



# MENRE

Strengthening the mental resilience  
of youth in dealing with crises  
presented on social media

## Country-specific Report from Czech Republic

### Activity 1



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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Relevance of the Topic for the Target Groups

In the Czech Republic, just like in other European countries, young people are increasingly exposed to crisis-related content on social media, particularly in connection with the recent global events, such as COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, climate change, and rising social and political tensions.

According to a 2023 report by the Czech National Institute of Mental Health (Národní ústav duševního zdraví 2023: n.p.), 59% of adolescents stated they often encounter emotionally distressing content online, and nearly one-third reported increased symptoms of anxiety or stress in connection with digital media consumption.

At the same time, the 2022 Digital Wellbeing report by O2 Czech Republic highlighted that 72% of Czech teenagers regularly follow news about crises on social platforms, yet only 34% feel confident distinguishing between trustworthy and manipulative content (O2 Czech Republic 2022: n.p.). The spread of misinformation and the lack of systemic media literacy education in Czech schools leave many young people without adequate tools to critically assess the information they consume.

This issue is highly relevant for teachers, youth workers, and educators as well as policymakers. Youth workers and multipliers can serve as important guides in helping young people cope with the psychological and social impacts of online crisis content, offering safe spaces for discussion, emotional support, and skill-building. For policymakers, the topic underscores the need to expand digital literacy and mental health support within the national education strategy, as emphasized by the Czech Ministry of Education's 2023 proposal for integrating media education into the curriculum. Addressing the emotional and cognitive impact of crisis-related content on social media is essential not only for the mental well-being of young individuals but also for strengthening civic resilience and critical thinking.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

The aim of this country-specific report is to present the types of crisis-related content that young people in Czech Republic engage with on social media and to identify the associated social, emotional, and mental effects. It also seeks to highlight best-practice educational offerings in Czech Republic that support young people in using digital content critically and responsibly.

The research conducted for the purpose of this report is intended to contribute to the targeted support and preparation of young people. Based on this research, the consortium will develop recommendations and propose pedagogical practices that



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strengthen young people's resilience and their ability to critically and consciously engage with digital content on social media, especially content related to crises or emotionally challenging topics.

In addition, this research will help broaden the scope of action for youth workers and educators by providing them with specialized knowledge and practical recommendations. These insights will support digital media education, such as guiding young people in managing online content, and promote the development of critical thinking skills. These recommendations will be designed to be applicable across national contexts.

## 1.3 Definition of Key Terms

### 1.3.1 Crisis Content

Crises are situations or life circumstances that cannot be managed effectively in the moment. In this paper, crisis content refers to material on social media, such as posts, images, videos, articles, or stories, that present, discuss, or react to events involving significant danger, disruption, or distress. These may include natural disasters, wars, pandemics, violence, political unrest, mental health struggles, or personal tragedies.

Crisis-related content is often emotionally intense and may evoke fear, grief, anger, or anxiety. It can be highly disruptive, as it reflects events that challenge social, emotional, or mental stability. Due to its disturbing nature, such content is frequently shared and spreads rapidly, sometimes without proper verification. It may also include graphic

images or videos. Often, this content is framed through personal experiences or fears to create a stronger emotional impact on viewers.

### 1.3.2 Psychosocial Impact

In the context of this report, psychosocial impact refers to the combined psychological and social effects that crisis content on social media can have on young people. It describes how exposure to such content influences a young person's mental health, emotional well-being, behaviour, social relationships, and overall functioning within environments such as school, family, and peer groups.

## 1.4 Research Methodology

This country-specific report is based on a mixed-methods design that combines desk research with field research among young people and youth workers in the Czech

Republic. The aim was to capture both the broader structural context and the lived experiences of those directly affected by crisis-related content on social media.

### **Desk research**

The desk research drew on national and international studies, policy documents, and statistical reports related to youth mental health, digital well-being, social media use, and exposure to crisis-related content. Priority was given to up-to-date sources from 2021–2025, including reports from Czech public institutions (e.g. NUDZ, NIPH), NGOs, and international organisations. Theoretical frameworks and key concepts (such as digital addiction, psychosocial impact, and resilience) were synthesised to provide the basis for Chapters 2–5.

