

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

A GENERATION IN LOCKDOWN DREAMING OF A DIFFERENT FUTURE



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A generation in lockdown

Alessandro Rosina

The lockdown is, metaphorically, a condition in which young people have been living for a long time in Italy. With social mobility blocked, they have been stuck living in the family home long-term, held back from taking the steps towards adult life.

The studies published in the Toniolo Institute's annual *Rapporto Giovani* have documented the objective difficulties encountered by the up and coming generations since the peak of the previous Great Recession (the first survey was conducted in 2012), as well as their moods and their subjective perceptions of their condition, with a particular focus on expectations and life plans (Istituto Toniolo, 2013; 2014; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020).

The Osservatorio Giovani's work over these years has revealed a complex, varied and constantly evolving scenario. In the introduction to the *Rapporto Giovani 2013*, we wrote:

If the new generations are unable to find a job and start their own families, this is a problem that concerns us all; the country itself will be structurally undermining the foundations of its future. Although the generational issue is ever present in the public debate, little is done to provide real answers (Istituto Toniolo, 2013, p. 9).

The situation described in the 2019 edition remained unsatisfactory, as reflected in the following introductory passage:

Overall, the data and analyses herein highlight the persistence of objective difficulties in a climate of low trust in institutions and high uncertainty about the future. The result is a present day in which young people are struggling to turn their desires into life plans and transform their new perspectives into a collective commitment to change their surrounding reality. There is no lack of positive examples, and encouraging feedback is obtained when the right conditions are created: evidence of the vital energy that is present but too often dissipated rather than harnessed (Istituto Toniolo, 2019, p. 18).

The COVID-19 epidemic has, therefore, had a particularly intense impact on a country that already had some of the worst values in Europe in terms of social and employment indicators for the new generations. Accordingly, if young people were already experiencing great difficulty in imagining a positive future, the new situation has added a further layer of uncertainty, which may take root and become insecurity if not properly managed.

In the “Final Considerations” published with the 2019 Annual Report, the Governor of the Bank of Italy stressed that the measures implemented to contain the pandemic have reduced new employment opportunities and led to job losses, especially when it comes to non-permanent contracts and certain sectors that primarily employ young people.

Of particular importance are the negative implications on the condition of young people, on the starting of new families, on reproductive choices and on the welfare of families with non-adult children. The dual risk of curbing life choices and accentuating inequality also presents itself. While the virus has affected the physical health of the elderly primarily, the indirect impact of the lockdown on economic distress and mental health has hit older adolescents and young people particularly hard, bringing about a deterioration in individual well-being.

We are facing a new scenario, which needs to be observed, analysed and interpreted in a robust and appropriate way if the country is to be led to a full and rapid recovery; we must recognise risks and vulnerabilities, but also seize any opportunities that arise from the disruption in the shaping of individual and collective choices. In this new post-COVID scenario, the new generations, more than any other, will have to redesign their lives and find impetus and direction for a new path of common growth.

The studies in this volume are based on the data from the first international survey on the state of the new generations in the age of Coronavirus and on post-pandemic expectations, which was funded by the Osservatorio Giovani dell’Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo di Studi Superiori and conducted by Ipsos between the end of March and the beginning of April 2020 (see the Appendix for the questionnaire used). The target of the survey was a representative sample of young people aged 18-34: about 2000 in Italy and 1000 in each of the other major European countries, namely Germany, France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 health crisis is recognised as being the biggest post-war crisis in Europe and in most developed economies.

As Luppi and Rosina point out in the first chapter (“The suspended decisions of the double crisis generation”), although some postponement

or cancellation of plans in light of the situation created by the pandemic was to be expected, the data show a very significant impact in this respect in Italy, with a large degree of variability between countries. Nearly two in three young Italians anticipate negative consequences on the economy and employment levels overall. Since the beginning of the crisis, 42% have experienced a worsening in their working conditions. It turns out that young Italians in particular are far more likely to have abandoned – and not simply postponed and rescheduled – their life plans, at least in the short term. With particular regard to moving in with a partner, getting married and having children, the gap is more than 20 percentage points when compared to young Germans. Levels of concern were found to be higher among women and those in insecure employment conditions.

In the second chapter (“Psychological wellbeing, the relational sphere and identity dynamics among young European adults in the age of COVID-19”), Aresi, Martinez Damia, Ellena, Pistoni and Marta explore the connection between physical isolation and psychological discomfort. Faced with emergencies, it is common for people to feel a stronger sense of identity, belonging and solidarity. However, through the experience of lockdown and the new normality centred on protecting public health, the pandemic has also redefined how people behave and relate to each other on a daily basis, with objective but also subjective effects on their well-being. All of this comes in a context of heightened uncertainty about life “afterwards”.

The authors demonstrate that young Italians faced with this uncertainty are tending to feel more vulnerable than their European peers, experiencing both negative and positive moods more intensely, but with a prevalence of the former (such as “depression”, “confusion” and “tension”). In addition, gender differences are greater in our country, with women experiencing lower subjective well-being.

As far as significant relationships are concerned, the young people interviewed stated that they had suffered mainly from reduced contact with friends and colleagues, with no significant drop in terms of quality. At the same time, there seems to be a greater focus on the “most meaningful emotional ties, which were found to be those with family and loved ones”. One critical aspect to have emerged is the overloading of working women who have small children.

In the third study, (“Putting trust to the test”), Mesa and Triani examine the possible effects of the pandemic on trust levels in the countries surveyed (characterised by different degrees of public support for young people and the effectiveness of policies for inclusion in active life) and

discuss various hypotheses. According to the data, trust in institutions remained largely consistent during the emergency, although a shift towards negative values was observed. The least pessimistic are the Germans, while the Italians show a greater degree of polarisation between those who have a negative and positive view. Across all nations, men were found to be more optimistic than women.

On the whole, the perceived reliability of political parties (not necessarily Governments), banks, the Catholic Church, trade unions and the European Union has worsened (especially in Italy and Spain, although we must note that the survey was conducted before the launch of Next Generation EU). During the emergency, trust levels in educational institutions (particularly universities, in view of the age of the sample) have remained stable on the whole. On the other hand, the Health Care System, scientific research, and volunteering (which were already in a relatively high position) have seen a marked increase in trust. In general, the impact (both positive and negative) is highest in Italy and Spain and much lower in Germany.

In the last chapter (“Stay at home, stay online. Internet and social networks during lockdown”) Bichi, Introini and Pasqualini explore the world of the media, particularly digital practices, during lockdown. The unprecedented nature of the emergency has led to an increase in various types of demand, to which the internet has responded in various ways. We have the demand for information, communication and remote social interaction (with family members and friends, but also for study or work reasons), but also services (home banking, delivery etc.) as well as participation, expression and entertainment. All of these aspects have seen a significant increase in use. In particular, the data demonstrate that social media platforms have been an important source of information, but are balanced with a variety of other sources (institutional websites, online newspapers, news and TV news) in line with the “omnivorous media diet of the younger generations”. Another important finding common to the various countries is that about one in two respondents used the internet to receive or give help within their social network. Finally, lockdown has given a strong boost to e-commerce and audio and video home entertainment platforms.

On the whole, the international survey data presented here demonstrate that whilst COVID-19 has had a direct impact on health, it has also impacted strongly on an economic and social level, disrupting everyday life, the way social relations are understood and experienced, the emotional state and the way people work and study. Lockdown has meant that activities are being banned or conducted differently, but also that

a new normality and a different system of risks and opportunities is being constructed. Being able to understand how people have experienced and interpreted the emergency, but also how they look beyond the emergency itself, their fears and expectations, how they are facing the changes in the new landscape, how they are adapting and reorienting their choices and paths is crucial for preparing policies and tools that will allow the country to lay solid foundations for a new start.

After this initial international survey conducted during lockdown, the Osservatorio Giovani will continue to collect information and analyse the condition of the new generations in the belief that, even more so now, all action that supports them in interpreting reality and acting positively moves us towards a better “after” than the “before”.

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The suspended decisions of the double-crisis generation

Francesca Luppi, Alessandro Rosina

Introduction

The health and ensuing economic crisis caused by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is widely regarded as the worst since World War II in Europe and in most advanced economies. One of its distinguishing features, compared to past crises, has been the widespread awareness among citizens of its great impact, currently and for a long time to come, on ordinary people's lives. Indeed, from the very beginning of the lockdown, people have had the clear perception that the everyday world, up to that point, had changed and that many plans they had in the pipeline only a few months earlier would have to be revised, postponed or even cancelled.

Italy was the first European nation to face the emergency, which officially started at the end of February 2020 with the adoption of restrictive measures concerning the mobility of persons and physical proximity, and the consequent closure of most production sites, public establishments and services. At the end of spring 2020, together with Spain and the United Kingdom, it was one of the most affected countries in Europe, both in terms of the number of infected and of dead, especially the regions that drive the country's economy.

As is often the case, crises do not affect all members of the population equally. In fact, more vulnerable people tend to be worse affected than others. After the great recession of 2008, for example, the vulnerability of young people became clear: the rate of youth unemployment increased significantly everywhere. The labour markets of Southern European countries in particular (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Italy and Spain) never fully recovered, with additional negative demographic consequences. Indeed, fertility rates in these countries dropped further over the last decade; furthermore, in general, the transition to adult life for those who experienced the great recession in their twenties was severely hampered by the increased challenge of gaining financial independence from their families of origin. Therefore, arriving on the

coat tails of severe recession, the new economic crisis born out of the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to ensnare the life plans of young people once again. So there is no time to lose in collecting data on how the new generations have experienced and perceived the impact of the lockdown period, and on their expectations for the country's recovery phase, as a source of useful information for designing effective policies to reduce risks and seize new opportunities.

The pre-pandemic environment in Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain and Spain

The demographic and economic contexts offer a reflection of the main resources upon which a country can rely to stem the negative effects of a crisis. Where the employment and demographic situations are more fragile, the economic and social stresses associated with the crisis will be more difficult to cope with and overcome. Thus, whilst economic crises have always traditionally had a negative impact on the birth rate, due to income and employment insecurity (Adsera, 2011; Goldstein *et al*, 2013; Matysiak - Vignoli - Sobotka, 2018), favourable contexts can reduce this uncertainty, thereby protecting any plans to have children made in the pre-crisis period (Adsera, 2004; Kreyenfeld, 2016; Caltabiano - Comolli - Rosina, 2017; Vignoli - Tocchioni - Mattei, 2019). Accordingly, a description of the demographic and labour market characteristics in the months preceding the pandemic is useful to identify contexts of greater or lesser vulnerability in relation to young people's plans (family planning etc.).

A few months before the start of lockdown, like other European countries and particularly those of Southern Europe, Italy was faced with persistent economic stagnation and demographic crisis, partly inherited from the great recession of 2008. With their respective birth rates in constant decline, Italy and Spain had the lowest in 2019 fertility rate in Europe. This continually declining birth rate is at least partly explained by the condition of young people and women in the labour market. The great recession drove the NEET rates (young people Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training) in these countries to among the highest in Europe (Rosina, 2020). Both countries also experienced historically low female employment rates in 2019, far below the European average.

Table 1 makes a brief comparison of some demographic and labour market indicators (the most recent ones provided by Eurostat) in the European countries included in the Osservatorio Giovani survey. The same indicators are reported both at national and macro-area levels,

aggregating the regions with a high incidence of COVID-19. As mentioned above, the two countries with the worst overall scenarios are Italy and Spain, both in terms of labour market and fertility indicators. However, it can be noted that, in the same two countries, the regions most affected by the epidemic are also the most high-performing, both in terms of the labour market (lower NEET levels and higher female employment) and demographic indicators (higher fertility rates and lower first-time mother age).

Tab. 1 - *Some demographic and labour market indicators in the countries included in the Osservatorio Giovani study*

| | ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SPAIN | UNITED KINGDOM |
|---|-------|---------|--------|-------|----------------|
| % NEET (15-24) in 2019* | | | | | |
| <i>In the country</i> | 18.0 | 5.7 | 10.6 | 12.1 | 11.5 |
| <i>In the regions with high numbers of COVID-19** cases</i> | 11.8 | 5.2 | 11.1 | 8.6 | 13.1 |
| Female employment rate (25-34) 2019*** | | | | | |
| <i>In the country</i> | 50.2 | 73.0 | 62.9 | 58.4 | 71.5 |
| <i>In the regions with high numbers of COVID-19** cases</i> | 68.4 | 78.2 | 74.2 | 76.7 | 76.4 |
| Mean age of women at childbirth 2018*** | | | | | |
| <i>In the country</i> | 32.0 | 31.1 | 30.6 | 32.2 | 30.6 |
| <i>In regions with high numbers of COVID-19** cases</i> | 32.0 | 31.2 | 30.5 | 32.8 | 30.4 |
| Fertility rate 2018*** | | | | | |
| <i>In the country</i> | 1.29 | 1.57 | 1.88 | 1.26 | 1.68 |
| <i>In regions with high numbers of COVID-19** cases</i> | 1.40 | 1.55 | 1.74 | 1.29 | 1.64 |

* Sources: Eurostat (age: 15-24 years); UK Government for England (age: 16-24 years); Wales Government for Wales (age: 16-24 years).

** The regions with a high number of COVID-19 cases are those in the third trifacta of the distribution of the indicator. Number of cases out of the total population (per 1000) - (Italy: Valle d'Aosta, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto; Germany: Baden Wuttemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine, Saarland; France: Bourgogne France Comte, Corsica, Grand Est, Hauts de France, Ile de France).

*** Source: Eurostat (Spain: North East, Madrid; Great Britain: Greater London, North

East, North West, Wales). Sources: <https://www.data.gouv.fr/fr/reuses/carte-de-levolution-du-covid-en-france/>; <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/#regions>; <https://github.com/open-covid-19/data#metadata>.

To complement the picture offered by the data, other factors regarding the condition of young people and family policies can be considered. After the great recession, especially in Italy, for example, the condition of young people has received little attention. As the NEET data shows, the burden of the (first) crisis and (subsequent) economic stagnation has been shouldered mainly by the new generations. Often precarious workers, with low and unstable wages, people who were in their twenties during the financial crisis of 2008 in many cases reduced their propensity to implement the life projects typical of the transition to adult life (e.g. moving out of their family homes, moving in with a partner/marrying, gaining economic independence, having children, etc.) (Sironi - Rosina, 2016). Over the years, no effective policy has been adopted to reduce the financial and employment uncertainty of young Italians.

At the same time, little or nothing has been done in terms of policies to support the birth rate, despite the marked fall in the fertility rate as a result of the effects of the great recession. According to Eurostat data¹, in 2018 Italy was had one of lowest percentages (16.1%) of children between 0 and 2 years old accessing childcare services for at least 30 hours per week (full time) in Europe. Spain and Germany show a percentage of 20.3 and 22.4, respectively, while in France 30.4% of children access full-time services. In the UK, only 7% of children between 0 and 2 years old attend childcare for more than 30 hours a week, but the proportion of those who attend part-time services is one of the highest in Europe (31.7%, compared to 9.6% in Italy; 19.6% in France; 7.7% in Germany; 30.2% in Spain). Italy also lags far behind other European countries in terms of maternity/paternity leave, with a system that grants five months compulsory leave for the mother (the longest in Europe) and, in 2019, five days' leave for fathers. Such a system bears the hallmark of a traditional view of gender roles, where the mother is the primary carer and the father is the breadwinner. The result, given the lack of support for reconciling work and family commitments, not only in terms of childcare and the labour market (e.g. little recourse to flexible working arrangements for working parents) is a high rate of abandonment of employment by mothers and, therefore, the low rate of female employ-

¹ [Ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Formal_childcare,_by_age_of_child_and_duration_of_care,_2018_\(%25_share_of_children_in_each_age_group\)-LCIE_2020.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Formal_childcare,_by_age_of_child_and_duration_of_care,_2018_(%25_share_of_children_in_each_age_group)-LCIE_2020.png)

ment. It is clear that such a system is totally unsuitable to support the fertility of the younger generations, for whom having a double income in the couple is a necessity, both to cope with a lack of job security and to compensate for wage levels, which are often not high enough to make having children a sustainable choice for a single-income family.

There is, therefore, a high risk that the COVID-19 health emergency, subsequently translated into an economic crisis, will both further postpone the transition phases to adult life and further depress the birth rate. The economic difficulties and the increased climate of uncertainty, in fact, can further postpone the decision to have children for already-formed couples and the possibility for young people to become independent and establish their own families. Although, after the great epidemics of the past, we can observe a revival of demographic vitality, in this case such a revival looks less certain. In particular, there has been no recovery of the birth rate since the economic crisis began in 2008, leaving the new generations in an enduring state of vulnerability as a result. In this way, arriving on the coat tails of severe recession, the current crisis threatens to ensnare the life plans of young people once again.

Life plans at risk

In line with the information provided on the demographic and economic situations of the countries surveyed, the Osservatorio Giovani data appears to show that the life plans of young Italians in particular – but also Spaniards – are more vulnerable than those of their European peers. As early as one month into lockdown, 62% of the Italian respondents, in fact, believed that the health emergency would have a negative impact on their plans, followed closely by young Spaniards (59%). French and German young people seemed less concerned, with 46% and 42% of respondents recognising this risk. In Great Britain, 54% of young people were concerned about the negative effects of the crisis on their life plans.

Although it was to be expected, in the current situation, that many desired plans would have to be postponed or cancelled, there is nevertheless a wide discrepancy between different countries in terms of those who say they have changed their plans (postponed or abandoned). Young Italians, more than all their European peers, were the most likely to have abandoned – and not simply postponed – their life plans, at least in the short term (Tab. 2). In particular, as far as of moving in with a partner, getting married or having children is concerned, the gap is more than 20 percentage points when compared to young Germans, who

are the most optimistic about leaving their plans almost unchanged or simply postponed.

Tab. 2 - Distribution of the potential rescheduling of demographic-type life plans (percentage of the total number of young people with these plans at the beginning of 2020)

| MOVING OUT OF THE FAMILY HOME TO LIVE ON YOUR OWN | | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|--------|-------|----------------|
| | ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SPAIN | UNITED KINGDOM |
| <i>Confirmed</i> | 20.0 | 30.6 | 31.7 | 19.4 | 25.1 |
| <i>Postponed</i> | 45.6 | 46.4 | 55.3 | 51.5 | 50.7 |
| <i>Abandoned</i> | 34.4 | 23.0 | 13.0 | 29.1 | 24.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| MOVING IN WITH A PARTNER | | | | | |
| | ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SPAIN | UNITED KINGDOM |
| <i>Confirmed</i> | 23.1 | 36.8 | 41.4 | 26.4 | 30.6 |
| <i>Postponed</i> | 43.4 | 50.5 | 43.8 | 52.6 | 51.4 |
| <i>Abandoned</i> | 33.5 | 12.7 | 14.8 | 21.0 | 18.0 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| GETTING MARRIED | | | | | |
| | ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SPAIN | UNITED KINGDOM |
| <i>Confirmed</i> | 16.6 | 29.0 | 18.0 | 20.4 | 24.9 |
| <i>Postponed</i> | 43.0 | 53.7 | 58.9 | 57.1 | 50.8 |
| <i>Abandoned</i> | 40.4 | 17.3 | 23.1 | 22.5 | 24.3 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| HAVING A CHILD/CONCEIVING | | | | | |
| | ITALY | GERMANY | FRANCE | SPAIN | UNITED KINGDOM |
| <i>Confirmed</i> | 25.6 | 30.7 | 32.0 | 21.2 | 23.0 |
| <i>Postponed</i> | 37.9 | 55.1 | 50.7 | 49.6 | 57.8 |
| <i>Abandoned</i> | 36.5 | 14.2 | 17.3 | 29.2 | 19.2 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Note: The percentages are calculated based on the answers to the question «Has the Coronavirus emergency interfered with this plan in any way?» where «plan» means the life plans listed in the Table. The possible answers are: «No, the plan is still in place

for 2020»; «The plan is still in place but I have had to postpone it»; «For now, I have abandoned the plan». These questions were asked to those who stated that they were planning each of the corresponding life plans.

