15.6 | 14.9 | 69.5 | 100 | 23.9 | 19.1 | 57.1 | 100 |
| | Unable to work | 36.8 | 27.2 | 36.1 | 100 | 40.4 | 26 | 33.6 | 100 |
| | Unemployed | 27.0 | 29.4 | 43.6 | 100 | 32.1 | 30.2 | 37.6 | 100 |

Source: Own elaborations on Living, Working and COVID-19 Survey.