### **Field research with young people (online survey)**

To complement the desk research with empirical data, an online survey was conducted among young people living in the Czech Republic. The questionnaire focused on their social media habits, exposure to different types of crisis-related

**content, emotional and cognitive responses, and coping strategies. In total, 23 respondents aged approximately 13–26 years completed the survey; the sample**

was predominantly female and mainly from urban environments. Recruitment took place via youth networks, social media channels and project partners. The survey results are presented in summarised form in Chapter 6 and visualised in the accompanying graphs.

### **Field research with youth workers (questionnaire / semi-structured interviews)**

**In addition, 8 youth workers (including educators, social workers and trainers)**

participated in a short questionnaire and/or semi-structured interview. They were asked about their observations of how crisis-related social media content affects young people, typical digital habits, perceived risks and protective factors, and strategies they recommend in practice. Their qualitative insights are summarised in Chapter 7 and are used throughout the report to contextualise the survey findings and desk research.

### **Data analysis and limitations**

Quantitative survey data were analysed descriptively (frequencies and percentages) and are primarily used to identify patterns and tendencies rather than to make representative claims. Youth-worker responses were analysed thematically and integrated into the narrative of the report. The relatively small, non-representative samples—especially for the youth survey and youth-worker interviews—mean that



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the findings should be interpreted as exploratory insights. Nevertheless, they offer valuable indications of how young people in the Czech Republic experience crisis-related content on social media and how youth workers perceive and address these challenges in their practice.

### 1.5 Involved Target Groups

**The field research conducted for this report involved two main target groups: young**

**people and youth workers. Both groups provide complementary perspectives on**

the exposure to, and impact of, crisis-related content on social media.

#### **Young people (survey participants)**

**A total of 23 young respondents took part in the online survey. Participants ranged**

**in age from approximately 13 to 26 years, with the highest concentration between**

**17 and 19 years. The sample consisted predominantly of female respondents and**

**was mostly composed of young people living in urban environments. These demographic characteristics reflect the outreach channels used, such as youth networks, educational institutions and social media platforms. The young respondents provided insights into their social media habits, exposure to crisis-related content, emotional reactions, and coping strategies.**

#### **Youth workers (questionnaire participants)**

**In addition, eight youth workers—including social workers, educators, NGO staff,**

and youth mentors—were involved through a short questionnaire. They work directly with adolescents and young adults in various settings, such as youth centres, community programmes, educational institutions, and online support initiatives. Their perspectives offer a professional interpretation of how crisis-related social media content influences young people's wellbeing, behaviour, and digital habits, as well as the challenges youth workers face in addressing these issues.

Together, both groups form the empirical basis of the field research, supporting the interpretation of desk-research findings and contributing to a multi-layered understanding of young people's digital experiences in the Czech Republic.



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## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Relevant Psychological Theories

These are relevant psychological theories that help explain how young people are affected by crisis-related content on social media. These theories help explain why this type of content has such strong emotional, cognitive, and social impacts on young people, especially during vulnerable periods of development.

#### **Cognitive Appraisal Theory by Lazarus and Folkman**

This theory explains how people evaluate and respond to stress. Young people assess whether a crisis (e.g. traumatic content online) is threatening and whether they have the resources to cope. If they feel powerless, emotional distress (like anxiety or hopelessness) increases. (Lazarus & Folkman 1984: n.p.).

#### **Cultivation Theory by Gerbner**

This theory suggests that repeated exposure to media shapes one's perception of reality. Constant crisis content can make young people believe the world is more dangerous or hopeless than it really is, contributing to chronic stress or fear. (Gerbner 1969: n.p.).

#### **Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson**

Adolescents are in the stage of "identity vs. role confusion." Exposure to overwhelming or conflicting crisis narratives online can make it harder for them to form a stable sense of self, especially if they're already experiencing personal struggles. (Erikson 1968: n.p.).