As can be expected, the employment status of young people plays an important role in the level of perceived uncertainty and risk, with a different impact on their willingness to retain or change their life plans as a result. Managers, freelancers and employees (both permanent and temporary) are more likely to confirm or possibly postpone their plans than the self-employed and those working on project-based contracts, among whom there seems to be a higher propensity to abandon their plans. This disparity reflects the greater economic vulnerability of the second group of workers – especially in times of crisis – compared to the first. And the impact seems significant if we look, for example, at the modification of plans to have a child this year. More than half (52.3%) of self-employed and project-based workers stated that they had abandoned – at least temporarily but in any case indefinitely – the idea of having a child, compared to 26.8% of the most secure workers. Also on the question of having a child, the proportion of those who postponed the decision was almost equal for both categories of workers, while the proportion of those who still intend to have a child in 2020 is markedly higher among the more secure workers (34.1%) compared to the other group (10.8%). The outlook is similar for the decision to move out of the family home or move in with a partner.

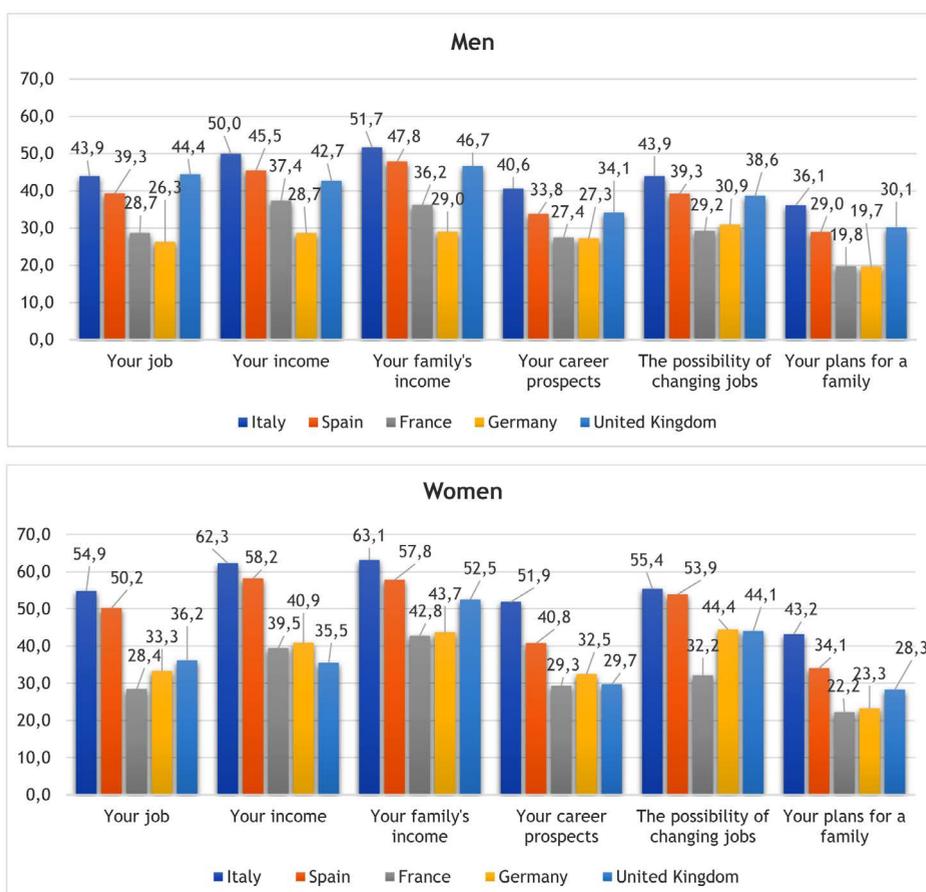
For NEETs and students, whilst the lack of income from work definitely creates more uncertainty, resulting in a higher proportion of abandoned plans (just below the level of the self-employed and project workers), variation is nevertheless high within this category. It includes both job seekers and inactive individuals, i.e. those who are not looking for work and do not intend to work, perhaps with the idea of exclusively caring for their family and depending on the income of another family member (e.g. partner). However, a negative effect of the crisis on this category of young people is detectable in terms of active participation in the labour market in Italy². In fact, in this context, the economic crisis seems to have decreased the propensity of NEET women to seek employment². Before the health emergency, 84% of NEET men and 75% of NEET women were seeking employment; however, among these, while 22% of men stopped actively seeking employment (49% postponed their search), the equivalent figure among women was 35% in March (with 41% postponing).

The renunciation, albeit temporary, of certain key life plans for tran-

² In other countries, the sample sizes are too low to conduct the same analysis. However, at an aggregate level, there are no differences between men and women or NEETs and non-NEETs.

sitioning to adult life is associated with a very negative perspective on how the health crisis will affect the future of young Italians. Compared to their peers in other large European countries, Italians (both genders but more so women) tend to be much more pessimistic about the changes that this situation will impose on their income and employment situation, as well as on their family life (fig. 1).

Fig. 1 - Young people expecting the COVID-19 emergency to have a negative impact on certain aspects of their lives, by gender (percentage values)



Note: The graph shows the percentages of those who answered «Very negative» or «Quite negative» to the question «Looking to the future, do you think the current Coronavirus emergency will have a positive or negative effect on...».

First evidence of negative effects on the birth rate

The decision to have a child is certainly one of the most vulnerable plans to economic uncertainty: this is because children require significant and prolonged financial input. The survey data also provide evidence in this regard. According to the survey, in January 2020 the proportion of young people planning to conceive in 2020 was about the same in the various countries, albeit slightly higher in Italy and France (26.6% and 27.5% respectively) than in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom (21.4%, 21.6% and 23.6% respectively). However, the impact of the health crisis seems to have varied in different countries. As already highlighted by the data in Table 2, in some cases the negative effect of the crisis seems (relatively) less dramatic, as in France and Germany, where the emergency led the majority of young people to postpone their plans to have a child, while a relatively small number decided to abandon the plan entirely; in more than 30% of cases the plan to have a child did not change. In Spain and the United Kingdom, a smaller proportion of young people kept their family planning intentions unchanged (around 20%), while the majority were inclined to postpone them; in Spain the percentage of those abandoning their plans to become parents was higher than in Great Britain (by 10 percentage points). Finally, in the international comparison, the situation in Italy stood out, with a decidedly higher percentage for those deciding to abandon their plans to have a child than in the other countries: 36.5%.

To investigate the possible heterogeneity behind such wide-ranging family planning decisions in different nations, we explored the propensity to keep, postpone or abandon plans to have children based on a number of socio-demographic characteristics: age (18-24, 25-29; 30-34 years), level of education (university educated or not), perception that one's employment is at risk and residence in a region with a high incidence of COVID-19. More specifically, in order to take into account the possible economic effect of the crisis, we considered how insecure the respondents perceived their employment situation to be. This uncertainty is likely to be an indicator both of their job (in)security and the anticipated indirect effect of the crisis on the economic system and the labour market. The question about employment uncertainty that young people have been asked is «Compared to before the Coronavirus emergency, do you feel more or less vulnerable in terms of your job (current or future)?» Responses were provided on a scale from 1 (much less vulnerable) to 5 (much more vulnerable). The variable was re-categorised as follows: 0 for respondents who expected either no effect or a posi-

tive effect (values 1, 2 and 3 of the original variable), 1 for respondents who expected strongly negative effects on their job (value 4) and 2 for those who expected very strong negative effects (value 5). Finally, we hypothesised a possible context effect related to residence in a region strongly affected by the spread of COVID-19. Data were collected at a regional level (NUTS2 or NUTS1 according to the aggregation level available in the survey) between 9 and 14 April 2020³. After considering the cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases per 1000 inhabitants, we calculated the tertiles of the distribution of this indicator within each country and generated a dichotomous variable to identify those living in a region with a high number of COVID-19 cases (regions above the second tertile)⁴. We calculated the expected probabilities of the three family-planning decisions using multinomial models and including the socio-demographic variables one by one whilst controlling for gender.

A common trend throughout the countries studied is the protective effect of age: the percentage of those sticking to their current plan increases with age. This propensity is therefore higher among 25- to 29-year-olds and 30- to 34-year-olds above all, compared to their younger counterparts (18-24-year-olds). A possible explanation may be found in the fact that young people over the age of 30 – especially women – were more inclined to remain committed to their plans to have a child at least in the early stages of the crisis (Sobotka - Skirbekk - Philipov, 2011): this hypothesis seems consistent with the lower tendency observed among young people aged 30-34 to postpone the decision compared to the other two groups. Moreover, in Italy only, the tendency to abandon pregnancy plans was lower for 30-year-olds. This unique result for Italy may be due to the higher age of first-time mothers in this country compared to elsewhere; as a result, among those who are 30-34 years old, the absence of children may be more widespread in Italy than in other countries (Sobotka - Beaujouan, 2018). As shown in previous studies, at least in Italy, the great recession did not change the propensity to have a first child for women who were in the last years of their fertile period when the economic crisis hit (Caltabiano - Comolli - Ros-

³ Sources: www.data.gouv.fr/fr/reuses/carte-de-levolution-du-covid-en-france; coronavirus.data.gov.uk/#regions; github.com/open-covid-19/data#metadata.

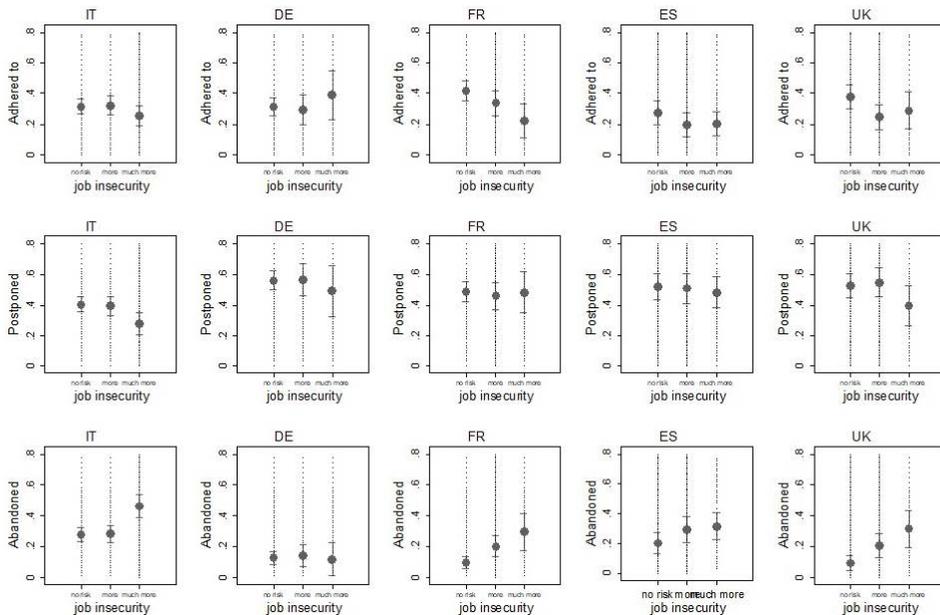
⁴ The regions with a high number of COVID-19 cases are those in the third tertile of the indicator for “Number of cases out of the total population” (per 1000) - (Italy: Valle d’Aosta, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Lombardy, Piedmont, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto; Germany: Baden Wuttemberg, Bavaria, North Rhine, Saarland; France: Bourgogne France Comte, Corsica, Grand Est, Hauts de France, Ile de France; Spain: North East, Madrid; Great Britain: Greater London, North East, North West, Wales).

ina, 2017), while this propensity was strongly reduced among younger women (under 30) (Goldstein *et al.*).

However, the higher education⁵ variable (degree or higher) seemed to have no meaningful effect, whilst even the prevalence of COVID-19 cases in the region failed to suggest there were significant associations with the family planning changes common among the countries surveyed. Only in Germany, France and the United Kingdom do the “red” regions show a higher prevalence of abandoned or postponed pregnancy plans. In Italy and Spain, for example, the probability of abandonment is lower in the regions most affected by the pandemic.

Finally, confirming the important role of financial security in family planning, the job insecurity resulting from the crisis seems to have increased the probability of abandoning plans to have a child in 2020 in all countries except Germany (fig. 2).

Fig. 2 - Propensity to adhere to, postpone or abandon plans to have a child in 2020 in relation to the perceived level of future job insecurity (young people aged between 24 and 34)



⁵ For these and subsequent analyses, only the sub-sample of young people aged between 24 and 34 was considered, to avoid distorting the results by including those in the 18-23 group, not yet able to achieve a qualification higher than secondary education.

These results point to the possibility that the effect of the COVID-19 emergency and ensuing economic crisis may act according to different mechanisms in different European countries. This may be due to the fact that the economic, social and demographic conditions of the country prior to the economic crisis and partly inherited from the 2008 recession not only created the fertility conditions before the crisis, but are creating those during the crisis and will (presumably) create the future conditions as well.

Some evidence of this link can also be found in the results presented here. The countries where young people are more likely to abandon their plans to have a child are those where fertility was already very low before the crisis (Italy and Spain). Conversely, in those countries where fertility was higher before the crisis (France and Germany) plans to have children are better protected even in a context of uncertainty such as the COVID-19 emergency: in these cases, a higher percentage of young people are either planning to have a baby in 2020 or at most postponing their plans rather than abandoning them. This trend could therefore suggest that the same factors that hampered fertility in the various countries before the crisis are still at work during the crisis, thus explaining its varying impact on the family planning of young Europeans.

There is one factor which could play an important role in this respect and which is linked to the different status of women in the labour market. In our study, the countries now suffering the greatest losses in terms of family planning are also those with the lowest female employment rates in Europe and the lowest percentage of children aged 0-2 years enrolled in childcare. It is well understood in the scientific literature that female employment is positively correlated with fertility. And the availability (understood as accessibility both in economic terms and the extensiveness of facilities throughout the region) of childcare services is one of the factors that encourages the presence of women in the labour market. In Italy, for example, the lack of adequate public childcare services is often circumvented by relying on grandparents and their willingness to care for grandchildren; a valuable resource in contexts with family-type welfare (Ferrera, 1996; Bordone - Arpino - Aassve, 2017) for families with two working parents, that was no longer available during the COVID-19 emergency due to lockdown restrictions. In addition, the lockdown experience may have aggravated the traditional gender role division⁶ in terms of care and domestic tasks, especially in countries where the gender gap between the share of paid and unpaid work done

⁶ See Ferrario - Profeta, 2020.

by women and men was high even in the pre-crisis period. It is easy, therefore, to imagine that the exacerbation of these gender imbalances in such contexts could have negative effects on the birth rate.

Conclusions

In Europe, the climate of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have been accentuated by the enduring effects of the 2008 financial crisis, particularly in Southern European countries where employment indicators for young people and women and fertility rates are the lowest (Matysiak - Vignoli - Sobotka, 2018).

In other words, the gravity of the current situation is due to fact that the negative consequences of this crisis on the birth rate in Europe are being added to the negative consequences of the great recession, since both crises impact the same segment of the younger population. In other words, the 30-year-olds today, now finding themselves postponing their plans to start a family, are the 20-year-olds of the previous crisis, who already postponed these same plans at time. Now in an advanced stage of their fertile period, at least for some, the total or partial abandonment of their plan to have children may not only become an option but a definitive choice. We are facing the real threat of this becoming a “lost generation”: living in a condition of enduring uncertainty, struggling against economic difficulty, continually postponing full entry into adult life and even abandoning their own life plans.

While the decline in fertility in recent decades was already a cause for concern for many European governments, the possibility of a further decline in the birth rate as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis poses a serious threat to the resilience of the social, economic and welfare systems of these countries. For this reason, political efforts to reverse this trend must be swift and effective, especially in countries where the condition of young people (and the demographic situation) was already critical before the pandemic. Supporting the presence of young people in the labour market is indispensable if we are to reduce the negative impact – both demographic and economic – of this crisis. At the same time, measures to promote female empowerment and gender equality in both paid and non-paid work (e.g. domestic work, care work) are indispensable.

In the “Final Considerations” presented at the end of May 2020 with the release of the 2019 Annual Report, the Governor of the Bank of Italy pointed out that the measures implemented to contain the pandemic have reduced new employment opportunities and led to job losses, es-

pecially when it comes to non-permanent contracts and certain sectors that employ young people primarily.

However, in this new post-COVID scenario, it is also true that the new generations, more than any other, will have to redesign their lives and find impetus and direction for a new path of common growth. The data presented here tell us that if the Italian generations were already experiencing great uncertainty about the future, the new situation created by the pandemic has added a further layer of uncertainty, which may take root and become insecurity if not properly managed.

The impact of the health emergency presents the country with a new scenario requiring the careful monitoring of the condition of the new generations and the adaptation of the system of risks and opportunities within which they make their decisions. Only through adequate research and analysis can we provide the necessary scientific support for designing targeted policies that will enable the country to revive the country with the new generation playing an active role and contributing their essential boost of vitality.

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Psychological wellbeing, the relational sphere and identity dynamics among young European adults in the age of COVID-19

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Introduction

Although it shares specific characteristics with other emergencies, the health emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic that we have been experiencing in recent months has two distinctive and unique features. Firstly, for the first time since World War II, the whole world is experiencing the same dramatic situation, thus developing feelings of insecurity, risk, fear and anxiety. Furthermore, it is allowing a subject that remains taboo in our society to come to light: death. For the first time in this new century, people worldwide have realised that they share a common fate, that human interdependence goes further than economics and that individual responsibility has obvious social implications.

Secondly, the massive use – and reinterpretation in educational terms – of technological devices, has increased the so-called “disintermediation” of physicality. This overuse of technology has turned the spotlight on the meaning of the body and corporeity, and even more on the fact that, whilst technologies have been of great help, they still operate using simplified and simplifying thought patterns, not always sensitive enough for conveying the thoughts, emotions, dreams, desires and interactions that comprise human expression.

Alongside this, we have witnessed – and we are still seeing – a dominant theory, built on the one hand by the economic-administrative policy and on the other by the healthcare sector, each with its jargon and assumptions that escape most people.

However, it is ordinary people that tell the real story. People who have been confronted with a new and worrying situation involving physical isolation, teleworking, the suspension of daily routines, and staying indoors for too long.

It is well known that psychological wellbeing or discomfort, as well as the feeling of security/insecurity, derives from the context in which people live, and at the same time the psychological state can have an impact on the context (this topic was explored in the Rapporto Giovani

2014, cf. Marta - Marzana, 2014). This is emphasised in situations such as the one we are currently experiencing, in which relationships, considered a source of wellbeing and a solid part of one's identity, have been limited in terms of daily physical presence.

The psychological literature has also highlighted that people tend to develop a shared identity during collective emergencies: social divisions partly dissolve and give rise to a renewed social identity characterised by greater solidarity and satisfaction derived from the group membership (Cocking - Drury - Reicher, 2009). This group can even be as large as the nation, which has become important due to well-known political and humanitarian issues.

How have young Europeans experienced this situation? Was their mood – an indicator of wellbeing – affected by the pandemic? Has it changed as a result of the pandemic? How vulnerable did they feel? What was the impact of the pandemic on their relationships? And on their social identity, in terms of national identity?

This chapter aims to answer these questions by analysing a sample of young adults from five European countries, including Italy, with respect to some psychological dimensions relevant to their experience in this exceptional health emergency. We focused in particular on the emotional experience and moods, the perception of change on a personal and social level in response to the emergency and the effects of restrictions on interpersonal relationships and feelings of national identity. The introductory section outlines the state of the art as regards the psychological dimensions investigated. The following sections describe the objectives, methods and results of the study. The last section is dedicated to the discussion of results.

