CONTINUE Conversation of Change Event - Report

Name of Organisation	Crossing Borders
Country of Event	Denmark
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Number of Attendees	10
Description of Attendees	Youth, youth workers, educators, mental health professionals and other stakeholders

Short Description/Overview of the Event (3 - 5 sentences)
This Conversation of Change took place online on March 11th, 2022. Videos were shown from the community reporter website from the Danish youth that set the scene for the conversation that followed. There was robust discussion on the topic of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on school students from an academic standpoint and on their mental health and emotional well-being. We also highlighted the importance of teenage years as a critical life stage that prepares young people for adult life.

From the discussions at the event, please answers the following:
• **What did you learn about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of young people?**   • **How does this relate to how socially included or excluded they are?**   **(10 bullet points approx.)**
- One youth worker highlighted that teeenagehood is a crucial stage of life; a necessary step for all young people's development. For many, the pandemic was a dehumanising process where existing problems were magnified.   - We learnt about the importance of structure and routine in young people's lives – during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a clear lack of structure and more rigid structures are required to avoid a lack of certainty, which can lead to chaos.   - The pandemic resulted in a sense of powerlessness in young people; many reporting a lack of motivation to get up in the morning.   - One participant related to how being a student in their own home was difficult; being with their parents and/or othere family members in a confined space made it difficult to escape or have any space of their own.   - The pandemic reinforced the need for emotional and peer support and structure for students; they didn't want to do anything because they felt ¨all over the place.¨   - Some participants identified with the videos and stated that having more time made it twice as challenging to focus, as there was so much effort being put into focusing on their mental health

- Practising mindfulness and self-care is important from an early age
- Nature was perceived to have a relaxing and calming effect and there was a longing to be outdoors to decompress from the pressures of home and school. It was also helpful to separate home life from school and their personal lives.
- Many reported losing their sense of time, and that the pandemic disrupted any balance they had in their everyday lives
- One youth worker said they were happy because they had more time to work on their mental health.
- Conversely, another attendee felt like empty containers when socialising was taken out of the equation. Advice was offered to tackle mental health issues before they get worse; to seek support and assistance.
- Discussions were had amongst attendees that felt that part of their identity was rooted in being a social being and having a social existence that defines who they are as an individual.
- It was agreed amongst attendees that the online schooling format is isolating in itself as there is virtually no contact with other students, leading to feelings of social exclusion. All of the above led to feelings of social exclusion and a sense of alienation, as there was no means of connecting with others face to face.

What ideas did the attendees come up with for social actions?
(List all ideas)

- Increasing access to healthcare and mental health supports; a resource database
- Support groups – peer led groups to navigate through the last years of schools and any identified common issues, isolation, to come together and meet and have snacks
- Support for teachers
- Not enough focus in the topics of mental health of teenagers- to have a campaign that provides early intervention and tackles the misconception that¨you're still young, your problems aren't that severe yet¨
- Educating parents – parents' hub for mental health of children
- Awareness campaigns and advocacy
- Training parents and teachers to build the capacity for these networks to recognise signs of mental distress
- How to make obtaining mental health supports more accessible for youth i.e in the form of free or more accessible therapy
- Campaign to help young people realise what they're going through should not be taken for granted as just another aspect of being young, the campaign would serve to stop minimising the problems of youth and this can be achieve through simple steps like having a poster in school highlighting to seek support if experiencing issues/distress and it is okay to do so
- Campaign to push for equal access for all – same kind of access to education, community, health etc
- Mentors for students who allow them to seek advice on how to navigate different situations and equip them with more autonomy. These mentors will be willing to volunteer and help with practical skills such as time management
- Organize a youth focused event for International Mental Health Day

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- Forum managed by adults and mental health professionals
- Service Map focused on mental health access for youth in Denmark

What small, immediate actions did the attendees say they would commit to doing?
(List all actions)

- When interacting with teenagers and youth, tell them it's okay if to discuss their issues
- Share information about youth mental health (i.e. resources/databases) with network
- Make social media posts with lists of resources and referrals for youth mental health services
- Normalise that it is okay to experience distress and seek help in every day life

Use the space below to tell us any other relevant details or reflections on the event.

Event was held online due to covid outbreak, which resulted in less attendance than expected.