### 2.1.1 Theories Explaining the Impact of Social Media on Young People

These are key psychological and sociological theories that explain the impact of social

**media on young people, especially in relation to emotional, cognitive, and social**

development.

#### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

This theory suggests that young people actively use social media to fulfill specific

**needs—such as seeking connection, validation, entertainment, or information (Katz,**

Blumler & Gurevitch 1973: n.p.) However, when used to cope with stress or crisis, social media can either help (through support) or harm (through exposure to harmful content or comparison).



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### **Social Comparison Theory by Festinger**

Young people often compare themselves to peers or influencers online. This can lead to lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, or increased anxiety, especially when they perceive others as more successful, attractive, or emotionally unaffected by crises (Festinger 1954: n.p.).

### **Social Learning Theory by Bandura**

Young people learn behaviors by observing others. On social media, they may imitate peers or influencers in how they react to crises, express emotions, or engage in activism or risk-taking. This theory explains both positive and harmful behavioral modeling online (Bandura 1977: n.p.).

## **2.1.2 Theories Related to How to Cope with Stress**

### **Lazarus and Folkman’s Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**

It directly explains how young people evaluate stressful content (like war, climate disasters, or violence on social media) and how they choose coping responses. It highlights the difference between problem-focused (e.g. limiting screen time, fact-checking) and emotion-focused (e.g., seeking support, emotional expression) strategies. It’s highly adaptable to both education (media literacy, self-regulation) and mental health support (counseling, peer support) (Lazarus & Folkman 1984: n.p.).

### **Psychological Resilience Theory**

It shifts focus from just reducing stress to building long-term coping capacity, which is essential for youth repeatedly exposed to digital crises. It emphasizes the role of protective factors—like self-esteem, optimism, supportive relationships, and meaning-making. It aligns well with youth work and educational interventions that aim to strengthen emotional resilience, community support, and positive identity development (Masten 2001: n.p.).

## **3 Types of Crisis Content on Social Media**

Young people in the Czech Republic are exposed to a wide range of crisis-related content on social media (Národní ústav duševního zdraví 2023; O2 Czech Republic 2022). This content appears across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and occasionally X (Twitter), although the field research confirms that

### **Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube dominate crisis-related exposure among**

Czech youth. According to the youth survey, these three platforms account for the overwhelming majority of time spent online, with X being “almost unused.” Youth

workers confirm these platforms as the primary environments where adolescents encounter crises, due to their visual, fast-paced and algorithm-driven nature.

The following categories summarise the types of crisis content that young people most frequently encounter, combining desk research with the empirical findings from the survey and youth-worker interviews.

### 3.1 Personal Crises

Personal crises refer to distressing experiences that affect individuals directly, such as mental-health struggles, violence, self-harm, family conflict, bullying, relationship breakdowns or identity-related difficulties. Desk research shows these topics are highly visible across TikTok and Instagram, often in the form of short videos, confession pages, influencer disclosures or mental-health hashtags (ScienceDirect 2024).

#### **Field-research insights:**

#### **According to the youth survey, a very high share of respondents reported**

encountering personal-crisis content, especially posts related to mental health, anxiety, depression, and relationship or family conflict. Youth workers reported that these posts strongly resonate with adolescents

because many are already struggling with emotional instability, loneliness or anxiety. They noted that young people often compare themselves to others' crisis stories online, which may increase distress or feelings of inadequacy.

Several youth workers emphasised that repeated exposure to self-harm or

trauma narratives can heighten emotional sensitivity or overwhelm, especially among already vulnerable young people.

Overall, personal-crisis content is one of the categories with the strongest emotional impact, a pattern confirmed by both desk and field research.

### 3.2 Social Crises

Social crises include events or conditions affecting communities or groups, such as economic strain, migration, political conflict, social injustice or public-health issues. Desk research indicates that Czech social media often amplify emotionally charged narratives around inflation, housing insecurity, migration, rising prices, and access to mental-health services (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2025).