Emotions, moods and perception of vulnerability

In emergency situations, feelings of psychological discomfort can occur, i.e. negative emotional states. In such complex and difficult circumstances as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to study emotional reactions and moods, as well as young people's perception of risk during the peak contagion period. These constructs have been extensively studied in psychology and are important for understanding, in the different fields of study, the state of psychological discomfort or wellbeing of individuals. It seems appropriate to point out important conceptual distinctions between emotions and moods (see, for example, Beedie - Terry- Lane, 2005; Ekman, 1999). Moods are defined as a set of feelings that can vary in intensity and duration and usually involve more than one emotion (Lane - Terry, 2000). Emotions are generally described as more intense, faster,

and shorter than moods, which, on the contrary, have a lower, more pervasive, and enduring intensity and are less subject to conscious monitoring and control (Beedie - Terry - Lane, 2005). In addition, moods tend to exert a more global influence on feelings, thoughts and, behaviours, while emotions tend to generate the development of specific responses to situations that are event-oriented and require immediate action (Lane, 2007; Tehrani - Molesworth, 2016). Although the “mood” construct is sometimes conceptualised as a unified psychological state, Lane (2007) pointed out that moods imply a complex combination of feelings and that the interaction between these dimensions of a mood, rather than any of its aspects considered alone, has an influence on people’s behaviour. It therefore seems important, in this regard, to investigate the moods of young people as well as their perceived vulnerability, in order to gain a picture of their “generalised” mood in this emergency context and to understand the impact it may have had on their psychological state, in order to propose appropriate support interventions.

Personal growth following a traumatic situation

Trauma has been extensively studied in the literature, both for its psychopathological implications and its social and collective impact. When considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the relative restrictive measures, it is evident we are dealing with a traumatic event that, like earthquakes, hurricanes and wars, affects not only the individual but the community as a whole as well. Although most studies have focused on the psychopathological consequences of traumatic events, one branch has instead examined the positive outcomes on both an individual and a social level. Post-traumatic growth (PTG) (Tedeschi - Calhoun, 1995), i.e. growth following a traumatic situation, is a crucial construct from this point of view.

By “post-traumatic growth”, we mean all subjective experiences of positive psychological change following exposure to a traumatic event. More precisely, psychological growth is experienced by people as a result of considerable effort to counter the pain of a negative experience. In this respect, it differs from resilience, which instead represents the ability to act positively. In short, suffering engenders psychological growth. More specifically, following a trauma, people find themselves in a situation of emotional distress because the collapse of specific solid points of reference places them in a position of vulnerability and insecurity. When individuals become aware of this condition, they can start a process of cognitive redevelopment, whereby they try to find a new sense of their

experience, building new meanings for it. Such reflections can lead to changes in five different life areas: appreciation of life (greater consideration for aspects that are meaningful, even small ones, and worth experiencing), relationships with others (changing the way people relate to each other, for example through an increased willingness to express emotions or a greater propensity to accept help), new possibilities (renewed desire to pursue different paths in life and redefine priorities), personal strength (increased sense of self-efficacy, strength, and self-confidence) and spirituality (change in religious beliefs, spiritual and existential/philosophical issues) (Tedeschi *et al.*, 2018).

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the enduring climate of fear of infection, the interruption of almost all daily activities, and social and physical isolation have been sources of intense pain for many people. At the same time, people were inspired to reflect on their existence and its meaning and on their most important goals and values. This study aimed to explore, from a psychological perspective, how young European adults have coped with such situations, attempting to provide an initial response to the question that many people are asking themselves: “Have we come out of this as better people?”

Interpersonal relations

Humans have an innate need to create and maintain positive and lasting social ties and form meaningful interpersonal relationships characterised by a certain degree of intimacy (Baumeister - Leary, 1995). Significant relationships include those within families, couples, and friendships. On the other hand, relationships with work colleagues may be more or less meaningful depending on the degree of intimacy.

The theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968) identifies youth as a period of relational intimacy versus isolation: young people, having clarified their personal identity, form bonds with others. Building a deep relationship is a time-consuming process that can suffer setbacks and recoveries depending on certain experiences and living conditions. Restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have profoundly affected our familiar ways of managing social relationships, preventing us from seeing friends, family, and partners and, depending on our job, from interacting with colleagues. Baumeister and Leary (1995) argue that the need for belonging that human beings experience is so persistent that they will do everything they can to maintain their social ties. In this situation, therefore, unable to interact in person, many have taken up using remote communication tools. In this regard, young people were

indeed at an advantage compared to the older adult generation, since online life was already part of their everyday experience, albeit to a less pervasive degree than among adolescents.

Some researchers have pointed out that forming and maintaining meaningful relationships may be a mechanism to cope with the fear of death (Mikulincer - Florian - Hirschberger, 2003; Wisman - Koole, 2003). They argue that reminders of one's death increase the motivation to build close relationships because maintaining relationships provides a symbolic shield against the fear of death. This may have occurred in response to the daily death reports in both one's own and other countries. However, the pandemic introduced two new aspects that are noteworthy: most parts of Europe have seen the suppression of opportunities for the socialising and sharing activities that, in normal circumstances, allow social relations to continue without excessive effort; the two obstacles to these activities have been physical distancing and isolation, thus making it very difficult to develop close relationships.

Considering these themes – the need for belonging, the life stage of youth, and the fear of death experienced in an exceptional situation – this study has attempted to understand what happened to relationships during the lockdown: did experiencing social restrictions in any way affect the need for belonging and the propensity to maintain these relationships? The aim was to understand whether interactions have increased or diminished, improved or worsened and whether, instead of investing in relationships, young people have opted for isolation.

National identity

The concept of identity has been studied extensively in psychology: the first person to introduce the term to the psychosocial field was Erikson (Erikson, 1968). He defined this construct as the set of dynamics that people use to achieve self-awareness and maintain their characteristics over time. There are two types of identity: personal and social. By “personal identity”, we mean the descriptions that people apply to themselves based on individual characteristics. “Social identity” refers to all those aspects of the self that the person derives from belonging to a group and from feelings and emotions connected to it (Myers *et al.*, 2019). For example, a person who uses his or her individual characteristics to describe himself or herself will apply terms such as pleasant, cheerful, or shy. Whereas a person who uses his or her membership of a group will describe himself or herself using terms such as European, Italian, volleyball player, man/woman, daughter/son, etc. The sense of

belonging to a group, whether large or small, has a fundamental role in helping people deal with difficult or dangerous situations, especially if they are experienced on a collective level. In other words, when one's social group is threatened, people tend to reinforce their social identity to deal with the adverse event and associated anxiety: an alternative way of saying "strength in numbers" (Kira *et al.*, 2019).

Entire nations have been affected by the COVID-19 emergency, which has had a dramatic impact on citizens. National governments have reacted according to different timelines and taken various containment measures, encouraging a continual comparison between countries, both in terms of the responses to the health crisis and the number of infections and deaths. These factors have helped to define the groups' boundaries, clearly delineating the "us" and "them", and thus increasing the sense of belonging among citizens to their respective states. In this study, we referred to a particular type of social identity: the national identity. This construct is defined as that part of oneself derived from a sense of belonging to a nation or state (Triandafyllidou, 1998). We wanted to understand how this has been experienced in different European countries during this unique period.

Objectives

Using a sample of young adults from five European countries, including Italy, we analysed psychological aspects related to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, we investigated mood, the perception of being vulnerable, perceptions of personal and social growth in response to the emergency, the effects of restrictions on interpersonal relationships, and feelings of national identity. These constructs were analysed, considering the country and socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age group, educational level, and employment status).

Method

Participants

This study is based on a sample of 6,000 young people aged 18-34¹ living

¹ A weighting has been included in the data analyses to ensure their representativeness with respect to certain socio-demographic variables such as gender, age group and region of residence.

in Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Spain. The Italian sample consists of 2000 individuals, while the other countries are represented by 1000 participants each. Each sample is gender-balanced and representative of the youth population of the respective country. Out of the total sample, 49.2% were women. At the time of the survey, the average age was 27.1 years ($DS = 4.7$; range 17-34 years) with small variations between countries (26.9 in France and 27.3 in Spain). 18.8% were 18-22 years old, 18.9% 23-25 years old, 20.2% 26-28 years old, 20.6% 29-31 years old, and 21.5% 32-34 years old.

In the Italian sample, 22.2% had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, 50.6% had a high school diploma or qualification, and the remaining 27.2% had a secondary school diploma or lower qualification. In the UK sample, 39.3% had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, 46.4% had a high school diploma or higher qualification, and the remaining 14.3% had a secondary school leaving certificate or lower qualification. In the German sample 20.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, 62.0% had a secondary school diploma or qualification and the remaining 17.9% had a secondary school diploma or lower qualification. In the French sample 38.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, 48.8% had a diploma or higher school qualification, and the remaining 12.5% had a secondary school diploma or lower qualification. In the Spanish sample 33.9% had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, 36.3% had a high school diploma or qualification, and the remaining 29.8% had a secondary school diploma or lower qualification.

In all countries, most participants were unmarried at the time of the survey: Italy 72.5%, United Kingdom 71.3%, Germany 72.8%, France 64.7%, Spain 72.8%. The rest were married with a small percentage of separated, divorced or widowed individuals.

Regarding employment, 47.8% of the Italians declared themselves to be working and 36.8% studying, with respective figures of 67.5% and 25.8% in the United Kingdom, 66.0% and 41.6% in Germany, 55.3% and 29.0% in France and 48.2% and 43.1% in Spain. Several participants reported studying and working simultaneously: 12.6% in Italy, 13.0% in the United Kingdom, 22.3% in Germany, 8.7% in France and 18.1% in Spain. Conversely, those who reported being neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) amounted to 21.5% in Italy, 19.7% in the UK, 14.8% in Germany, 24.4% in France and 26.8% in Spain.

Tools

Moods. *The Italian Mood Scale (ITAMS)* (Quartiroli - Terry - Fogarty, 2017) was used to measure the moods experienced by young people. This in-

strument is the Italian adaptation of the Brunel Mood Scale, BRUMS (Terry et al., 1999), a 24-item short version of the classic Profile of Mood States, POMS (McNair - Lorr - Droppleman, 1971), which includes a total of 65 items. The ITAMS consists of 24 items that refer to different moods (such as “tense”, “strong”, “exhausted”, or “uncertain”) divided into six dimensions: anger, confusion, depression, fatigue, tension, and strength. Participants were asked: “Today, on a scale of one to ten, to what degree do you feel...”. In addition, an ad-hoc “vulnerable” item was added to the 24 ITAMS items to assess how young people *perceived the sense of vulnerability*. The items were measured on a ten-point Likert scale from one (“Not at all”) to ten (“Very”).

Post-traumatic growth. The Post-traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) (Prati - Pietrantonio, 2014) was used to measure this construct. The PTGI consists of five subscales that measure perceptions of post-traumatic change in: a) relationships with others (example of item: «I have learned a lot about how wonderful people are»); b) perception of new possibilities opening up (example of item: «I have developed new interests»); c) personal strength (example of item: «I have greater belief in myself»); d) changes in spiritual life (example of item: «I have a better understanding of spiritual matters»); e) appreciation of life (example of item: «I have a greater appreciation of the value of my life»). Respondents were asked: «Compared to before the Coronavirus emergency, how has your position changed today in relation to the following statements?» The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale with values ranging from one (“Much less than before”) to five (“Much more than before”). Three was indicated as a midpoint (“No change”).

Interpersonal relations. Two sets of questions were asked to measure the change in the quantity and quality of relationships. Participants were given the following introduction: «Compared to before the Coronavirus emergency, your current in-person interactions with...», followed by the following list: children, parents, friends, and colleagues from school or work. Items were measured on a five-scale Likert scale from one (“have decreased greatly”) to five (“have greatly increased”). This question was designed to quantify the increase or decrease in the face-to-face relationships of young adults. The second question was formulated as follows: «Compared to before the Coronavirus emergency, your current interactions with...» followed by the same list. The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale from one (“have got much worse”) to five (“have got much better”). This question was designed to qualify the relational changes experienced by young people.

National identity. To measure national identity, we adapted the In-Group Identification Scale (La Barbera - Capone, 2016). In particular, we used the Satisfaction sub-scale (four items), Solidarity subscale (three items) and Centrality sub-scale (three items). The items were measured using a ten-step Likert scale with values ranging from one (“Totally disagree”) to ten (“Totally agree”). Examples of items are: «I am happy to be [nationality]». (Satisfaction); «I feel engaged with [people of the nationality]» (Solidarity); «Being [nationality] is an important part of my identity» (Centrality).

Data analysis

In the present study, we used the following software for data analysis: SPSS 24.0. Descriptive analyses and analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted for comparison between countries and concerning socio-demographic characteristics.

Results

Moods

Table 1 shows the average ITAMS and risk perception scores for the whole sample and each country divided by gender. The scale ranged from one to ten, meaning that a score of 5.5 or higher indicates, on average, the increasing presence of that emotion or mood. First of all, across the different countries, no particular mood, neither positive nor negative, rises sharply. Instead, emotional state generally appears to be low or just below average. However, the analyses do demonstrate significant differences between countries. Italians describe each mood as more intense than their counterparts in other countries². The only exception is feeling strong, which is equal to that of the French respondents.

If, on the other hand, one looks at the scores by gender, the analyses show that Italian women reported experiencing all negative moods more intensely, only scoring lower than men in their perception of strength³.

² Results of the analysis of variance between averages per country: Anger: $F = 117.235$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$. Confusion: $F = 101.758$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$. Depression: $F = 68.861$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$. Fatigue: $F = 39.415$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$. Strength: $F = 74.006$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$. Tension: $F = 117.036$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$.

³ Results of the analysis of the variance of the averages by gender in the Italian sample: Anger: $F = 9.720$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.01$. Confusion: $F = 32.549$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$. Depression: $F = 39.265$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$. Fatigue: $F = 44.306$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$. Strength: $F = 63.024$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$. Tension: $F = 79.156$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$.

The greater perception of strength in Italian men is also observed in men in other countries, while significant gender differences did not always emerge for other emotions and moods⁴. For example, in other countries, the level of anger is similar in men and women.

Finally, with respect to the perception of being vulnerable because of the pandemic, it is interesting to note that none of the respondents, regardless of nationality, described high levels, although analyses revealed Italians to feel more vulnerable compared to young people in all the other countries, whereas lower-risk perception was observed in Germans⁵. Gender analyses present another interesting finding: in the Italian sample alone, women feel more vulnerable than their male counterparts⁶, while no significant differences were found in other countries.

Tab. 1 - Average scores for mood and risk perception per gender and country

| | ITALY | | UNITED KINGDOM | | GERMANY | | FRANCE | | SPAIN | | WHOLE SAMPLE | |
|------------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Anger | 4.8 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.3 |
| Confusion | 4.8 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 3.7 | 3.6 | 3.8 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.6 |
| Depression | 4.7 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 4.4 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 4.7 |
| Fatigue | 4.9 | 5.5 | 4.4 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 3.9 | 4.5 | 4.3 | 5.1 | 4.5 | 5.1 |
| Strength | 5.8 | 5.3 | 4.9 | 4.3 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 5.9 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 4.6 | 5.6 | 5.0 |
| Tension | 5.4 | 6.2 | 4.5 | 5.1 | 4.0 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 5.2 | 4.9 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 5.4 |
| Vulnerable | 4.9 | 5.4 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 4.5 |

Post-traumatic growth

Table 2 shows the average post-traumatic growth scores of the whole sample and for each country divided by gender. First, we can observe that the scores are concentrated around values between 3.1 and 3.3, i.e. slightly above the central value of the measurement scale (3), which

⁴ The results of the analysis of the variance in the individual countries and for each mood are not reported due to space limitations.

⁵ Results of the analysis of variance between averages per country: $F = 98.962$, $df = 4$, $5,995$, $p < 0.001$.

⁶ Results of the analysis of the variance of the averages by gender in the Italian sample: $F = 22.582$, $df = 1$, $1,997$, $p < 0.001$.

corresponds to the respondent's perception of no change. Second, there are only minor differences between average scores, both in terms of gender and nationality. We also explored differences based on specific socio-demographic characteristics such as age group, educational level, and employment status. No evidence was found.

Tab. 2 - *Average post-traumatic growth scores by gender and country*

| | ITALY | | UNITED KINGDOM | | GERMANY | | FRANCE | | SPAIN | | WHOLE SAMPLE | |
|--------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| GENDER | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.2 |

Quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships

Table 3 shows the average scores for the quantity and quality of the main interpersonal relationships of the entire sample and each country divided by gender. The scale for answering these questions ranged from one to five. The value of three indicates that there has been no change in the relationship; lower scores indicate that there has been a reduction or deterioration, whereas higher scores indicate an increase or improvement in these relationships.

We can observe that generally speaking, the pandemic and the restrictions linked to the containment of COVID-19 had a significant and positive effect on interactions between respondents and their children in term of quantity, especially for women, and to a lesser degree but for both genders, their partners. The effect was neutral as far as interaction with parents is concerned: the average scores oscillate around the value of three in all countries. The quantity of interactions with friends and colleagues and schoolmates, on the other hand, suffered a negative effect, especially in Italy and among women in the United Kingdom⁷. In terms of quality of interactions, no significant changes were observed in any of the countries.

⁷ Results of the analysis of the variance of the averages of the quantity of each report by country: the partner: $F = 23.345$, $df = 4$, $4,647$, $p < 0.001$. Children: $F = 4.278$, $-df = 4$, $2,827$, $p < 0.01$. Parents: $F = 12.420$, $df = 4$, $5,803$, $p < 0.001$. Friends: $F = 35.048$, $df = 4$, $5,801$, $p < 0.001$. Colleagues/classmates: $F = 21.566$, $df = 4$, $5,308$, $p < 0.001$.

Tab. 3 - Average scores for quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships by gender and country

| | ITALY | | UNITED KINGDOM | | GERMANY | | FRANCE | | SPAIN | | WHOLE SAMPLE | |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| GENDER | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| QUANTITY OF INTERACTIONS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Partner | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.3 |
| Children | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 3.5 |
| Parents | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| Friends | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| Colleagues/ classmates | 2.4 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.4 |
| QUALITY OF INTERACTIONS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Partner | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| Children | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.3 |
| Parents | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| Friends | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Colleagues/ classmates | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.9 |

National identity

Table 4 shows the average scores of national identity of the entire sample per country, gender and according to socio-demographic characteristics such as age group, level of education and employment status. The median score on the 10-point national identity measurement scale is 5.5. Above this score, respondents reported increasingly strong feelings of national identity. Analyses have revealed significant differences between countries⁸. Italians have the highest scores compared to all the others, while French respondents' scores were lower than Italians but higher than young people in the UK, Germany and Spain.

Analyses of gender differences⁹ reveal that while men and women in Italy and the UK have similar scores, in Germany, France and Spain, men reported statistically higher values than women did.

⁸ Results of the analysis of the variance of country averages: $F = 45.001$, $df = 4, 5, 995$, $p < 0.01$.

⁹ Results of the analysis of variance by gender for each country: Italy and United Kingdom: $p > 0.05$. Germany: $F = 34.706$, $df = 1, 998$, $p < 0.001$. France: $F = 16.425$, $df = 1, 998$, $p < 0.001$. Spain: $F = 5.594$, $df = 1, 998$, $p < 0.05$.

As far as age is concerned, the youngest age groups (18-22 and 23-25) tended to report lower national identity scores, especially Italian and Spanish women and German men and women. The effect of education level seems different in different countries. While among Italian women and men, UK men and French women national identity decreases as the level of education increases (i.e. more educated people have lower scores). The opposite effect is observed among UK and German women. In contrast, higher scores are associated with average levels of education among UK men. Finally, with regard to employment status, NEET men in Italy and Spain report less intense feelings of national identity than their female counterparts, while the opposite is true in Germany and France. The highest national identity scores are found among Italian and French workers and students, and German and Spanish male workers.

Tab. 4 - Average national identity scores by gender and country

| | ITALY | | UNITED KINGDOM | | GERMANY | | FRANCE | | SPAIN | | WHOLE SAMPLE | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| GENDER | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| | 6.4 | 6.4 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 5.3 | 6.3 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 6.1 | 5.8 |
| AGE GROUP (YEARS) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18-22 | 6.4 | 6.0 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.6 | 5.1 | 6.1 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 4.9 | 6.0 | 5.6 |
| 23-25 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 6.4 | 5.2 | 6.7 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5.2 | 6.2 | 5.6 |
| 26-28 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 5.2 | 5.7 | 6.2 | 5.5 | 6.2 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 6.1 | 6.0 |
| 29-31 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 6.0 | 5.4 | 6.3 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 6.1 | 5.9 |
| 32-34 | 6.5 | 6.6 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 5.9 | 5.3 | 6.1 | 5.9 | 6.0 | 5.8 | 6.1 | 5.9 |
| EDUCATION LEVEL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low | 6.4 | 6.6 | 5.4 | 5.1 | 5.9 | 5.2 | 6.5 | 6.1 | 5.8 | 5.4 | 6.0 | 5.8 |
| Average | 6.5 | 6.4 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 6.1 | 5.3 | 6.0 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 6.1 | 5.8 |
| High | 6.2 | 6.3 | 4.9 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 6.6 | 5.6 | 5.9 | 5.4 | 6.0 | 5.8 |
| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student | 6.5 | 6.4 | 5.7 | 5.3 | 5.9 | 5.2 | 6.2 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 6.1 | 5.8 |
| Worker | 6.5 | 6.5 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 6.3 | 5.5 | 6.3 | 6.0 | 6.2 | 5.3 | 6.2 | 5.8 |
| NEET | 5.7 | 6.2 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 6.3 | 5.6 | 5.2 | 5.5 | 5.7 | 5.7 |

Note: Education levels: Low (lower secondary school diploma or lower qualification), medium (diploma or lower secondary school qualification) and high (bachelor's degree or higher qualification).

Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter we investigated certain psychological dimensions related to the recent COVID-19 pandemic in a sample of young adults from five European countries, including Italy.

Concerning moods in general, analyses have shown that, there are no “peaks” (negative or positive) reported by young people in any of the states surveyed. This may be consistent with the definition of the construct itself, which, as explained above, is less intense than emotions but more pervasive and enduring. Such lower intensity could explain the differences between young Italians and their European peers. Two factors, in particular, are noteworthy: the first concerns the initial outbreak and development of the pandemic in Italy, while the second concerns how the other European countries have experienced the emergency. The negative moods shown by Italians had more time to develop between the beginning of the pandemic and the time of the survey (the peak of the contagion). In fact, Italy was the first European country to detect infections and apply restrictive measures. Secondly, the other European countries have dealt with the emergency differently, i.e. by introducing less drastic lockdown measures. The virus containment measures, which have been so strict and restrictive in Italy, seem to have encouraged negative moods in young Italians.

In line with the specific features of the Italian situation, young Italians feel more vulnerable than their peers in other countries. However, it is important to underline that, although they experience negative moods, young Italians also show higher positive moods than their European counterparts on average. We can assume that the great media and community campaigns “Ce la faremo” (“We can do it”) and “Andrà tutto bene” (“Everything will be okay”) had an impact on people’s moods, in this case encouraging them to experience positive feelings, perhaps out of a desire for release. As for the personal growth that followed the traumatic situation, there were no differences between genders or countries. This may be due to the fact that the impact of the health emergency and its relative measures on young adults has been similar in the various European countries, or that there has not yet been time for a full process of reflection and rethinking to unfold and manifest itself at a conscious level. In fact, post-traumatic growth can also take a long time to manifest itself and, in most cases, may not reach intense levels, instead affecting only a few aspects of one’s existence without causing obvious change.

As regards significant relationships, the results show that the quan-

tity of interaction with children increased across all countries, while the quantity of interaction with friends and colleagues decreased; interaction with partners and parents, on the other hand, saw no change in terms of quantity. With regard to the quality of relationships, the results show no change regardless of country or specific relationship. There are several factors to consider in relation to these results. Firstly, the closure of schools and all extra-curricular activities led to an increase in the time parents spend with their children. This burden has fallen, once again, on the shoulders of young women. Secondly, this period of isolation has also led to an increase in the time that many couples spent together, without implying either an improvement or a deterioration in the quality of their interactions. Thirdly, the most severely affected relationships in terms of quantity were those where people were not close or cohabiting, i.e. those with friends and colleagues or classmates, especially in Italy and the UK, but only for women. Such relationships usually require more effort to maintain over time, unlike those with family members, which are stable and long lasting. It is possible that it was harder to maintain interactions with friends and colleagues during the pandemic for several reasons. As highlighted in *Rapporto Giovani 2019* (Bichi - Rubin, 2019), cultivating friendships is indispensable for young Italians, but it is likely to be equally as important for those from other countries to meet occasionally and spend time together, an activity greatly hampered by the current pandemic.

It is also possible that young people, and especially young women, may have invested less time in these kinds of interaction, having to devote more time to their children. Finally, we can also assume that in times of emergency, when the reality of death is ever-present and social interactions are limited, people have fallen back on their most meaningful emotional ties (i.e. family and loved ones) in order to meet their need for belonging.

In conclusion, the effect of the pandemic on feelings of national identity seems clear. It is interesting to note that feelings of national identity were strongest in Italy during this period. This may be linked to the fact that Italy was, at the time of the survey, the most affected European country, and also to the media attention that the health crisis has received. For many weeks, the eyes of the Western world were focused on Italy, heightening the comparison of its citizens with those of other countries and increasing their sense of belonging.

The data presented here have clear practical implications, particularly as regards constructing a common European social identity and

the effects on young people of the policies implemented by the various countries.

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Putting trust to the test

Diego Mesa, Pierpaolo Triani¹

Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand the extent to which the COVID-19 emergency has impacted on the trust that young people in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and the UK have in their respective societies and constituent institutions.

Trust in people and institutions is an aspect of collective life to which the social sciences have devoted increasing attention over time. There are many reasons for this. First of all, the processes of change in contemporary societies have gradually encouraged the erosion of social bonds (Giaccardi - Magatti, 2003). As a result, the trust that people place in others in general (*generalised trust*) and in institutions (*systemic trust*) is contingent and by no means guaranteed. In an increasingly differentiated and structured context, the specific weight of trust in decisions has increased, with people having to rely on the services of strangers and experts in their daily lives and trust in the functioning of systems and institutions over which they have almost no control (Giddens, 1994). Trust has also proved a fundamental component of economic exchange (Fukuyama, 1995; Zak - Knack, 2001), as became dramatically evident in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis of 2008.

In the context of youth studies, attention has often focused on the lack of trust young people tend to feel in political institutions, which is considered a risk factor for the present and future endurance of Western democratic systems (Norris, 2011).

Therefore, in its many aspects, trust is the basis of human interactions and of the functioning of institutions in the social, economic and political spheres.

The COVID-19 emergency has caused a traumatic change in the daily

¹ This study is the result of the joint reflection of the authors. However parts one and two are attributable to Diego Mesa, and part three to Pierpaolo Triani, with both authors collaborating on the final reflections.

life of citizens and in relations between citizens and institutions. The populations affected by the pandemic found themselves exposed in a very short time to an unprecedented form of precariousness and uncertainty. This situation generated new demands for trust in the generalised other and in institutions. Containment of the pandemic depends to a large extent on millions of individuals complying with restrictive measures and on the ability of the institutions to coordinate and manage a systemic crisis of epochal scale.

Within this context, therefore, we asked ourselves how young people in the five European countries most affected by the COVID-19 emergency had reacted to the situation, and what impact it had on their trust in people in general and in the institutions. We propose the hypothesis that variation in young people's reactions in the different countries may be attributed to at least two factors, one of a more general nature and one concerning the critical event of the pandemic. The first is that the social systems in different countries are configured differently in terms of the inclusion of young people in active life and the protection and promotion of their citizenship rights (Chevalier, 2019; Walther, 2006), and these differences should also have tangible effects on trust levels among young people in the relative institutions. The second reason is that the different countries have been impacted differently, both in terms of the dynamics of the spread of the virus and the measures taken with regard to the population and the ways in which events were narrated.

The analysis begins with a concise overview of young people's trust in institutions prior to the COVID-19 emergency, with a focus on trust levels among young Italians. We then present data on the respondent's perception of their changing levels of trust in people in general and in terms of increased, unchanged and reduced trust levels in a set of institutions in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres. Using a concise index for the change in institutional trust, we then consider the effects of socio-democratic characteristics in different countries and the links between three different dimensions of trust: institutional and generalised trust and self-belief. In the conclusions, we identify and comment on the main results of the study, highlighting the strengths and critical points that have emerged.

Young people's trust in the institutions in the period before the COVID-19 emergency

In order to build a representative picture of the degree of trust placed by young people in the institutions prior to the COVID-19 emergency,

we will use data from the *European Values Study (EVS)* (Gedeshi *et al.*, 2020) on the population aged 18-34. Looking at Table 1 referring to the 2017-2018 survey period, we can see both convergent aspects among young people in the five countries and diverging positions regarding the degree of trust placed in the various institutions.

Tab.1 - *Degree of trust in the following institutions (sample 18-34 years old) («Great» + «Moderate» answers)². Percentage values.*

| GREAT + MODERATE | ITALY | SPAIN | FRANCE | GERMANY | UNITED KINGDOM |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|---------|----------------|
| <i>Healthcare system</i> | 59.2 | 77.3 | 80.1 | 71.4 | 84.8 |
| <i>Police</i> | 75.4 | 63.5 | 72.7 | 83.3 | 75.4 |
| <i>Environmental organisations</i> | 64.8 | 70.7 | 69.9 | 64.4 | 74.9 |
| <i>Armed forces</i> | 71.6 | 52.4 | 77.9 | 55.9 | 84.3 |
| <i>School system</i> | 58.2 | 68.1 | 67.6 | 58.2 | 73.1 |
| <i>Social services</i> | 40.7 | 66.5 | 74.3 | 59.6 | 55.3 |
| <i>Legal system</i> | 39.3 | 48.2 | 58.1 | 67.7 | 66.5 |
| <i>UN</i> | 61.2 | 51.0 | 63.0 | 50.1 | 55.2 |
| <i>European Union</i> | 42.1 | 58.2 | 52.1 | 53.7 | 45.4 |
| <i>Public administration</i> | 29.8 | 46.0 | 48.1 | 60.2 | 66.6 |
| <i>Trade unions</i> | 26.7 | 32.8 | 43.6 | 60.5 | 48.6 |
| <i>Large enterprises</i> | 50.9 | 40.7 | 35.4 | 25.0 | 37.1 |
| <i>The Church</i> | 41.9 | 24.0 | 41.0 | 28.2 | 30.5 |
| <i>Parliament</i> | 21.5 | 27.7 | 28.7 | 41.0 | 25.6 |
| <i>The press</i> | 31.8 | 32.2 | 27.1 | 32.9 | 11.5 |
| <i>The government</i> | 20.1 | 19.6 | 27.4 | 37.9 | 26.7 |
| <i>Social media</i> | 27.0 | 32.9 | 10.4 | 8.3 | 25.0 |
| <i>Political parties</i> | 11.4 | 15.9 | 10.3 | 19.3 | 16.7 |

Source: processed data from the *European Values Study*

² Surveys were carried out in 2017 in Germany and Spain respectively, and in 2018 in France, Italy and the United Kingdom. The sub-samples extracted from the 18-34 age group corresponded to 749 for Italy (8% of the total sample), 423 for Spain (9%), 778 for France (9%), 789 for Germany (9%), 540 for the United Kingdom (7%). The analyses were carried out by weighting the samples by age group.

The institutions located transversally in the positive sector, with over 50% “Great” or “Moderate” answers in all the countries comprise two nerve centres of the welfare system (the healthcare and school systems), the institutions that deal with the security and defence of citizens (the police and the armed forces) and two that have, by their nature, a more global scope: environmental organisations and the UN. The health system is in first place in terms of trust in Spain (77.5%), France (80.1%) and the United Kingdom (84.4%), in second place in Germany (71.4%) and in fifth place in Italy (59.2%). This is followed by the police, with a range of positive responses from 63.5% in Spain to 83.3% in Germany, then environmental organisations (ranging from 64.4% in Germany to 74.9% in the UK) and the armed forces (from 52.4% in Spain to 84.3% in the UK). The school system had the lowest value among young Italians (58.2%) and scored most highly in the UK (73.1%). The UN won less trust from the Germans (50.1%) and was more popular among the French (63.0%).

In the intermediate zone, we find institutions that receive conflicting judgements. These are other state sectors (social security, the judicial system and public administration), the European Union and two key players the economic system: trade unions and large enterprises.

The percentage score for social security only falls below 50% in Italy (40.7%), while in the other countries it is rated positive, peaking at 74.3% in France. Predominantly negative levels of trust were recorded for the legal system in two countries: Italy (39.3%) and Spain (48.2%). The highest level was recorded for Germany with 67.7%. Public administration received largely negative judgements in Italy (29.8%), Spain (46.0%) and France (48.1%), whilst remaining on positive terrain in Germany (60.2%) and the United Kingdom (66.6%). Trust in the European Union was at its lowest among young people in Italy (42.1%) and the UK (45.4%), scoring just over 50% in the other countries, with Spain reaching 58.2%. As far as large enterprises and trade unions are concerned, in a scenario characterized by low average percentages of trust, young Italians stand out with the highest value for trust in large enterprises (50.9%) and the lowest value for trade unions (26.7%), as do young Germans, for whom the positions are inverted: trade unions scoring 60.5% and large enterprises 25.0%.

Finally, the Church, old and new media and political institutions are at the bottom of the list, with percentages well below 50%.

Trust in the Church ranges from 24.0% in Spain to 41.9% in Italy. As far as political institutions are concerned, parliament enjoyed on average more trust (ranging from 21.5% in Italy to 41.0% in Germany) than the

government (from 19.6% in Spain to 37.9% in Germany) and political parties (from 10.3% in France to 19.3% in Germany).

Looking more globally at the responses, the lowest percentages were scored in Italy in eight out of eighteen cases (welfare systems, European Union and parliament), in Germany in five (environmental organizations, school, UN, large companies and social media), in Spain in four (law enforcement and police, the Church and government), and in the UK in one (the press). Conversely, Germans recorded the highest values for seven items (police, legal system, political institutions and press), the British for five (health system, school and public administration, environmental organisations and armed forces), the Italians for three (large enterprises, the Church and social media), the French for two (social security and UN) and the Spanish for one (the European Union).

As far as the media are concerned, in the case of the press, the level of trust was around 30% except in the United Kingdom where the percentage drops to 11.5%. Compared to social media, the positions are more variable: ranging from 8.3% in Germany to 32.9% in Spain.

Trust levels among young Italians

For Italy, longitudinal analysis of the data offered by the Rapporto Giovani allows us to observe the dynamics of changes in trust levels over four years, from 2013 to 2017 (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2 - Degree of trust young Italians aged 19-32 feel in the following institutions. Percentage of answers ranging from 6-10 on a scale of 1 («None») to 10 («A great deal»)

| | 2013 | 2017 | DELTA |
|---|------|------|-------|
| <i>Scientific research</i> | n.a. | 77.3 | n.a. |
| <i>Voluntary associations</i> | n.a. | 67.2 | n.a. |
| <i>Hospitals</i> | n.a. | 66.9 | n.a. |
| <i>Small and medium-sized enterprises</i> | n.a. | 60.4 | n.a. |
| <i>Law enforcement</i> | 56.2 | 59.2 | 3.1 |
| <i>Schools and universities</i> | 56.8 | 53.5 | -3.3 |
| <i>Large enterprises</i> | n.a. | 45.8 | n.a. |
| <i>The European Union</i> | 41.8 | 35.0 | -6.8 |
| <i>The Catholic Church</i> | 33.9 | 34.9 | 1 |

(continue)

| | 2013 | 2017 | DELTA |
|--|------|------|-------|
| <i>The Presidency of the Republic</i> | 37.9 | 34.6 | -3.3 |
| <i>Newspapers</i> | n.a. | 33.8 | n.a. |
| <i>Municipality (municipal administration)</i> | 30.5 | 31.7 | 1.2 |
| <i>Social media</i> | n.a. | 31.2 | n.a. |
| <i>Region (regional administration)</i> | 25.7 | 26.9 | 1.2 |
| <i>Trade unions</i> | 29.1 | 24.1 | -5 |
| <i>Banks</i> | n.a. | 24 | n.a. |
| <i>National government</i> | 19.1 | 23.9 | 4.8 |
| <i>Chamber of deputies</i> | 13.9 | 22.1 | 8.2 |
| <i>Senate</i> | 14.7 | 22 | 7.2 |
| <i>Political parties</i> | 8.5 | 16.8 | 8.3 |

Source: Rapporto Giovani, 2014 and 2017 surveys

The data are not directly comparable with the EVS survey mentioned above. As well as offering different items, different response modes were also presented: in this case, a range of responses from 1 to 10, where 1 stands for «No trust» and 10 «A great deal of trust». However, we can see a good degree of coherence in the order of the positions occupied by the institutions present in both surveys. Once again, referring to the 2017 data, law enforcement agencies (59.2%) and schools and universities (53.5%) are in the upper part of the ranking.

The Rapporto Giovani survey does not include the health care system, but does refer to hospitals, which also score highly (66.9%).

The other high-scoring items are scientific research (77.3%), voluntary associations (67.2%) and small and medium enterprises (60.4%), none of which are included in the EVS survey.

In this case, we also find large enterprises (45.8%), the European Union (35.0%) and the Catholic Church (34.9%) in the intermediate zone, alongside the Presidency of the Republic (34.6%), which is only included in the Rapporto Giovani survey. Once again, these are followed by the media (newspapers with 33.8% and social media with 31.2%), trade unions (24.1%) and political institutions (the national government with 23.9%, the Chamber of Deputies with 22.1%, the Senate with 22.0% and political parties with 16.8%). Similarly, we find also local authorities in the lower part of the ranking: the municipal authority with 31.7% and the regional authority with 26.9%.

However, it is with the political and administrative institutions that

we see a significant increase in the degree of trust between 2013 and 2017 (+ 8.3% political parties, + 8.2% the Chamber of Deputies, + 7.2% the Senate, + 4.8% the national government, + 1.2% municipal and regional administration) together with law enforcement (+ 3.1%). In the comparison, trust in the Catholic Church increases by 1%, while trust decreases in schools and universities (-3.3%) and in the Presidency of the Republic (-3.3%), but above all in trade unions (-5%) and the European Union (-6.8%).

The challenge of COVID-19

How will the Coronavirus emergency affect trust in the institutions? This is a particularly important question when it comes to understanding how the main institutions, on which the social, economic and political dynamics of our countries are based, can, in the opinions of young people, come out weakened or strengthened from the unprecedented “crisis” we are currently experiencing.

The responses from young people in the European nations surveyed seem to indicate moderate pessimism overall. With a choice ranging from 1 (extremely negative influence) to 10 (extremely positive influence), in all countries the most frequently selected score 5 (chosen by 20.2% in Italy, 21.4% in Spain, 30.2% in Germany, 30.4% in France and 31.8%), with a prevalence of women over men. The same moderate score prevails when the distribution of the results is divided into three groups: *negative affect* (1-4); *moderate affect* (5-6); *positive affect* (7-10).

As we can see from Table 3, the majority of young people in each country reported that the influence of the pandemic on their overall trust in institutions was moderate, leaning towards the negative.

Tab. 3 - Young people’s opinion on how the pandemic will affect trust in the institutions. Percentage values

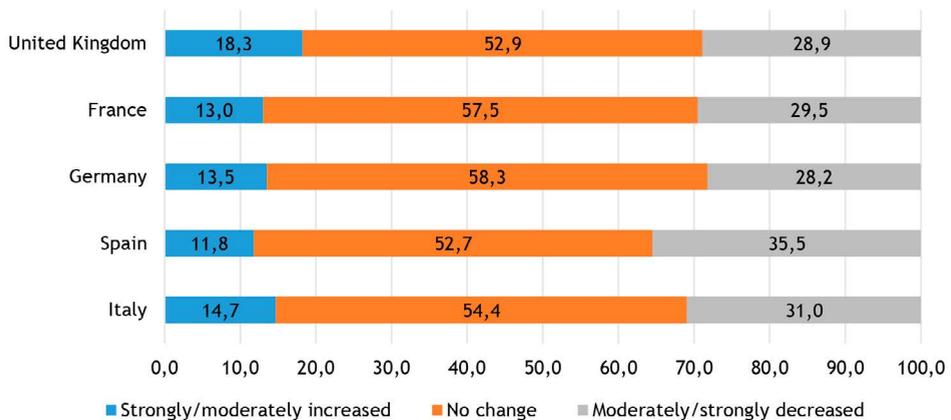
| INFLUENCE ON TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Negative (1-4) | 33.6 | 54.7 | 28.8 | 44.3 | 33.7 |
| Moderate (5-6) | 39.6 | 30.5 | 45.7 | 41.9 | 45.8 |
| Positive (7-10) | 26.8 | 14.8 | 25.5 | 13.8 | 20.5 |

The only exception is Spain, where marked pessimism prevails for one in two young people and fewer than 15% are optimistic. The lowest number of respondents reporting a positive impact on trust in institutions is found in France.