#### **Field-research insights:**

In the youth survey, large proportions of respondents reported encountering

content about economic instability, violence, migration, and public-health challenges. Content about inflation and rising prices was particularly common,



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reflecting youth anxieties about the future. When asked which crises concern them most, respondents selected climate change, war, mental health and economic instability. This shows that their personal concerns mirror the types of social crises dominating their feeds. Youth workers highlighted that social crises tend to provoke strong emotional reactions (anger, frustration, helplessness) and can contribute to polarisation or fear, especially when content is framed through dramatic language or misinformation.

These findings confirm that social crises are not only frequently encountered but also personally meaningful and emotionally charged for young people.

### 3.3 Global crises

Global crises include large-scale events such as wars, natural disasters, climate-related events or global health threats. Desk research shows that visually dramatic content—war footage, floods, wildfires, earthquakes—spreads especially quickly on TikTok and Instagram due to algorithmic amplification.

#### **Field-research insights:**

#### **The youth survey shows that war and climate crises are among the most**

frequently encountered and most personally worrying topics. Many respondents reported exposure to war-related videos (especially Ukraine and Middle East), climate-disaster footage, and global socio-political tensions. Youth workers noted that crisis videos from abroad often create a sense of

global instability and future uncertainty, which young people mention in conversations at youth centres or schools. They also observed that repeated exposure to violent or catastrophic imagery can lead to emotional overwhelm or avoidance. Several youth workers emphasised that misinformation is particularly pervasive in global-crisis content, making young people more vulnerable to confusion, fear or emotional extremes when distinguishing reality from exaggeration (ScienceDirect, 2024).

#### **Both field-research components point to global crises—especially war and climate**

change—as core drivers of uncertainty among Czech youth.

### 3.4 Digital Addiction, Cyberbullying and Social Media Pressure

#### **The youth survey and youth workers' interviews also identified cross-cutting digital**



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## **issues that function as crisis-related content in themselves or intensify emotional**

stress (Drogy-info.cz 2023; English Radio.cz 2024).

### **3.4.1 Digital Addiction & Social Media Overuse**

Youth workers repeatedly pointed to excessive scrolling, notifications, and algorithm-driven feeds as sources of stress and emotional overload. Some young respondents acknowledged spending 15–60 minutes daily on crisis content alone.

### **3.4.2 Cyber-Bullying, Online Harassment & Peer Pressure in Digital Spaces**

While not always linked to external crises, these digital harms form part of the daily online “crisis landscape” experienced by many adolescents. Youth workers described cyberbullying as a frequent issue in schools and youth centres, contributing to anxiety, social withdrawal and conflict.

### **3.4.3 Emotional Manipulation, Misinformation and Sensationalism**

Both young people and youth workers mentioned that crisis content is often emotionally exaggerated, misleading, or designed to provoke strong reactions. Youth workers identified misinformation as a rising challenge, especially in crisis-related videos that lack context or balanced perspectives.

## **4 Psychosocial Impacts on Young People**

Exposure to crisis-related content on social media has significant emotional, cognitive, behavioural and social effects on young people. Desk research shows that repeated consumption of distressing digital content can increase anxiety, reduce attention, intensify stress, shape worldviews, and undermine social relationships. Field research among Czech youth and youth workers confirms these patterns and illustrates how they unfold in practice.

### **4.1 Emotional responses**

Desk research indicates that adolescents commonly experience anxiety, fear, sadness, helplessness, and emotional numbness in response to crisis narratives. These reactions are especially strong when the content is graphic, repetitive, or linked to global instability (e.g., war, climate disasters) (NUDZ, 2023).

#### **Field-research insights:**

According to the youth survey, the most frequently reported emotional



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response was uncertainty about the future, followed by sadness, stress, fear, overwhelm, and emotional fatigue. Very few respondents reported any positive emotions linked to crisis content.