Among those who see the possibility of a growth in institutional trust, two groups always score more highly, in all countries: men (in Italy, for example, 28.4% of men have an optimistic attitude compared to 25.1% of women; in France, the equivalent figures are 18.4% and 9.2% respectively), and degree holders (in Italy 32.5% of graduates believe that by the end of the emergency trust in institutions will have risen, compared to 22.7% among those with a low qualification).

If we consider the answers related to the change in the perception of trust in others, a moderately negative trend also emerges (fig. 1). Whilst the majority of young people in all countries state that their level of trust in people has not changed, about one third state that their trust has moderately or strongly decreased. In this regard, young Spaniards express the highest greatest negative change in trust (35.5%) followed by the Italians (31.0%).

Fig. 1 - *Change in the degree of agreement with the phrase «Most people are trustworthy» compared to before the Coronavirus emergency (percentage values)*



Varying fluctuations

In addition to a general assessment of the impact of the Coronavirus on overall trust in the institutions, we also wanted to investigate the per-

sonal position of young people, asking them whether they considered their trust in specific institutions to be stable, diminishing or growing. An interesting picture emerged, revealing some differentiation between the countries involved, as can be seen in Table 4, which summarises the data on the opinions about various items. We should specify, however, that this picture does not reveal the level of trust *per se* that young people have in an institution, but rather the stability or not of the opinion already held. Certain institutions may, therefore, enjoy levels of trust, which, although falling, are still very high compared with institutions in which trust levels, although low, appear to be rising.

Tab. 4 - «With the impact of the Coronavirus emergency, how has your trust in these institutions changed?» (Percentage values)

| | | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|----------------|
| <i>Healthcare system</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 51.3 | 55.8 | 29.5 | 26.7 | 50.3 |
| | No change | 32.9 | 30.0 | 49.0 | 48.2 | 38.0 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 15.8 | 14.2 | 21.5 | 25.1 | 11.7 |
| <i>Scientific research</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 48.9 | 48.5 | 37.6 | 31.4 | 40.6 |
| | No change | 41.5 | 39.9 | 50.4 | 54.4 | 49.1 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 9.6 | 11.6 | 12.0 | 14.2 | 10.3 |
| <i>Voluntary associations</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 48.8 | 45.5 | 22.5 | 33.1 | 45.3 |
| | No change | 41.9 | 44.4 | 64.5 | 55.9 | 48.5 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 9.3 | 10.1 | 13.0 | 11.0 | 6.2 |
| <i>Civil protection</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 48.3 | 39.3 | 16.9 | 20.8 | 18.2 |
| | No change | 41.0 | 44.3 | 68.8 | 59.3 | 70.6 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 10.7 | 16.4 | 14.3 | 19.9 | 11.2 |

(continue)

| | | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|---|------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|----------------|
| <i>Law enforcement</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 41.4 | 40.6 | 18.3 | 10.3 | 27.3 |
| | No change | 45.3 | 41.8 | 64.7 | 63.5 | 58.5 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 13.3 | 17.6 | 17.0 | 26.2 | 14.2 |
| <i>National government</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 29.7 | 13.7 | 28.6 | 12.8 | 27.6 |
| | No change | 43.0 | 35.6 | 50.5 | 44.6 | 48.4 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 27.3 | 50.7 | 20.9 | 42.6 | 24.0 |
| <i>Small and medium-sized enterprises</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 23.1 | 30.7 | 21.3 | 22.1 | 27.2 |
| | No change | 61.7 | 54.9 | 63.4 | 65.1 | 59.5 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 15.2 | 14.4 | 15.3 | 12.8 | 13.3 |
| <i>Social media</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 22.3 | 23.4 | 16.1 | 17.5 | 18.2 |
| | No change | 57.5 | 57.4 | 60.2 | 63.9 | 56.3 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 20.2 | 19.2 | 23.7 | 18.6 | 25.5 |
| <i>Schools and universities</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 21.2 | 19.2 | 14.9 | 12.3 | 18.9 |
| | No change | 61.9 | 59.3 | 65.9 | 70.1 | 66.6 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 16.9 | 21.5 | 19.2 | 17.6 | 14.5 |
| <i>Large enterprises</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 17.7 | 16.3 | 11.0 | 13.3 | 15.7 |
| | No change | 64 | 54.7 | 64.0 | 63.6 | 60.1 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 18.3 | 29.0 | 25.0 | 23.1 | 24.2 |
| <i>Newspapers</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 14.9 | 13.0 | 15.3 | 12.2 | 14.2 |
| | No change | 60.9 | 58.4 | 68.0 | 62.2 | 58.2 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 24.2 | 28.6 | 16.7 | 25.6 | 27.6 |

(continue)

| | | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|--------|----------------|
| <i>The Catholic Church</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 12.1 | 7.2 | 8.0 | 5.4 | 6.0 |
| | No change | 50.9 | 49.9 | 73.0 | 76.1 | 76.3 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 37.0 | 42.9 | 19.0 | 18.5 | 17.7 |
| <i>Trade unions</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 11.9 | 13.0 | 12.0 | 7.8 | 13.1 |
| | No change | 59.6 | 54.6 | 74.5 | 65.2 | 72.6 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 28.5 | 32.4 | 13.5 | 27.0 | 14.3 |
| <i>European Union</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 10 | 11.2 | 13.6 | 9.8 | 14.1 |
| | No change | 37.1 | 44.0 | 62.7 | 57.4 | 67.3 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 52.9 | 44.8 | 23.7 | 32.8 | 18.6 |
| <i>Political parties</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 8.5 | 8.0 | 15.6 | 5.6 | 15.7 |
| | No change | 50.7 | 38.0 | 62.0 | 53.2 | 56.3 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 40.8 | 54.0 | 22.4 | 41.2 | 28.0 |
| <i>Banks</i> | Greatly/moderately increased | 7.4 | 9.5 | 9.8 | 6.3 | 16.9 |
| | No change | 63.2 | 54.0 | 68.6 | 68.2 | 63.9 |
| | Greatly/moderately decreased | 29.4 | 36.5 | 21.6 | 25.5 | 19.2 |

The pandemic does not seem to have triggered a uniform trend in young people’s institutional trust levels: indeed, as we can see in the previous Table, for every item there is a group of young people, usually a majority, for whom the trust levels have remained at pre-COVID levels, as well as a group who report an increase and another who report a decrease.

However, as highlighted in Table 5, if we take into account the difference for each item between those who declared an increase or decrease in their trust level, we can see that for some items a greater degree of polarisation has emerged, i.e. a stronger shift in trust either towards growth or towards decline. This phenomenon is observed in different ways in the overall reaction of young people in the different countries. The least

polarised responses have been seen among young people in Germany; indeed, the gap between the increase and decrease in trust exceeded 20% in only one case, namely scientific research, for which there has been a marked increase in trust. The responses of young people in France and the United Kingdom are also rarely polarised, with a gap of more than 20% in only three cases. On the other hand, polarisation is much more pronounced in the responses of young people in Italy (9 items out of 16) and in Spain (10 out of 16), suggesting that in Italy and Spain the COVID emergency has generated highly contrasting emotional responses.

In general, looking at all the countries involved, the items that have suffered the least fluctuation in trust levels (regardless of whether they are low or high) are social media and, above all, all educational institutions, i.e. schools and universities. The latter appear particularly significant, considering that educational activity has undergone a profound transformation during the health emergency.

Tab. 5 - *Percentage differences between the increase and decrease in trust*

| | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|---|-------|-------|---------|--------|----------------|
| <i>Healthcare system</i> | 35.5 | 41.6 | 8.0 | 1.6 | 38.6 |
| <i>Scientific research</i> | 39.3 | 36.9 | 25.6 | 17.2 | 30.3 |
| <i>Voluntary associations</i> | 39.5 | 35.4 | 9.5 | 22.1 | 39.1 |
| <i>Civil protection</i> | 37.6 | 22.9 | 2.6 | 0.9 | 7.0 |
| <i>Law enforcement</i> | 28.1 | 23.0 | 1.3 | -15.9 | 13.1 |
| <i>National government</i> | 2.4 | -37 | 7.7 | -29.8 | 3.6 |
| <i>Small and medium-sized enterprises</i> | 7.9 | 16.3 | 6.0 | 9.3 | 13.9 |
| <i>Social media</i> | 2.1 | 4.2 | -7.6 | -1.1 | -7.3 |
| <i>Schools and universities</i> | 4.3 | -2.3 | -4.3 | -5.3 | 4.4 |
| <i>Large enterprises</i> | -0.6 | -12.7 | -14.0 | -9.8 | -8.5 |
| <i>Newspapers</i> | -9.3 | -15.6 | -1.4 | -13.4 | -13.4 |
| <i>The Catholic Church</i> | -24.9 | -35.7 | -11.0 | -13.1 | -11.7 |
| <i>Trade unions</i> | -16.6 | -19.4 | -1.5 | -19.2 | -1.2 |
| <i>European Union</i> | -42.9 | -33.6 | -10.1 | -23.0 | -4.5 |
| <i>Political parties</i> | -32.3 | -46.0 | -6.8 | -35.6 | -12.3 |
| <i>Banks</i> | -22.0 | -27.0 | -11.8 | -19.2 | -2.3 |

«Rising» and «falling» stock

Which are the institutions in which young people’s trust has most fluctuated? Borrowing an expression from the stock exchanges, which stocks are up and which are down? The results change, as is easily understandable, depending on the socio-political situations in the different countries surveyed. However, if we draw up a ranking per country of the institutions that saw an increase in young people’s trust, at the top we find a number of recurring items, albeit with distinctions.

Tab. 6 - *Institutions in which reported trust has increased the most*

| | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Healthcare system | Healthcare system | Scientific research | Voluntary associations | Healthcare system |
| 2 | Scientific research | Scientific research | Healthcare system | Scientific research | Voluntary associations |
| 3 | Voluntary associations | Voluntary associations | National government | Healthcare system | Scientific research |
| 4 | Civil protection | Law enforcement | Voluntary associations | Small and medium-sized enterprises | National government |
| 5 | Law enforcement | Civil protection | Small and medium-sized enterprises | Civil protection | Law enforcement |

These are, not surprisingly, the health system, scientific research and voluntary associations. These three institutions are in the top three places (with the exception of one in Germany) in all countries and have seen an increase in trust particularly among young Spaniards and Italians. Among the latter, the percentage of young people who reported growing trust in civil protection and law enforcement agencies is also significant. Young Italian women reported a greater increase in trust than their male counterparts, while there are no substantial differences between groups with different levels of education.

The “rising” items, therefore, seem somewhat to attenuate that moderate pessimism mentioned earlier. The pandemic in fact seems to have reinforced young people’s conviction that even in such a serious crisis, they can count on a health network accessible to all, on research

efforts and on the courage and generosity of many people willing to put themselves on the line for others.

On the other hand, however, we also have a number of institutions in which a not insignificant percentage of young people have reported a reduction in trust. In this case, the results per country are much more diversified, with some institutions rising or falling sharply (Tab. 7).

Tab. 7 - Institutions in which reported confidence has fallen the most

| | ITALY | SPAIN | GERMANY | FRANCE | UNITED KINGDOM |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | European Union | Political parties | Large enterprises | National government | Political parties |
| 2 | Political parties | National government | Social network | Political parties | Newspapers |
| 3 | Catholic Church | European Union | Banks | European Union | Social network |
| 4 | Banks | Catholic Church | Political parties | Trade unions | Large enterprises |
| 5 | Newspapers | Banks | European Union | Law enforcement | The government |

At an overall glance, however, one item is ailing significantly: the European Union. Indeed, of all institutions, the EU has scored most highly for falling trust levels among young Italians (in 52.5% of cases), with not insignificant figures for Spain (44.8%), France (32.8%) and Germany (23.7%).

As far as Italy is concerned, distrust in the European Union is slightly higher among women (53.6%) than men (52.3%) and increases with age, with the percentage of those for whom trust in Europe has decreased at 45.4% among 20-22 year-olds and up to 57.6% among 29-31 year-olds. In all areas of the country the increasing lack of trust exceeds 50%, and is even higher in the North East (55.9%) compared to the South and Islands (51.7%). It is higher among the employed (55.7%) than among the non-employed (50.3%) and among high school graduates (55.9%), compared both to graduates (49.8%) and those with very low levels of education (49.8%).

This appears to confirm a gradual psychological detachment between the population and the European Union, seen by its people as largely unresponsive to their most pressing needs.

Among young Spaniards, however, the biggest drop in trust concerns political parties and the national government; these two items fell by the most, albeit in reverse order, among young French people as well. The item that saw the largest drop in trust in the UK was political parties, while among young Germans the highest decline in trust (25%) was in large companies.

As far as Italy is concerned, after the European Union, “political parties” saw their (notoriously low) trust levels fall even further, with 40.8% of young people reporting that the Coronavirus emergency has led to a decrease in trust. The third institution in which trust is “down” among young Italians is the Catholic Church. Indeed, as many as 37% of the respondents reported diminishing trust; rising to 42.9% among young Spaniards.

Among young Italians, the fall in trust in the Church is a little more marked in men (37.6%) than in women (36.3%); in the North East (41.7%) than the North West (37.9%) and especially the Centre (35.2%) and South (35%); among young people with low educational qualifications (39.8%) than those with a high school diploma (36.9%) and those with a degree (33.4%).

It is not easy to interpret the reasons for this decline. In fact, there does not seem to be a correlation with a crisis of trust on a religious level, since, in two other questions, only 18.9% of young Italians stated that compared to the situation before the spread of the Coronavirus, the search for connection with God has decreased and 19% that their religious faith has decreased (while 19.3% said it had increased). Nor have there been any particular events in our country that might have influenced people’s opinions. Rather, the reasons are to be found in the gradual detachment of the younger generations from the life of the Catholic Church and from a religious experience linked to being part of a community. One might hypothesise that people have experienced lockdown as a time for strengthening community ties, despite the inability for those who already felt fully part of the community to participate in services and come together. However, it has instead increased the sense of distance and extraneousness among young people who practice rarely or not at all, for whom, therefore, the relationship with the Church was already weak or limited to a few brief occasions.

The impact of young people’s social and demographic characteristics on trust levels

To measure the propensity for change in institutional trust concisely, be it positive or negative, an index was created combining the responses

for the 16 items on institutional trust. The index has values ranging from -2 (maximum negative change) to +2 (maximum positive change)³. Table 8 shows the correlations between the index of change in institutional trust, general trust, self-belief and some variables related to respondents' social and demographic profiles.

Tab. 8 - *Correlation between the index of change in trust, generalised trust, self-belief and social and personal characteristics*

| | ITALY | SPAIN | FRANCE | GERMANY | UNITED KINGDOM |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|
| <i>Generalised trust</i> | .207** | .227** | .209** | .128** | .131** |
| <i>Self-belief</i> | .095** | .147** | .082** | .057 | .117** |
| <i>Gender (male/female)</i> | .065** | .049 | .015 | -.027 | .009 |
| <i>Age</i> | -.095** | -.042 | -.008 | -.060 | .025 |
| <i>Qualification (non-graduates/graduates)</i> | -.005 | -.037 | .037 | .044 | .022 |
| <i>Condition (non-students/students)</i> | .060** | .036 | -.037 | .037 | -.001 |
| <i>Employment (not employed/employed)</i> | -.066** | .039 | .064* | .059 | .031 |
| <i>Habitation status (not alone/alone)</i> | -.035 | -.071* | .039 | .059 | .026 |

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-code).

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-code).

Regarding the relationship between the different dimensions of trust, as can be seen from Table 9, the most significant figure for all countries is the correlation between changes in institutional trust and generalised trust levels. Self-belief is positively correlated with institutional trust in 4 out of 5 cases, but to a lesser extent than generalised trust.

Turning instead to social and demographic variables, in most cases, differences in gender, age, education, study or work conditions and

³ The index was compiled by calculating the average score of the responses of the 18 items on institutional trust. The responses range from 1 («greatly increased trust») to 5 («greatly decreased trust»). The score obtained was recoded to range from -2 («greatly decreased trust») to +2 («greatly increased trust») to better respect the characteristics of the dimension under investigation.

housing conditions do not seem to have a significant impact on changes in overall levels of institutional trust, except in Italy, where, albeit only slightly, the increase in trust is positively correlated to the female gender and to student status, whilst negatively correlated to age and employment status, unlike in France, where being employed correlates with an increase in institutional trust. Whether or not you have a university degree does not seem to have a significant impact on change in trust, whereas in Spain, living alone seems to have a negative influence.

After having considered the general overview, we will take a closer look at the impact of social and demographic characteristics on changes in trust levels in three institutions: the health system, which, of all the institutions surveyed, has seen the greatest degree of trust-building, the national governments that played a central role in managing the COVID-19 emergency during the lockdown phase, and the European Union, which, as we have seen, has suffered one of the greatest drops in trust during this phase of all the institutions surveyed.

Tab. 9 - Correlation between changes in levels of trust in the healthcare system, generalised trust, self-confidence and social and demographic characteristics

| | ITALY | SPAIN | FRANCE | GERMANY | UNITED KINGDOM |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|
| <i>Generalised trust</i> | .088** | .052 | .163** | .069* | -.008 |
| <i>Self-belief</i> | .085** | .107** | .062 | -.006 | -.002 |
| <i>Gender (male/female)</i> | .046* | .116** | -.032 | -.022 | .066* |
| <i>Age</i> | .044 | .016 | -.012 | -.018 | .107** |
| <i>Qualification (non-graduates/graduates)</i> | -.024 | -.009 | .008 | .061 | .044 |
| <i>Condition (non-students/students)</i> | -.009 | .008 | .016 | .027 | -.094** |
| <i>Employment (not employed/employed)</i> | .020 | -.025 | .050 | .011 | .055 |
| <i>Habitation status (not alone/alone)</i> | -.071** | -.078* | .003 | .059 | .003 |

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-code).

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-code).

The data shown in Table 9 in this case show a correlation with generalised trust in Italy, France and Germany only. In Italy and Spain, trust in the health system also correlated with self-belief.

As regards the influence of social and demographic variables, there is a positive relationship in Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy with the female gender. Moreover, in the United Kingdom, the increase in trust seems to be associated with cohorts of young adults and non-students. In Italy and Spain, not living alone seems to be associated with increased trust among young people in the health care system.

Tab. 10 - *Correlation between changes in trust levels in the national government, generalised trust, self-belief and social and demographic characteristics*

| | ITALY | SPAIN | FRANCE | GERMANY | UNITED KINGDOM |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|----------------|
| <i>Generalised trust</i> | .124** | .227** | .185** | .056 | .108** |
| <i>Self-belief</i> | .061** | -.011 | .036 | .012 | .169** |
| <i>Gender (male/female)</i> | .041 | -.051 | -.039 | -.051 | .005 |
| <i>Age</i> | -.069** | -.079* | -.066* | -.079* | -.019 |
| <i>Qualification (non-graduates/graduates)</i> | .051* | .050 | .031 | .050 | -.031 |
| <i>Condition (non-students/students)</i> | .074** | .040 | .061 | .040 | .039 |
| <i>Employment (not employed/employed)</i> | -.026 | .012 | -.009 | .012 | .019 |
| <i>Habitation status (not alone/alone)</i> | -.000 | .018 | .036 | .018 | -.043 |

In Table 10, in three out of five cases, Italy, Spain and France, generalised trust shows the highest level of correlation with changes in trust in the government. There is also significant correlation in the United Kingdom data, although in this case the strongest association is between changes in trust in the government and self-belief.