Youth workers confirmed a rise in emotional instability, noting that many young people feel “constantly on edge,” “discouraged,” or “hopeless” after repeated exposure to crisis narratives. Several youth workers observed that emotional overload is especially strong

among adolescents who are already dealing with mental-health challenges, loneliness, or insecurity.

Combined findings show that emotional responses to crisis content are one of the most significant psychosocial impacts identified in both research strands.

#### 4.2 Cognitive effects

Desk research highlights several cognitive consequences: information overload, reduced attention span, difficulty distinguishing facts from misinformation, distortion of risk perception, and reduced cognitive empathy.

#### **Field-research insights:**

#### **Many youth survey respondents reported spending 15–60 minutes per day**

on crisis content alone, which contributes to cognitive strain and rumination. Youth workers noted that crisis content often leads to confusion, difficulty

concentrating, and a sense of being “mentally exhausted.” They frequently observe young people struggling to process contradictory or sensationalised information online. Youth workers also emphasised that young people are vulnerable to misinformation and emotionally manipulative content—particularly in global crisis posts presented without context. Some professionals highlighted that young people sometimes adopt

catastrophising thinking (e.g., assuming worst-case outcomes) after repeated exposure to disaster-oriented content.

These findings illustrate a clear overlap between theoretical expectations and real-life cognitive impacts (PMC, 2024).

#### 4.3 Behavioural changes

Desk research shows that crisis-related content can lead to behaviours such as doomscrolling, compulsive checking, avoidance, withdrawal, hyper-engagement, or activism (Drogy-info.cz, 2023).

#### **Field-research insights:**



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The youth survey shows that a significant number of respondents engage in regular exposure to crisis-related content, and some spend up to one hour **daily specifically scrolling through such posts. This pattern mirrors classic doomscrolling behaviour.**

**Youth workers observed that many young people alternate between hyper-**engagement (intense watching, constant checking) and avoidance (avoiding platforms, muting topics) as coping strategies. Both tendencies are reported frequently in youth centres and schools. Some youth workers noted increased withdrawal, irritability or changes in

sleep routines during periods of heavy crisis coverage (e.g., war escalation, natural disasters). On the positive side, both the survey and interviews indicate that some young

people respond with activism, sharing information, or supporting peers, showing that crisis content can also motivate constructive engagement.

Overall, behavioural impacts are two-sided: potentially harmful, but occasionally activating prosocial behaviours.

#### 4.4 Social impacts

Desk research indicates that crisis content can influence how young people relate to peers, interpret social norms, form communities, or engage in civic discussions. It can foster empathy and solidarity but also increase polarisation, comparison, or guilt (People in Need, 2023).

#### **Field-research insights:**

According to youth workers, crisis content often becomes a topic of

conversation among peers, sometimes strengthening solidarity (e.g., sharing coping ideas, discussing world events), but at other times creating tension, arguments, or withdrawal. Some youth workers reported that crisis narratives amplify social

comparison, especially when influencers present themselves as “strong,” “unaffected,” or “always coping well.”

Young people in the survey frequently selected crises that relate strongly to

shared identity issues (climate change, war, mental health), showing that crisis content can shape group concerns and collective emotional climate. Youth workers also observed that repeated exposure to negative content may

reduce young people's sense of safety in public spaces or communities, leading to heightened mistrust, withdrawal, or pessimism about society.

These combined findings underline that crisis content strongly influences not only individual wellbeing but also peer dynamics and how young people position themselves socially.

### **Additional Relevant Sources and Data (2023–2025)**

According to the EU Youth Wiki (European Education and Culture Executive Agency 2025: n.p.) up to 20% of children and adolescents in the Czech Republic experience some form of mental disorder during their lifetime. Data from the National Institute of Public Health also show a sharp increase in reported psychological complaints among Czech adolescents between 2002 and 2018, with higher prevalence among girls (ČEJPH 2021).

A 2025 cross-European study on adolescent loneliness published in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* showed a 104% increase in reported loneliness among Czech adolescents between 2012 and 2018. This aligns with earlier findings that social media overexposure and crisis content correlate with emotional isolation and social withdrawal (CAPMH 2025).