There is a significant correlation between age and declining trust in national governments in four out of five cases, excluding the UK. The only other significant result in Italy concerns the condition of students and graduates, which correlates negatively with an increase in trust.

Tab. 11 - *Correlation between a change in the trust in the European Union, generalised trust, self-belief and social and demographic characteristics*

| | ITALY | SPAIN | FRANCE | GERMANY | UNITED KINGDOM |
|--|---------|---------|--------|---------|----------------|
| <i>Generalised trust</i> | .122** | .195** | .116** | .092** | .028 |
| <i>Self-belief</i> | .013 | .017 | .062* | .037 | -.019 |
| <i>Gender (male/female)</i> | -.004 | .060 | .006 | .014 | .006 |
| <i>Age</i> | -.117** | -.079* | -.021 | -.074* | .055 |
| <i>Qualification (non-graduates/graduates)</i> | .054* | -.097** | .053 | -.010 | .051 |
| <i>Condition (non-students/students)</i> | .065** | .006 | -.050 | .013 | -.025 |
| <i>Employment (not employed/employed)</i> | -.052* | -.022 | .067* | .065* | -.004 |
| <i>Habitation status (not alone/alone)</i> | .073** | -.055 | -.017 | .019 | -.025 |

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-code).

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-code).

In the four EU countries, the most significant figure for the Union relates to the positive relationship with generalised trust, with a slight correlation with self-belief in France alone (Tab. 11).

In Italy, France and Germany there was a significant decrease in trust with age. Being a graduate has a positive influence in Italy and a negative one in Spain. In Italy, student status is also associated with an increase in trust. Other contrasting data concerns employment, which is negatively associated with trust in Italy, and positively in France and Germany. In Italy the condition of isolation seems to correlate with an increase in trust in the European Union.

In the final analysis, with regard to the relationship between the different dimensions of trust, there is generally greater convergence between institutional and generalised trust, while the link with self-belief is weaker. As far as the social and demographic characteristics are concerned, in Italy, changes in institutional trust seem to be more affected by specific features of the various profiles of the young people surveyed than in other countries, where differences in terms of systemic trust are more nuanced if not entirely absent.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has been and continues to be an important test of resilience for the social lives of the affected countries and their institutions. The emergency situation seems to have pushed young people to accentuate their positive and negative judgements. As we have highlighted on several occasions, according to the responses of young Europeans involved in the survey, the institutions that have gained the most trust are those most directly perceived as capable of responding immediately to the needs and problems experienced by citizens. These institutions, as shown by previous surveys, already enjoyed good levels of trust. The younger generations in Italy, Spain, Germany, France and the United Kingdom feel a good level of trust in the welfare and security services that their respective countries have, not without sacrifice, managed to implement over the last fifty years. Political institutions received much less recognition, and were already at the bottom of the list before the outbreak of the pandemic. They usually receive low levels of trust, but the COVID emergency has further lowered trust levels for many young people.

This is something that needs to be monitored. Although it seems to be a typical characteristic of the social dynamic that citizens feel a certain suspicion towards the political world, this does not negate the need to consider how to reinforce a trusting disposition among young people – and others – towards the institutions that help govern the country and regions. In this regard, the results appear to be differentiated in relation to the respective situations of the various states. In Italy, for example, trust in the national government has been more stable, while the position towards political parties has been more critical, probably because they are considered too “partisan”.

With a few exceptions, trust in institutions related to labour and employment has not grown. This is easy to understand: the economic crisis that the health care crisis has brought with it can only cause concern and anxiety for the present but also for the future. It is on this matter, among others, that the European Union will be put to the test, appearing, as we have said, to have suffered the greatest fluctuations among young people of all the institutions surveyed. In this regard, the COVID-19 emergency will be a real turning point: either the European Union will be able to relaunch the idealistic values on which it was founded as complementary and beneficial to the policies of individual states, or its citizens will continue to see it as an increasingly remote set of rules and institutions.

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“Stay at home, stay online”.

The internet and social networks during lockdown

Rita Bichi, Fabio Introini, Cristina Pasqualini

Introduction

Any investigation into the intensity and nature of the impact of the Coronavirus emergency on people’s lives, including their attitudes, behaviours, thoughts and plans, could hardly fail to acknowledge the world of the media and the digital realm in particular. Indeed, the internet embodies three values that, during the COVID-19 emergency in particular, proved fundamental. The first is, obviously, information. The internet and social network platforms, despite the high risk of fake news, are a key information channel, especially for real-time news. Secondly, although the face-to-face dimension of social interaction maintains deeply rooted in our way of understanding relationships, including for the new generations, it is equally evident that the internet has, in recent years, become an indispensable hub of services supporting people’s activities, from the niche to the mainstream. In fact, a large part of our daily life is organised via the internet, particularly consumption, media usage and the so-called smart working practices. Thirdly, the internet is also of important social and participatory value, offering people the opportunity to express themselves through both playful and “engaged” sociality, i.e. it is linked to the “management” of one’s own social capital and to speaking out in the public sphere.

Finally, thanks to its widespread diffusion, which allows it to permeate all areas of our daily lives, and its capacity as an expressive space, the internet is also tinged with the emotional colours of its community, becoming a sort of “thermometer” for understanding what is stirring therein.

Our objective is therefore to observe how, in this time of crisis, young people have been interacting with the internet regarding the dimensions highlighted above, and what moods have accompanied some of their digital practices during lockdown. Therefore, in the first part of this paper, we will deal with the use of the internet as

a source of information, comparing “old” and “new” media; in the second part, we will focus instead on social network platforms, the “place” where informative and participatory practices co-exist in close contact and continuous hybridisation. In the third part we will look at the ways young people have used digital platforms, linked in particular to certain services (shopping, media entertainment and e-commerce), and we will analyse their relationship with the digital “translation” of certain activities central to basic everyday life: work, study and spirituality.

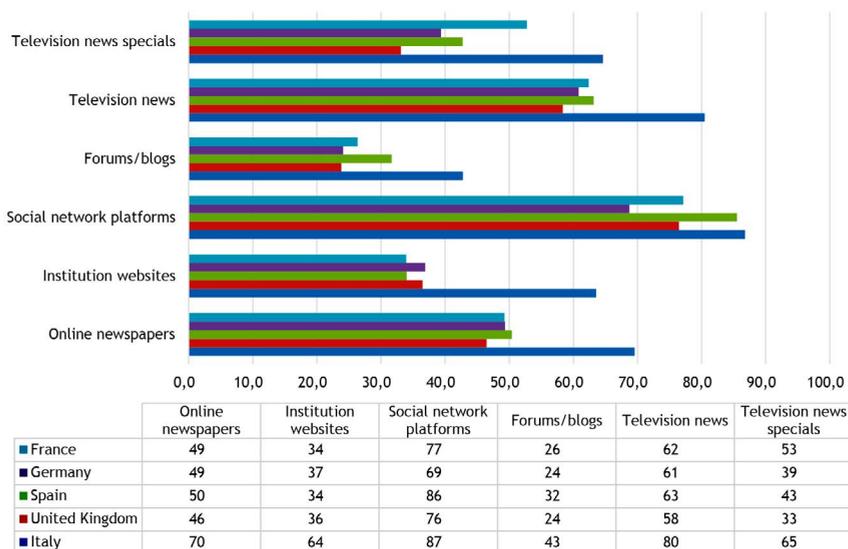
Media use during lockdown

In response to the question «In the last two weeks, how much have you used the following channels/platforms of communication?», the answers of young Italians and their peers from the other countries surveyed (United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain) confirmed certain trends and revealed interesting new phenomena. We should note that the survey was carried out in the middle of the first phase of the Coronavirus epidemic, when the state of alert and insecurity was at its peak, about the nature of the spread, how long it would take to overcome the emergency and immediate future of our opportunities and ways of life. This great uncertainty has led to a need to increase the normal flow of information in the daily lives of the younger generations, probably modifying their “media diet”. This relates less to frequency of use than to a shift in preferences for the available media, with people favouring those considered more appropriate, reliable or rapid in terms of updating and sharing news. Moreover, we can hypothesise that the changes in lifestyle, confinement at home, family relationships and the upturned daily rhythms due to lockdown have also brought with them specific information and relational needs capable of changing the frequency and mode of media use. Whilst these hypotheses remain to be tested, this initial “heat of the moment” survey offers some food for thought. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the percentage of people who report that they use the various channels a fair amount or a lot: applications and websites of official newspapers (e.g. national and local newspapers), applications and websites of institutions (political, administrative, health), social network platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), forums/blogs and other online discussion spaces, television news, television news programmes (e.g. news specials, talk shows etc.).

Remaining with the Italian data, it is very clear that the channel most frequently used, as may be expected for the age group surveyed, was social network with almost 87% reporting very frequent use. In second place, however, not wholly unexpectedly, was television news, with 80% of respondents claiming to have watched a fair amount or a lot. This result relates to the changed media diet of young people at the time of the pandemic: the obligation to stay at home and the impact of shared fear and isolation on our experience of cohabiting with family members may have contributed to an increase in collective television viewing as a sort of “community ritual” and gathering of information, also serving to quell anxiety and worries through sharing. Moreover, high usage rates were found for all the media forms surveyed, falling below 50% for forums/blogs only. This seems to be a common characteristic, albeit to a less marked degree, among all the young people surveyed, although the values in the different countries are lower than in Italy. News, in other words, seems primarily to have been consumed in a shared, familiar and friendly way.

It is also interesting to note other differences between the use of media by young Italians and those of the other countries participating in the survey. As is immediately evident, Italians have the highest frequency of all the countries for all proposed items. For everyone, the most frequently used media are social network platforms, with the proportion of Spaniards (85.5%) approaching that of Italians (86.8%), and a comparatively lower percentage (68.7%) among young Germans. There is a significant difference between Italy and other countries as far as institutional sites are concerned: from 63.5% of Italians to very similar percentages (34-36%) in the other countries. Young people in the UK pay little attention - not only to forums/blogs, like the other nationalities - but also current affairs programmes, frequently viewed by no more than 33%.

Fig. 1 - «In the last two weeks, how much have you used the following communication channels/platforms?» («A fair amount» + «A lot»). Percentage values



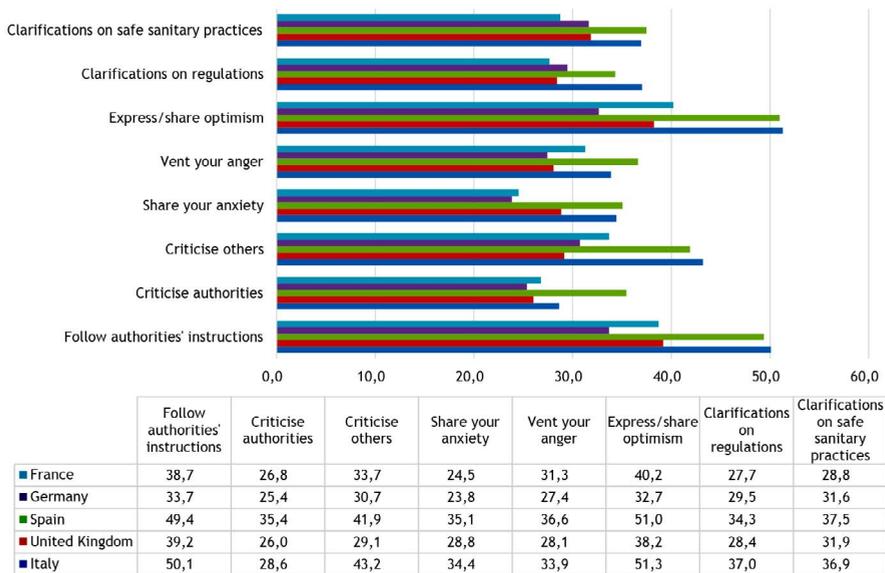
In general, in Italy, the South reports higher values than the other regions for all communication channels, even those less frequently used, such as forums. Particularly noteworthy is the variation in the use of these channels, with frequent users ranging from 29.6% in the North East to 48.6% in the South, as well as the results for television news, which in the South reach almost 85%, if we combine “A fair amount” and the “A lot”, while the equivalent figure in the North East is 75%. Remaining with the use of social network platforms, in Italy the differences are concentrated between men (high frequency 85%) and women (89%) - who are more active on all channels in general - while the age group reporting the most frequent use is 26-28 years (89.4%).

Another element that supports the hypothesis of a prevalence of communal news consumption relates to the younger age group, the 20-22 year-olds, who have the highest value for frequent viewing of television news (85.6%) compared to other age groups (76.5% for 30-32 year-olds): more than Millennials, we find Generation Z, the most “social” of all, the so-called e-generation, returning to traditional television during the Coronavirus crisis. In other words, what was described a few decades ago as “the new domestic hearth” around which the family gathered, has, on this occasion, (temporarily?) revived its old role.

Another question posed to the sample of young Europeans aged 20- 34 was about writing posts i.e. messages on a social network platform, blog or discussion group on the internet. What was the reason for posting? To encourage people to follow official instructions? To criticise the work of institutions and authorities? To criticise the collective behaviour of others? To express and share anxiety/fear? Or to vent anger/frustration? Were they written to express/spread optimism? To request or provide clarifications about instructions from the government and institutions? Or to clarify the health care procedures to be followed to avoid spreading the disease?

In general, young Spaniards were found to have the highest activity rate, followed very closely by Italians; Germans had the lowest rate. Of particular note, under the heading “Often”, was the 15.3% of Spaniards who posted to encourage others to follow the instructions of the authorities, which was also selected by Italians (13.3%) more than their French (9.4%), English (8.8%) and German (7.8%) peers.

Fig. 2 - «Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus emergency, how often have you written posts to...» («Sometimes» + «Often»). Percentage values



As Figure 2 shows, in general, more than to criticise the authorities, young people posted to invite others to follow the rules dictated by them, with Italians scoring highest (50.1%); Spaniards, however, criticised the authorities most, reaching 35.4%, compared to 25.4% of the Germans, who criticised them the least of all. Italians, on the other hand, came top in terms of criticism of others, with 43.2% compared to 29.1% of the UK respondents, who criticised the behaviour of other people less than the other nationalities (29.1%). The results for writing posts “to express/spread optimism” are interesting: it is the most frequent answer with 51.3% of Italians reporting having done this sometimes or often, likewise 40.2% of the French, 32.7% of the German, 51% of the Spanish and 38.2% of the English respondents. A way of supporting each other and “cheering people up” was more frequently selected by the older cohorts than the younger ones (in Italy, for example, the percentage of those who posted for this reason increases to 59% among 30-32 year-olds). Sharing anxieties and fears, venting anger and frustration – the negative expressive function of online communication – does not seem to have taken hold among young Europeans. The percentages of those who posted messages for this reason are relatively low, rising slightly in Spain and Italy, where young people are stereotypically more willing to express their feelings and emotions, including negative ones. Similarly, posting to request clarification (i.e. the informative function of online messages) was not a popular use of the internet and its meeting places; the percentage of those who asked for information on health practices (with a peak in Italy of 36.9%, followed, as is often the case, by Spain with 37.5%) only just exceeds those who sought clarification on the rules dictated by the institutions (for this item, the result in Italy is the same as for the previous item, at 37%, but all the other countries have lower percentages). In general, the answers provided by young Europeans point to a positive and rational approach to the crisis, with young people using the media to communicate what could certainly be defined as a resilient attitude. Young people are willing to follow the rules dictated by the institutions and authorities, willing to operate, even if only through words, in virtual places of communication to promote adherence to official guidelines; rather than expecting psychological support from the Internet, they are using it to spread good practices and, indeed, to cultivate the optimism required for mitigating anxieties and fears and really working towards a future without Coronavirus.

A closer look at social network platforms

As is well known, social network platforms lend themselves to “multi-functional” use by their users: from purely playful to informative and participative (Introini - Pasqualini, 2013; 2019; Bichi, 2013). Regarding the COVID-19 emergency, our survey focused mainly on informative and participative uses. At the same time, it aimed to explore the emotional implications of being on social network at a time when: there was a flurry of – often conflicting – information; the risk of encountering fake news was heightened; people felt, overall, that their safety was threatened.

Tab. 1 - Indicate how accurately the following statements reflect your experience: «Since the beginning of the Coronavirus emergency (i.e. news of the first infections) to today, being on social networks» (total of «Fairly» and «Very» responses. Percentage values)

| | ITALY | UNITED KINGDOM | FRANCE | SPAIN | GERMANY |
|--|-------|----------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Is essential for staying up to date on the infection situation in my country | 72.0 | 59.1 | 60.4 | 63.1 | 57.4 |
| Is essential for staying informed on how to behave to defend myself from the risk of infection | 60.1 | 56.6 | 53.6 | 54.8 | 49.9 |
| Is essential for keeping updated on the decisions and provisions of the authorities and institutions | 71.2 | 59.6 | 62.3 | 63.5 | 57.3 |
| Confuses me regarding modes of infection | 40.3 | 26.7 | 47.2 | 36.9 | 38.6 |
| Confuses me as to what to do in case of suspected or actual infection | 40.4 | 34.7 | 45.2 | 37.2 | 35.5 |
| Triggers strong feelings of anxiety and stress in me | 43.9 | 41.1 | 37.9 | 37.3 | 37.5 |
| Creates strong feelings of panic | 35.6 | 36.1 | 34.1 | 30.6 | 41.3 |
| Helps me keep my anxiety in check | 41.4 | 27.9 | 35.6 | 33.3 | 34.7 |

(continue)

| | ITALY | UNITED KINGDOM | FRANCE | SPAIN | GERMANY |
|---|-------|----------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Enables me to provide tangible help and/or support to people I know | 53.0 | 49.8 | 58.1 | 59.7 | 53.2 |
| Enables me to receive tangible help and/or support from people I know | 52.5 | 47.6 | 55.7 | 55.8 | 49.7 |
| Makes me to feel less lonely, particularly when authorities have instructed us to limit social contact to reduce infections | 71.2 | 54.0 | 62.3 | 58.6 | 57.1 |

Generally speaking, Italian users are the main group in terms of recognising the informative function of social network platforms as a means of staying updated on the progress of the disease. Indeed, 72% of them report significantly¹ recognising the importance of using social network platforms to receive this kind of information, compared to 59.1% of UK, 60.4% of French, 63.1% of Spanish, 57.4% of German respondents.

At least one in two respondents in each country considers their presence on social network platforms to be fundamental for staying informed about how to behave to avoid infection. The Italians feel most strongly about this (60.1%) followed by UK (56.6%), Spanish (54.8%), French (53.6%) and German (49.9%) respondents.

It seems even more important to connect with social networks to keep up to date with the measures and decisions of the authorities and institutions. This response is found in all five countries monitored and is most significant among Italian respondents (71.2% Italy; 63.5% Spain; 62.3% France; 59.6% United Kingdom; 57.3% Germany). The greater importance of social networks as a means of gathering information from institutions may be linked to two reasons: the first, related to the type of content; the second, to the type of sources. Being familiar with the measures on work and social life and with the forms and means of accessing certain services is fundamental in a phase when daily life is undergoing radical upheaval, requiring people to profoundly re-organise their routines. On the other hand, information about the measures taken by institutions is also most likely to come from the most trustworthy

¹ The expressions “significant/significantly” and similar are used to reflect the fact that the percentages quoted are the sum of the percentages of the responses “Fairly” and “Very”.

sources, including mainstream media such as national newspapers and television news, which in turn interact directly with institutional channels. In Italy, this need for “reliable” information is further highlighted by the fact that 63.5% of users declared that they find information through the websites of the institutions “fairly often” and “often” (with a percentage almost double than that recorded in the other countries monitored, see above). Indeed, the risk of confusion that information gathered on social networks produces tends to be perceived as significant by large proportions of respondents in all national sub-samples: confusion over what the scientific authorities are saying about how virus can be contracted and what behaviour to adopt in the event of actual or presumed infection. Those most disorientated by social network seem to be the French (Tab. 1) and the Italians; the least confused are the UK respondents (particularly as regards modes of infection).