Structural reform of mental health care in the Czech Republic remains incomplete: by the end of 2023, only 29 of the planned 100 community mental health centres were operational. This limits access to early intervention and youth-specific psychological support, especially outside metropolitan areas (Balkan Insight 2025).

The NGO 'Nevypust' duši' continues to play a central role in youth mental health education and stigma reduction. Its school programs focus on peer support, teacher training, and early recognition of distress. The organisation also collaborates with research institutions on impact evaluation of mental health literacy projects (Platforma pro transformaci 2023; Nevypust' duši 2025).

The Czech National Institute of Mental Health (NUDZ) coordinates several national grants on youth resilience, prevention, and mental health promotion within schools. These projects contribute to developing evidence-based materials for teachers and youth workers, complementing initiatives like MENRE (NUDZ 2025).

## **5 Youth Workers' Perceptions of Crisis Content on Social Media and Its Impact on Young People**

Youth workers play a crucial role in supporting young people in navigating crisis-related content on social media. Their insights offer a professional, practice-based



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perspective on how digital crises affect adolescents emotionally, cognitively, behaviourally, and socially. The findings below are based on questionnaires and **semi-structured interviews conducted with eight youth workers, including social**

workers, educators, and NGO practitioners from various youth settings in the Czech Republic.

### 5.1 Growing Psychosocial Vulnerability

**Youth workers consistently observe rising levels of stress, insecurity, and emotional instability among adolescents. Many describe young people as “overwhelmed,” “highly sensitive,” or “easily discouraged,” particularly when exposed to dramatic or emotionally charged crisis narratives.**

Several youth workers reported that repeated exposure to war, violence, climate disasters, or financial instability amplifies existing psychological difficulties. Young people who are already dealing with anxiety, loneliness, trauma, or academic pressure appear especially vulnerable to emotional overload.

*“They already feel stressed in their personal lives — crisis content online just adds another layer they don’t know how to process.” — Youth worker (interview)*

These observations align strongly with both the youth survey results and the desk research on rising mental-health challenges among Czech adolescents.

### 5.2 High Exposure to Negative and Crisis Content

**Youth workers confirm that young people encounter a constant stream of negative**

**or crisis-related posts, particularly on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. They note**

that algorithmic feeds often push content involving conflict, tragedy, or political tension because such posts trigger strong emotional engagement.

**Professionals emphasised that topics such as war, climate change, violence, economic uncertainty, and mental-health struggles dominate the feeds of**

adolescents they work with. These themes closely mirror those identified in the youth survey.

*“Every day they see something about war or some disaster — even if they don’t search for it, the apps show it to them.” — Youth worker (interview)*



This persistent exposure contributes to increased worry, helplessness, or pessimism among young people.

### 5.3 Digital Habits as a Risk Factor

Youth workers frequently describe problematic digital habits — especially **doomscrolling, compulsive checking, and reliance on social media for constant updates**. They observe that crisis content often triggers cycles of obsessive consumption followed by emotional exhaustion.

Many adolescents lack the critical skills to differentiate between reliable information and sensationalised or manipulative posts. Youth workers warn that misinformation and emotional exaggeration are especially problematic in global-crisis content.

*“They scroll until late at night, watching one negative video after another. It exhausts them but they can’t stop.” — Youth worker (interview)*

These behaviours reflect patterns also seen in the youth survey, where many respondents reported daily exposure of 15–60 minutes specifically to crisis-related posts.

### 5.4 Coping Strategies Observed and Recommended

Youth workers described a mix of coping behaviours used by adolescents:

#### **Common youth strategies observed:**

##### **Taking breaks from social media**

- Talking to friends or trusted adults
- Distracting themselves through offline activities
- Muting crisis-related topics or temporarily avoiding platforms
- Trying to verify information before believing or sharing it

Youth workers consider these strategies helpful but insufficient on their own, especially when young people rely mainly on avoidance — which provides short-term relief but does not build long-term resilience.

#### **Recommended strategies by youth workers:**

##### **Teaching digital literacy and fact-checking skills**

- Providing peer-support spaces to discuss distressing content
- Strengthening routines for healthy digital habits (screen limits, night-time boundaries)
- Helping young people identify trusted information sources
- Offering emotional-regulation strategies (breathing, grounding, journaling)



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These professional recommendations complement the survey findings and indicate areas where youth programmes and schools can intervene.

### 5.5 Recognised Positive Aspects of Social Media

Despite their concerns, youth workers also acknowledge positive aspects of social media for young people:

Access to educational resources and crisis information

Opportunities for solidarity, activism, and community engagement

Spaces for creativity, identity exploration, and mutual support

Possibility to share mental-health experiences and find peer understanding

Some youth workers noted that crisis content can empower young people to become informed, socially aware, and more reflective about global events — provided they have support and tools to manage the emotional burden.

### 5.6 Overall Reflection from Youth Workers

Youth workers unanimously agree that crisis-related content has become a

**significant factor shaping the emotional world, behaviours, and worldview of adolescents. They describe young people as both vulnerable and capable of resilience** — depending on the support systems available to them.

Their insights confirm the central findings of both the desk research and the youth survey:

Crisis content is pervasive

Emotional impact is substantial

Digital habits influence vulnerability

Supportive relationships and digital literacy are protective

Long-term resilience requires intentional guidance

**Youth workers underline the need for structured educational interventions that combine media literacy, mental-health awareness, peer support, and safe spaces for processing digital content** — all of which align with the objectives of the MENRE project.

## 6 Best practice educational offerings

Best practices in the Czech Republic combine critical media literacy, emotional **resilience building, civic engagement, and digital well-being. They leverage**

partnerships between schools, NGOs, government bodies, and youth organizations to create holistic programs that address not only the cognitive but also the emotional and social dimensions of crisis content on social media.

### 6.1 People in Need

People in Need (PIN), through its Youth and Education Department, runs educational programs focused on global crises, media literacy, social justice, and youth dialogue, with workshops that combine factual knowledge with discussion about emotional impact. Their youth forums encourage active citizenship and critical media engagement. Since 2001 they implement educational programme “One World in Schools” (Jeden svět na školách) that has been contributing to educate responsible young people, who are getting their bearings in today’s world and approach information in an open and critical manner (People in Need 2023: n.p.).

### 6.2 Czech Ministry of Education

The Ministry supports curricula development integrating media literacy and social-emotional learning into formal education. Teacher training modules include responding to youth distress linked to digital media and crisis content.

A group of experts, led by the National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic (NPI CR) in cooperation with the Partnership for Education 2030+, has created a definition of “digital well-being.” By doing so, it responds to the increasing need for support for the mental health of young people in the digital era. The first questions and answers will be published by NPI CR on its website, [digitalizace.rvp.cz](http://digitalizace.rvp.cz), by August 2025. This will be followed by an action plan for schools and institutions working with youth (Brdička et al. 2025: n.p.).

### 6.3 National Campaign “To chce odvahy”

In September–October 2025, the Czech nationwide campaign “To chce odvahy” (literally: “It takes courage”) was launched by Nadační fond Flaminia and the NGO Nevypusť duši, with the public support of the Presidential couple. The campaign encourages especially young people to speak openly about mental health and to seek help early. Its key message responds to the finding that around 70% of teenagers fear asking for help due to fear of rejection, framing help-seeking as a sign of strength rather than weakness (Nadační fond Flaminia/Nevypusť duši 2025).

The campaign used a high-reach, youth-oriented media mix (social media creators, national earned media, and on-site events linked to World Mental Health Day on 10 October). According to an official press update, the project website recorded ~3.7 million visits by ~2.65 million unique users within the first weeks, while social media posts reached approximately 1.8 million accounts (Nadační fond Flaminia/Nevypusť duši 2025).