Turning instead to the “participative” function of social network platforms, which, in our case, relates to the possibility of giving/receiving help through them (Introini - Pasqualini, 2019), about one in two respondents (in all countries considered) have direct experience of meaningful opportunities to offer help/support among people who know each other. This was particularly evident among the Spanish and French respondents, with figures of about 60% (59.7% and 58.1% respectively). Those who related strongly to the statement that being on social network has enabled them to offer help are also aware of the symmetrical condition, i.e. receiving help. Therefore, it is interesting to note that practically everywhere, one in two users found social network platforms an important tool for giving and receiving support. These data confirm what was observed during the lockdown period, i.e. the fact that, in the absence of face-to-face social interaction, social network platforms – like other online “places” – allow people, to continue leading a social life and remain close to others in their social circles.

With reference to the emotional sphere, the data reveal an ambivalent relationship between feelings of anxiety and social network use.

Within each country, the number of those who claim that connecting to social network platforms has significantly helped them to reduce anxiety is very similar to the number of people who claim the exact opposite, i.e. that connecting to Facebook&Co, has made them feel anxious. The exception are users in the United Kingdom, where people reporting significant anxiety (41.1%) are more than those who claim to be in the opposite position (27.9%). Anxiety, however, can also develop into real panic. About one in three users in Italy, the United Kingdom, France and

Spain strongly affirm this to be their condition, with the percentage rising to 41.3% among German users.

Finally, remaining with the emotional sphere, we wanted to investigate what we have defined elsewhere as the “benefit of connection” (Introini - Pasqualini, 2017), i.e. an emotional state of well-being linked to the simple and generic awareness of being connected with other people as an antidote to loneliness. Even during periods of lockdown, social network platforms are confirming their “strength” in their ability to confer this very benefit. This is mainly testified by the Italian users (who have strongly experienced this in 71.2% of the cases), but the French (62.3%), Spanish (58.6%) and Germans respondents (57.1%) also report the experience. On the other hand, it was less significant for UK respondents (54%).

Among Italian respondents in particular, greater appreciation for the informative value of social network platforms was reported by women, who not surprisingly also reported less confusion (37.7% of women compared to 42.8% of men report being significantly confused about methods of infection and 38.4% compared to 42.8% about what to do in the case of real or presumed infection). At the same time, women also report higher levels of anxiety and panic and show greater sensitivity to the participatory dimension, revealing a more marked predisposition to give/receive help through social networks and a greater perception of the beneficial effects of connection (74% of women strongly recognise this situation in their experience, compared to 68.5% of men). Distribution by area reveals that users who are more “sensitive” to the effects and the role of social network platforms – almost all those examined – are mainly located in the South, with more conspicuous delta percentages in the two areas of the North than in the Centre². As regards with respect to the two areas in the North, affected by the first lockdown “red zones”, emotional overload was greater in the North West: being on social network caused significant anxiety and stress to 42.2% of residents in this area, compared to 36.9% in the North East; at the same time, respondents in the West experienced more panic (34.5% compared to 29% in the East). In Italy, however, we should point out that, with the virus hotspots dotted throughout the country, it is always and in any case areas of Central and Southern Italy that report more emotional distress than the two territories of the North. Finally, the percentage of those in

² With the exception, for example, of “feeling confused”, both about modes of infection, where the figure for the South is almost identical to that for the Centre, and about how to cope, which is most prevalent in the Centre.

the North West who claim to have received help through social network platforms is significant: 53.3% (compared to 43.1% in the North East). It is interesting to note that the percentage in the North West which claims to have actually received help is significantly higher than that of those who have offered help (48.4%). Perhaps this is due to the fact that North-West Italy was the area most affected, and therefore the area most in need of support.

The data quoted above have allowed us to appreciate the “participative” role that social networks play for their users during the period of lockdown. We returned to this in more detail, with a subsequent question designed to capture trends in certain online behaviours during the quarantine phase. In particular, we wanted to investigate whether time spent on social networks has increased, if and how people have tried to extend their social capital to secure more complete information capital and, strictly correlated to the relationship with information, how the fear of sharing fake news has changed. The results are summarised in Table 2. Although with different percentages, the two items with the highest frequency of affirmative responses in each country are, on the one hand, the increase in time spent on social network platforms (with the Spanish in “first place”, followed closely by the Italians, with 73.8% and 71.8% respectively) and, on the other, the fear of sharing fake news (which was once again particularly marked among Spanish users at 71.2%). The fear of spreading untrustworthy information, however, characterises one in two users in the other countries examined, with the exception of France, where the percentage of those “fearful” does not exceed 41.1%.

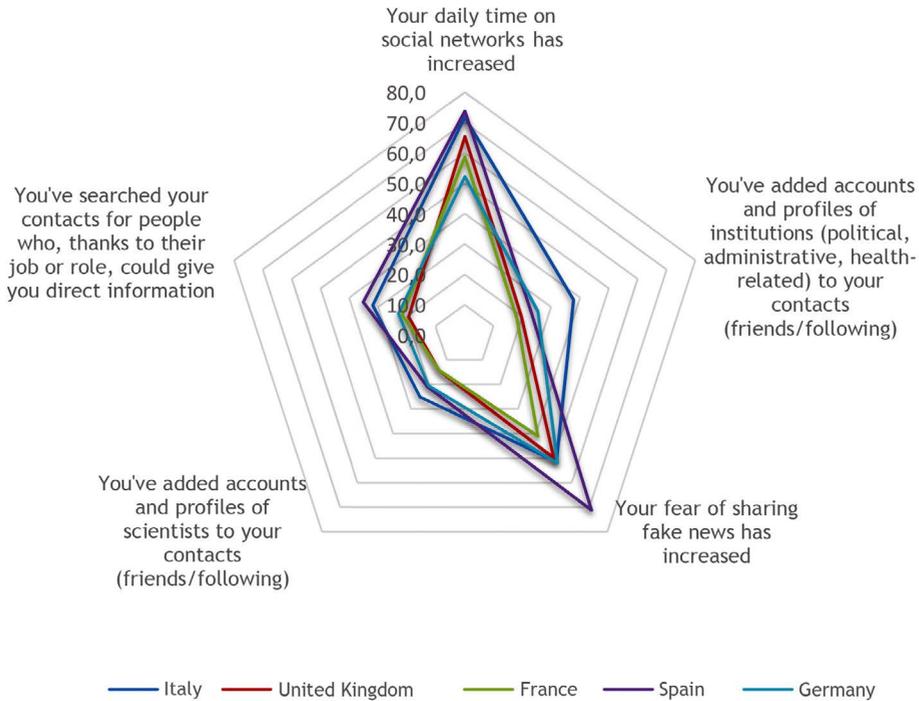
As for the ratio of social-capital to information-capital, there is a fair user investment (especially by Italians) in attempting to expand or mobilise their social network platforms to receive more or better information, at least in relation to online activities. However, this is not to say that the desire to enrich one’s information diet during lockdown did not lead people to consult other media, even offline, as discussed above (part two): social network platforms, although complex and capable of embedding content from other sites and platforms, are in turn part of a broader media and social ecology, with which they must always be linked.

Tab. 2 - «*Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus emergency, can you tell us whether...» (affirmative answers. Percentage values)*

| | ITALY | UNITED KINGDOM | FRANCE | SPAIN | GERMANY |
|---|-------|----------------|--------|-------|---------|
| Your daily time on social networks has increased | 71.8 | 65.5 | 58.8 | 73.8 | 52.2 |
| You have added accounts and profiles of institutions (political, administrative, health) to your contacts (friends/following) | 37.7 | 19.7 | 18.1 | 23.3 | 25.3 |
| Your fear of sharing fake news has increased | 51.5 | 50.0 | 41.1 | 71.2 | 52.0 |
| You have added accounts and profiles of scientists to your contacts (friends/following) | 25.1 | 14.4 | 14.3 | 20.9 | 20.5 |
| You searched your contacts for people who, thanks to their role or profession, could give you direct information | 31.9 | 19.5 | 21.7 | 35.2 | 23.0 |

Heightened concern about the risk of encountering fake news does not, therefore, automatically translate into a strong drive towards optimising one’s information supply via social networks. The most “proactive” seem to be the Italian users, a third of whom (37.7%) claim to have increased their contacts with institutions (political, health, administrative), whilst 31.9% have tried to mobilise resources among their contacts that could provide first-hand information (although, in this regard, young Spaniards score more highly with 35.2%) and 25.1% have added profiles and/or accounts of scientists to their contacts. Regarding the sample as a whole, in relation to seeking sources of information, institutions prevail over other types in Italy (significantly), Germany and the United Kingdom. Scientists, on the other hand, rank third in all the countries surveyed. On the other hand, personal resources are preferred in France and Spain; here, in particular, where the fear of encountering fake news is higher, it is noteworthy that significantly more people sought information from personal sources than direct institutional sources (35.2% compared to 23.3%).

Fig. 3 - «Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus emergency, can you tell us whether...» (affirmative answers. Percentage values)



With specific reference to Italy, the use of social network platforms is more common among women than among men, and among young people with lower educational qualifications, those living in the North-East and South and the two youngest cohorts (20-22 years old and 23-25 years old). Women, the two youngest cohorts, graduates and residents in the South are most afraid of sharing fake news. Regarding the extension and mobilisation of social capital, contacts with institutions increased most for graduates and residents in the South; contact with scientists increased for graduates, men and people living in the South (at an almost identical rate to respondent in the Centre, however); and, once again, it was graduates and young people in the Centre who mobilised their contacts to receive first-hand information. Employment status, on the other hand, does not reveal notable differences. Qualification level seems primarily to affect the quality more than the quantity (of time) of social network use.

Digital platforms, online services and managing a “non-ordinary” day-to-day life

The fact that the Millennial generation is on average a highly active and enterprising generation in terms of internet, social networks and collaborative platforms use has played a key role in their management of daily life during the Coronavirus emergency. One might say that already being digitally connected, inhabiting online environments (Manzo - Pais, 2020) and being familiar with many of them has proved extremely important and helpful for this generation, at a time when, all of a sudden, the digital world was no longer merely an alternative but the only means of staying connected with others and maintaining continuity in the many activities of everyday life, many of which take place in dedicated social places, “outside” and with other people: from purchasing basic necessities to work, study, entertainment, participation in religious activities, etc. The Millennials – even before the COVID-19 emergency – had already distinguished themselves as an “e-commerce” and “multi-platform” generation, accustomed to online shopping, group video calls with friends, a host of services (music, cinema, food) directly and conveniently usable at home, any time, with a simple click, through one of the many Apps available on their smartphone, which is, if not, as experts report, an extension of the hand, at least always at hand. From this point of view, the onset of the health crisis has not caught them unprepared. Despite our awareness that, especially for young people, digital media cannot and do not, in fact, replace all the forms of offline social activity that they engage in and need in order to grow up and become adults, it is also true that the digital dimension has offered many of them comfort or at least practical help in managing everyday life. The Osservatorio Giovani survey provides a snap shot of the behaviour of Millennials in the five countries in relation to these very issues, i.e. the use of online services in an “exceptional”, non-ordinary time (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3 - «During the Coronavirus emergency, can you tell us your situation with regard to each of the following online services?» (Percentage values)

| | ITALY | | | | UNITED KINGDOM | | | | FRANCE | | | | SPAIN | | | | GERMANY | | | |
|---|-------|------|------|------|----------------|------|------|------|--------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|---------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Online home-delivery platforms for groceries | 58.8 | 13.6 | 12.7 | 14.9 | 40.4 | 13.6 | 18.8 | 27.3 | 60.9 | 12.3 | 12.4 | 14.4 | 64.3 | 11.6 | 11.3 | 12.7 | 60.9 | 14.9 | 13.6 | 10.6 |
| E-commerce platforms (e.g. Amazon, Yoox, E-bay etc.) | 14.6 | 9.1 | 17.8 | 58.5 | 7.4 | 9.2 | 28.4 | 55.1 | 15.0 | 14.0 | 24.7 | 46.3 | 13.5 | 8.4 | 18.4 | 59.7 | 11.4 | 12.2 | 21.8 | 54.7 |
| Online home delivery platforms for prepared meals (e.g. Deliveroo, Glovo, etc.) | 58.4 | 10.3 | 11.6 | 19.7 | 44.4 | 10.7 | 18.1 | 26.7 | 59.4 | 11.6 | 11.4 | 17.6 | 54.5 | 9.2 | 12.0 | 24.3 | 44.8 | 15.1 | 13.5 | 26.5 |
| Video streaming platforms (e.g. Netflix, Chili etc.) | 23.8 | 12.3 | 24.2 | 39.6 | 14.6 | 6.8 | 28.2 | 50.4 | 25.3 | 11.6 | 18.7 | 44.4 | 13.8 | 9.3 | 30.7 | 46.2 | 15.9 | 12.5 | 23.0 | 48.7 |
| Audio streaming platforms (e.g. Spotify) | 40.1 | 9.9 | 13.5 | 36.5 | 27.4 | 12.1 | 16.7 | 43.7 | 40.0 | 11.7 | 12.2 | 31.1 | 28.7 | 8.2 | 17.0 | 46.1 | 30.3 | 14.7 | 14.9 | 40.1 |
| Subscription to an online newspaper | 72.5 | 9.6 | 10.1 | 7.8 | 75.2 | 9.1 | 7.8 | 7.9 | 71.2 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 10.6 | 73.4 | 8.5 | 9.7 | 8.5 | 68.3 | 12.0 | 9.9 | 9.8 |
| N. | 2,000 | | | | 1,000 | | | | 1,000 | | | | 1,000 | | | | 1,000 | | | |

Legend: 1) «I was not signed up to any before, and I am not signed up to any now»; 2) «I was not signed up to any before, but I am signed up to one or more now»; 3) «I was signed up to one or more before, but I have since signed up to others»; 4) «I was already signed up to one or more and have not signed up to others».

During the health emergency, four different experiences of online services were identified among the young people interviewed: 1) They were not equipped with them before and continued to do without them; 2) They were not equipped with them before, but they activated one or more services; 3) They were already well equipped before and further equipped themselves during the emergency; 4) They continued to use the services for which they were already signed up, without expanding them.

The data highlight common trends among young Europeans as well as features specific to the different countries. Certain digital platforms receive less consideration than others. For example, subscribing to an online newspaper remains unattractive for young people, even during this exceptional period. Among young Italians, 72.5% stated that they do not have one and have not signed up for one in this specific period; a figure in line with all other countries (75.2% United Kingdom; 71.2% France; 73.4% Spain; 68.3% Germany). On the other hand, the results are homogeneous across all the countries, but this time in positive terms, with respect to the provision of some specific services, namely e-commerce and video streaming platforms. Only 14.6% of “Generation E-commerce” have never used e-commerce platforms in Italy, with the figure falling as low as 7.4% among their peers in the United Kingdom. An exception should be made for certain food-related platforms that have gained ground in recent years on national and international levels and are redefining some of our eating habits, lifestyles and social practices. These platforms have proved particularly useful during the health emergency in the various European countries, which gradually tightened – adhering to varying timelines and measures – the restrictions on leaving home, up to full lockdown. At the time of the survey (27-31 March 2020), Italy was at the forefront of the health emergency. Accordingly, we see that among those who were not signed up pre-COVID-19 and then went on to sign up to some platforms, the most significant increases relate, at least in Italy, to home delivery platforms for groceries (13.6%) and for prepared meals (10.3%). As Inglehart (1993) taught us, in times of crisis, materialist needs – i.e. those linked to our primary needs – once again prevail over post-materialist needs. This means that, during the health crisis, while young people have certainly tried to keep all their multiple needs met, they have prioritised the primary needs. In Italy, the platforms that saw increased use by young people who were already signed up to some were e-commerce platforms (17.8%) and video streaming platforms (24.5%).

During the Coronavirus emergency, the day-to-day organisation of people’s lives had to undergo considerable change due to the restrictions on social life. Some of these changes could be remedied through possibilities

offered by the internet. These possibilities include smart working, distance learning and online religious services. How much do young people take advantage of these alternatives? (Tab. 4). In terms of smart working, the majority of young Italians (58.1%) had neither used this alternative in the past nor during the period of the health emergency (*versus*: 53.3% United Kingdom; 61.1% France; 61.2% Spain and 57.6% Germany). In Italy, compared to 11.5% of Millennials who had already experienced smart working, 21.6% tried it for the first time during the COVID-19 emergency. Nevertheless, smart working is still not very widespread in Italy, receiving little support from labour policies, and little encouragement even when possible and more sustainable, especially for some of the most vulnerable categories of people. At 67%, the percentage of young people in Italy who did not resort to smart working during the health emergency was very high, with similar figures for their European peers (63% United Kingdom; 66.4% France; 69.8% Spain; 67.6% Germany).

Tab. 4 - «During the Coronavirus emergency, the day-to-day organisation of people's lives had to undergo considerable changes due to the restrictions on social life. Some of these changes could be remedied through the possibilities offered by the internet. Below are some of these possibilities. Indicate whether you make use of them or not». (Percentage values)

| | | ITALY | UNITED KINGDOM | FRANCE | SPAIN | GERMANY |
|---------------|--|-------|----------------|--------|-------|---------|
| SMART WORKING | Yes, I was already doing this before the Coronavirus emergency | 11.5 | 14.0 | 12.6 | 12.2 | 9.5 |
| | Yes, I've been doing this since the Coronavirus emergency | 21.6 | 23.0 | 21.1 | 18.0 | 22.9 |
| | No, I did this in the past, but not now | 8.9 | 9.7 | 5.3 | 8.6 | 10.0 |
| | No, I have never done this. Not in the past and not now | 58.1 | 53.3 | 61.1 | 61.2 | 57.6 |

(continue)

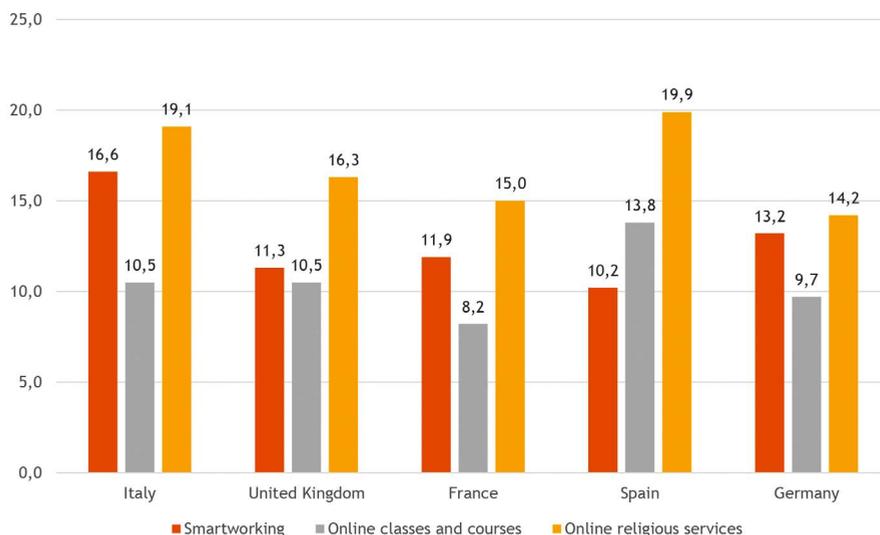
| | | ITALY | UNITED KINGDOM | FRANCE | SPAIN | GERMANY |
|---------------------------|--|-------|----------------|--------|-------|---------|
| DISTANCE LEARNING | Yes, I was already doing this before the Coronavirus emergency | 9.0 | 14.4 | 12.6 | 22.5 | 11.2 |
| | Yes, I've been doing this since the Coronavirus emergency | 32.6 | 20.5 | 20.0 | 24.9 | 24.1 |
| | No, I did this in the past, but not now | 9.3 | 16.1 | 10.6 | 20.1 | 13.9 |
| | No, I have never done this. Not in the past and not now | 49.1 | 49.0 | 56.8 | 32.5 | 50.9 |
| RELIGIOUS SERVICES ONLINE | Yes, I was already doing this before the Coronavirus emergency | 5.5 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 4.8 | 3.1 |
| | Yes, I've been doing this since the Coronavirus emergency | 11.8 | 10.2 | 6.3 | 8.6 | 12.6 |
| | No, I did this in the past, but not now | 6.7 | 7.4 | 5.5 | 6.7 | 8.5 |
| | No, I have never done this. Not in the past and not now | 76.0 | 78.9 | 85.0 | 80.0 | 75.8 |
| n. | | 2,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |

If working from home has become necessary and possible only for some and not for all, distance learning is another matter, with all young students and people involved in training activities gradually engaging in the activity, in all the European countries surveyed. As Italy was one of the first countries to close educational institutions at all levels, more Italian students reported participating in distance learning after the Coronavi-

rus emergency broke out (32,6%) than all their European peers. It is also interesting to note that 22.5% of young Spaniards were already participating in distance learning before the outbreak, compared to only 9% of young Italians. In general, Italy has a long and well-established educational tradition linked to the physical rather than virtual classroom; indeed, our country's digital delay in this area reflects this. The health emergency has highlighted this gap, providing a much needed boost in this regard, particularly in certain regions.

Finally, during the period of the COVID-19 health crisis, young people have also experienced online religious services: a near total novelty, you might say. The possibility of following religious services on social network platforms (Facebook and YouTube) was ignored by 76% of young Italians, with less than 11.8% starting to participate in them during this period. The proportion of respondents in Italy who had participated in them before was 5.5%. Subsequently, with the closure of all places of worship, this service represented – alongside traditional media such as radio and TV – the only way for people to continue following religious services taking place behind closed doors in their local areas, and thereby keep in touch with their community. Of all the countries considered, France is the least interested in this type of online service.

Fig. 4 - High levels of satisfaction in the new opportunities provided by the internet for managing daily life during the health emergency (a score of 10, on a scale of 1 «Not at all satisfied!» to 10 «Very satisfied». Percentage values).



Young Italians report a particularly high level of satisfaction in online religious services (19.1%), which drops slightly for smart working (16.6%) and distance learning (10.5%) (Fig. 4). Finally, it is interesting to note that among these three online services, young Europeans report the greatest satisfaction in online religious services, of which they have made little use but which they probably recognise as a “good” opportunity for all, but *first and foremost* for them, who inhabit the online world and social network to the greatest degree.

Conclusions

Based on the data collected, we can conclude that, in terms of information, social network platforms are the main channel for the young people interviewed. On the other hand, digital diets everywhere appear “balanced”, incorporating other online “places”, particularly online newspapers. Other than these, information from television newscasts was found to play an important role (significantly less important, on the other hand, were in-depth “specials” and talk shows). This trend towards a balanced media diet is partly explained by the omnivorous media diet of the younger generations and their awareness and reflexivity as regards information sources. On the other hand, the fear of sharing fake news, which increased during the COVID-19 emergency, and the feeling of uncertainty that being on social network generated in our respondents, go some way to explaining the need for alternative information channels outside the realm of Facebook&Co.

Regarding the interactive and “participative” use of the Internet, young people have not shown a particular predisposition for using the internet as a place to express themselves or voice their opinions/feelings. However, it should be noted that, when they did, they adopted a largely constructive and positive attitude, encouraging others to follow the rules dictated by the authorities and trying to spread optimism through their words. The tendency towards positive expression prevails over negative (expression of anger and/or sharing anxieties or fears). From a more “participative” point of view, it is also worth noting that, in all the countries surveyed, about one in two users reported being on social network platforms to receive or give help to people they know as particularly significant. A “real” use of the virtual that flies in the face of the common-sense critics who accuse social network platforms of being arenas for self-referential pretence and little else. Furthermore, in previous Rapporto Giovani studies, the Millennials themselves have demonstrated a more playful approach to social network, considering it a “pastime”

above all. If, on the one hand, we can interpret this greater awareness of the relational effectiveness of social network as a consequence of the specific “boundary conditions” generated by the health emergency, on the other, this solidarity-centred use of social network would probably not have been possible had the social networks not – through these very rituals of playful interaction – already paved the way.

Regarding online services, there is little interest in paid subscriptions to online newspapers in all the countries monitored. Not even the “push” of a greater need for information was a sufficient driver to increase this type of consumption. Video streaming services, more popular even than audio streaming services, are another matter, however. In the forced domesticity of lockdown, home entertainment based on films and television series has found the perfect conditions for expansion. The use of e-commerce services and food delivery platforms is also significant. Although this trend is particularly evident in Italy, we must remember that the survey from which this data derive was conducted when Italy, more than anywhere else, was at the centre of the most severe health emergency.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

PART A - General information

YEAR/MONTH. What is your date of birth?

YEAR (range: 18-34)

MONTH

RESP_GENDER. Are you...?

1. Male
2. Female

Where do you live?

Region

UK02EDU. What is your highest level of education attained?

1. Primary school
2. Secondary school (age under 15 years old)
3. GNVQ / GSVQ / GCSE/ SCE standard.
4. NVQ1, NVQ2
5. NVQ3/ SCE Higher Grade/ Advanced GNVQ/ GCE A/AS or similar.
6. NVQ4 / HNC / HND / Bachelor's degree or similar.
7. NVQ5 or post-graduate diploma.

UK02EDU _RECODE

TERTIARY EDUCATION (cod.5,6,7)

SECONDARY EDUCATION (cod.3,4)

PRIMARY EDUCATION (cod.1,2)

Main questionnaire

STUDY_uk. Are you currently a student?

SA

1. Yes
2. No

WORK_uk. Are you currently employed?

SA

1. Yes
2. No

IF CODE 1 AT STUDY_uk

TIPOL2015_uk. What kind of job do you do?

1. Salaried employee
2. Coordinated and continuous collaboration (with or without project)
3. Occasional provision of services
4. Self-employed as an entrepreneur
5. Self-employed as a freelancer
6. Self-employed
7. Self-employment as a collaborator in the company of a family member
8. Self-employment as a cooperative member

IF CODE 1,2,3 AT TIPOL2015

TIPOL2. Do you have an official employment contract or is your job based on a verbal agreement with your employer?

1. Permanent contract (with no set end date)
2. Short-term contract (with an end date)
3. Verbal agreement
4. I don't know

IF STUDY_uk=1 AND WORK_uk=1

ATTPREV_uk. You told us that you both work and study. But which do you do more? Study or work?

1. Study
2. Work
3. Study and work in equal measure

STATCIV. What is your current civil status?

1. Not married
2. Married or in a civil union
3. Separated
4. Divorced
5. Widowed

NUCLEO. Who do you currently live with?

1. I live alone

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 2. Spouse/partner | |
| 3. My children | enter how many __ __ |
| 4. My partner's children | enter how many __ __ |
| 5. My mother | enter how many __ __ |
| 6. My mother's partner | |
| 7. My father | |
| 8. My father's partner | |
| 9. Brother(s) | enter how many __ __ |
| 10. Sister(s) | enter how many __ __ |
| 11. Grandparent(s) | enter how many __ __ |
| 12. Aunt(s)/uncle(s) | enter how many __ __ |
| 13. Mother-in-law/father-in-law | enter how many __ __ |
| 14. Brother(s)-in-law/sister(s)-in-law | enter how many __ __ |
| 15. Other relatives | enter how many __ __ |
| 16. Friends or colleagues (students, fellow soldiers, work colleagues) | enter how many __ __ |
| 17. Other people | enter how many __ __ |

IF NUCLEO ≠ 1

NUCLEO1. How old are the youngest and oldest members of your family?

|__|__| (enter the age of the youngest member of your family)

|__|__| (enter the age of the oldest member of your family)

NUCLEO2. Do you have a disability?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I prefer not to answer.

IF NUCLEO ≠ 1

NUCLEO3. Does any other member of your family have a disability?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I prefer not to answer.

PART B - COVID-19 RISK PERCEPTION

Ask all

D0. On a scale from 1 to 10, today do you feel:

| | 1 Not at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very much so |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1. Tense | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Strong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Weary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. Depressed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5. Discouraged | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 6. Annoyed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 7. Exhausted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 8. Undecided | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 9. Edgy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 10. Confused | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11. Drowsy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 12. Resentful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 13. Unhappy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 14. Anxious | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 15. Worried | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 16. Energetic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 17. Distressed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 18. Disoriented | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 19. Angry | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 20. Active | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 21. Tired | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 22. Irritable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 23. Vigilant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 24. Uncertain | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 25. At risk | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

D0. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you agree with the following statements?

| | 1 Not at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very much so |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1. I feel connected to my fellow citizens | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. I'm supportive of my fellow citizens | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. I feel involved with my fellow citizens | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. I'm happy to be a citizen of this country | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5. I think citizens of this country have a lot to be proud of. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 6. It's nice to be a citizen of this country | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 7. Being a citizen of this country makes me feel good. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 8. I often think about the fact that I'm a citizen of this country | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 9. The fact that I'm a citizen of this country is an important part of my identity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 10. Being a citizen of this country is an important part of how I see myself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

D1. Let's talk about the coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19). On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'Strongly disagree' and 5 means 'Strongly agree', please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements.

| | 1 Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Strongly Agree |
|--|------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|
| 1. The coronavirus only affects the elderly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Young people aren't vectors for the coronavirus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Social distancing is necessary to contain the spread of the coronavirus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Limiting movement is an effective way to contain the spread of the coronavirus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Washing your hands is an effective way to limit the risk of getting the coronavirus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The coronavirus is transmitted exclusively by bodily fluids (especially saliva and tears) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The coronavirus can be transmitted via inanimate objects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Closing schools and other gathering places is an essential measure that will help contain the virus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Anyone can get the coronavirus, even a serious case of it | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D1.1 How much do you agree with the following statements?

| | 1 Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Strongly Agree |
|---|------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|
| 1. Throughout the current coronavirus emergency, most people have behaved irresponsibly. | | | | | |
| 2. In today's society, large-scale health emergencies like the coronavirus outbreak are inevitable | | | | | |
| 3. In today's society, we are destined to have an increasing number of large-scale health emergencies like the coronavirus outbreak | | | | | |

D2. In the past two weeks, how much have you used the following communication channels/platforms?

| | 1. Not at all | 2. A little | 3. Quite a bit | 4. A lot |
|---|------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Apps and websites of official journalism sources (such as national and local newspapers) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Apps and websites of institutes (political, administrative, healthcare) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Social media (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Forums/blogs and other online discussion spaces | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. TV news programmes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Journalism-focused television programmes (in-depth specials, talk shows, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

IF ITEM 3 AT D2 \neq 1

D3. Indicate how much you agree with the following statements, responding with: not at all, a little, quite a bit or very much.

Since the coronavirus emergency began (from the news of the first cases) to today, for you, being on social media...

| | 1. Not at all | 2. A little | 3. Quite a bit | 4. A lot |
|--|------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Is essential for staying up-to-date on the situation in terms of cases in my country | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Is essential for getting information about what to do to lower my risk of contagion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Is essential for staying informed about the decisions and regulations established by authorities and institutions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Makes me confused about how the coronavirus spreads | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Makes me confused about what should be done in case of suspected or known cases | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Makes me feel really anxious and stressed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Makes me feel a strong sense of panic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Helps me keep my anxiety under control | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Lets me help and/or support people I know in a meaningful, substantial way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Lets people I know help and/or support me in a meaningful, substantial way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Helps me feel less alone, especially when the authorities have asked us to be more isolated, to reduce the spread of the virus | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

D4. From when the coronavirus emergency began up to today, please indicate if...

| | 1. YES | 2. NO |
|---|-----------|----------|
| The amount of time you spend daily on social media has increased | 1 | 2 |
| You've added accounts and profiles belonging to institutions (political, administrative, health-related) to your contacts (friends/following) | 1 | 2 |
| You worry more about sharing fake news | 1 | 2 |
| You've added accounts and profiles belonging to scientists to your contacts (friends/following) | 1 | 2 |
| You've searched your contacts for people who, due to their job or role, could give you useful information | 1 | 2 |

D5. Since the coronavirus emergency started up to today, would you tell us how often you've...

| | 1. Never | 2. Sometimes | 3. Often |
|--|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Written posts to encourage others to follow the authorities' instructions | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. Written posts to criticise what the institutions or authorities are doing | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. Written posts to criticise the collective behaviour of others | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. Written posts to express and share your anxiety/fear | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. Written posts to take out your rage/frustration | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. Written posts to express/share optimism | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. Written posts to get/provide clarifications on the regulations issued by the institutions/authorities | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Written posts to get/provide clarifications on healthy practices to follow to avoid getting the virus | 1 | 2 | 3 |

D6. In the context of the situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak, can you tell us, with regard to each of the following online services, which statement best reflects your situation?

| | 1. I have never used them and I currently do not use them | 2. I had not used them in the past, but I have since activated one or more | 3. I had already used one/a few, but I have since activated others | 4. I had already used one/a few and I have not activated others |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| 1. Grocery delivery platforms | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Online shopping platforms (such as Amazon, Yoox, eBay etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Meal delivery platforms (such as Deliveroo, Glovo, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Video streaming platforms (Netflix, Chili, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Audio streaming platforms (Spotify, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Subscriptions to online newspapers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

D7. During the coronavirus emergency, the way people live their everyday lives has had to change drastically due to the restrictions placed on social interactions. Some of these changes have been remedied through the use of the internet. Below are a few examples. Please indicate which ones you've used.

| | 1. Yes, even before the coronavirus emergency | 2. Yes, I started because of the coronavirus emergency | 3. No, I've used it/ them in the past, but I don't any more | 4. No, neither in the past nor today |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Smartworking (from home, including the use of co-working technology) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Online classes and courses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Online religious services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

ONLY FOR EACH ITEM = 1 OR 2 AT D7

D7.1 From 1 to 10, with 1 meaning 'very dissatisfied' and 10 meaning 'very satisfied', how satisfied are you with...

| | 1 Very dissatisfied | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very satisfied |
|---|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| 1. Smartworking (from home, including the use of co-working technology) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Online classes and courses | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Online religious services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

D10. Compared to before the coronavirus emergency, today your in-person relationship with...

| | 1. Has decreased a lot | 2. Has decreased somewhat | 3. No change | 4. Has increased somewhat | 5. Has increased a lot | 6. I can't answer |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Your partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. Your children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. Your parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. Your friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. Your school/ work mates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

ONLY FOR EACH ITEM ≠ 6 AT D10

D10. Compared to before the coronavirus emergency, today your relationship with...

| | 1. Is much worse | 2. Is somewhat worse | 3. No change | 4. Is somewhat better | 5. Is much better |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Your partner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Your children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Your parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Your friends | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Your school/ work mates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D10.1 Compared to before the coronavirus emergency, today do you feel more or less ‘at risk’ in relation to...

| | 1. Much less at risk | 2. Less at risk | 3. No change | 4. More at risk | 5. Much more at risk |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Your health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Your income level | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Your job (now or in the future) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Your life plans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Your everyday life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D10.2 Compared to before the coronavirus outbreak, how has your stance on the following statements changed in terms of your degree of agreement?

| | 1. Greatly increased | 2. Somewhat increased | 3. Neither increased nor decreased | 4. Somewhat decreased | 5. Greatly decreased |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Most people are trustworthy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. When I think of my future, I envision it as full of risks and unknowns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Experiences in the present are more important than planning for the future | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Nothing in life is forever; it’s always possible to go back | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D10.3 Compared to before the coronavirus emergency, how has your stance on the following statements changed?

| | 1. Much less than before | 2. Less than before | 3. Neither less nor more than before | 4. More than before | 5. Much more than before |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. I'm changing my life priorities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I appreciate the value of my life more | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I'm pursuing new interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I have a greater sense of self-confidence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I know more about spiritual topics | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I'm more aware that I can count on people when there's a problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I'm changing my life path | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I feel closer to people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I can express my feelings better | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I feel more confident I can get by when things get difficult | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I feel capable of doing better things in my life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(continue)

| | 1. Much less than before | 2. Less than before | 3. Neither less nor more than before | 4. More than before | 5. Much more than before |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 12. It's easier for me accept the way things go in life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I appreciate every new day more and more | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I see that there are opportunities that I once thought were impossible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I have more compassion for others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I put more energy into my relationships | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I'm more willing to face the things that need to change | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I'm more religious/ have greater faith | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I've discovered I'm stronger than I believed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I've learned how wonderful people are | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. It's easier to accept the fact that I need others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I'm seeking a connection with God | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D11. Now let's move on to your present and future plans. AT THE START OF THE YEAR, just before the coronavirus outbreak, were you planning to complete any of the following events BY THE END OF 2020?

| | 1. No | 2. I was considering it but hadn't made any plans | 3. Yes, I was planning to do this |
|------------------------------|----------|--|--|
| Going to live on your own | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Going to live with a partner | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Getting married | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Having a child/conceiving | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Looking for work | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Changing jobs | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Changing houses | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Changing cities/towns | 1 | 2 | 3 |

ONLY FOR EACH ITEM ≠ 1 AT D11

D12. Has the coronavirus emergency interfered with that plan in any way?

| | 1. No, the plan is still confirmed for 2020 | 2. The plan is still happening but I've had to postpone it | 3. I've abandoned that plan |
|------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Going to live on your own | | | |
| Going to live with a partner | | | |
| Getting married | | | |
| Having a child/conceiving | | | |
| Looking for work | | | |
| Changing jobs | | | |
| Changing houses | | | |
| Changing cities/towns | | | |

D13. Compared to before the coronavirus emergency, your position in relation to your...

| | 1. Is much worse | 2. Is somewhat worse | 3. No change | 4. Is somewhat better | 5. Is much better |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Finances | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Free time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D14. Thinking about the future, do you think that the current coronavirus emergency will have a positive or negative impact on...

| | 1. Very negative | 2. Some- what negative | 3. No change | 4. Somewhat positive | 5. Very positive |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Your job in general (now or in the future) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your income (now or in the future) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your family's income | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your professional career/ academic prospects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The possibility of finding/ changing jobs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your plans for a family (living with a partner, getting married, having kids, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The way you manage your free time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Your health | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

PART C - THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

D15. Imagine what your country will be like at the end of 2020, in a little less than a year. In your opinion, what kind of impact will today's coronavirus emergency have...

| | 1 Very negative | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very positive |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 1. On the economy in general | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. On the average income of individuals | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. On the education of students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. On unemployment levels | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5. On women's employment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 6. On young people's employment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 7. On the automation of labour | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 8. On opportunities to work from home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 9. On the development of digital skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 10. On the efficiency of the healthcare system | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11. On trust in scientists and experts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 12. On trust in institutions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 13. On trust in the government | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 14. On the competitiveness of companies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 15. On online commerce | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 16. On local commerce | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

(continue)

| | 1 Very negative | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very positive |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 17. On the availability of services for families | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 18. On taxes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 19. On the school system | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 20. On the pension system | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 21. On social relationships | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 22. On familial relationships | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 23. On individual well-being | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 24. On attention on the common good | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 25. On the United Kingdom's reputation in Europe/the world | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 26. On your country in general | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

D16. Imagine what you think Europe will be like at the end of 2020, in a little less than a year. In your opinion, what kind of impact will today's coronavirus emergency have...

| | 1 Very negative | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 Very positive |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| 1. On the cohesiveness between member states | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. On economic growth | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. On the relationship between Europe and the USA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. On the relationship between Europe and China | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 5. On Europe in general | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

D17. Considering the impact of the coronavirus outbreak, how has your trust changed in relation to the following institutions?

| | 1. Greatly increased | 2. Somewhat increased | 3. Stayed the same | 4. Somewhat decreased | 5. Greatly decreased |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| The national government | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Political parties | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The European Union | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Schools and universities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The Church | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Trade unions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Law enforcement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Large companies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Small and medium companies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Banks | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Social media | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Volunteer associations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Scientific research associations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The healthcare system | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Newspapers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The civil defence authority | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Thanks for your participation.

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