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Relevance for MENRE: “To chce odvahu” offers a current Czech best-practice example of destigmatizing, help-seeking-oriented communication suitable for youth work and schools. The campaign’s simple call to action (talk about it; ask for help) and its credible institutional partnerships can be used in workshops to model supportive peer responses, guide discussions about barriers to help-seeking, and connect students to verified resources and crisis lines. Campaign assets also provide relatable prompts for classroom reflection and role-plays (e.g., how to support a friend who is struggling).

Suggested implementation ideas for educators and youth workers: (1) Use selected campaign clips and articles to initiate a structured conversation about help-seeking barriers and myths; (2) Co-create a local ‘Help Map’ of school, municipal and online services; (3) Run a peer-support micro-campaign where students craft short, kindness-focused messages echoing the campaign’s tone; (4) Integrate a short fact-checking exercise on mental-health misinformation circulating on social media, paired with emotion-regulation strategies practiced in class. (Nadační fond Flaminia/Nevypust’ duši 2025; People in Need 2023: n.p.)

## 6.4 Other campaigns

Building of emotional resilience and well-being of young people is mostly covered by Czech NGOs working with youth through campaigns and various initiatives. The most popular initiatives are:

### **Campaign and project 'Můj Mindset' (My Mindset) (Můj Mindset 2024: n.p.)**

- Started in 2016 and focuses on medical and health secondary schools - Focused on de-stigmatisation of mental health among secondary school pupils within the health sector. - NGO project with support among others of the Ministry of Health and National Institute of Mental Health.

### **Campaign 'Nevypust’ duši' (Do not let go of the soul)**

- Started in summer 2015 as an initiative of two students and became a NGO later - Promotes topics of mental health in the society, special focus on young people and their mental health struggle linked to studies - Initiative inspired by the UK - Supported by the National Institute for Mental Health

### **Project and app 'Nepanikař' (Do not panic) (Nepanikař 2025: n.p.)**

- Mobile app that helps users for free and provides first quick psychological help - They offer online counselling and therapy. They also run crisis intervention courses and workshops for schools and businesses



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## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Key findings of the Report

This report shows that crisis-related content on social media is a significant and growing influence on the lives, emotions, and wellbeing of young people in the Czech Republic. **By combining desk research, youth survey results, and youth-worker perspectives, several consistent patterns emerge.**

#### 7.1.1 Widespread and Highly Visual Exposure to Crisis Content

Desk research demonstrates that Czech adolescents regularly encounter emotionally charged content about war, violence, climate change, natural disasters, and socio-economic tensions. **National statistics reveal that 59% of adolescents frequently see emotionally distressing content, while around 72% follow crisis-related news on social platforms (Národní ústav duševního zdraví 2023; O2 Czech Republic 2022).**

Field research confirms these findings: nearly all survey respondents reported encountering crisis-related posts in the previous six months, particularly on **Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which youth workers also identify as primary vectors of crisis exposure.**

#### 7.1.2 Deep Emotional and Cognitive Impacts

Across all data sources, crisis-related content has a noticeable emotional impact.

**Young people frequently experience uncertainty, sadness, stress, fear, and emotional fatigue.** Youth workers report rising emotional instability and a heightened sense of vulnerability among adolescents.

**Cognitively, young people struggle with information overload, misinformation, and**

**difficulty concentrating, especially when crisis posts contain dramatic, contradictory, or alarming content.** Both surveys and interviews point to a strong sense of global and future insecurity.

#### 7.1.3 Behavioural Changes: Doomscrolling, Avoidance, and Activism



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**Desk research and youth-worker insights confirm patterns of doomscrolling and**

**compulsive checking. The survey shows that many young people spend 15–60 minutes daily consuming crisis-related posts. Youth workers observe cycles of hyper-engagement followed by withdrawal or avoidance, often driven by emotional exhaustion. At the same time, a minority of adolescents respond with activism, peer support, or deeper social engagement.**

#### **7.1.4 Influence of Social Crises and Global Crises**

**Young people are especially affected by content related to war, climate change, and**

**economic insecurity. These themes appear prominently both in the youth survey**

(top concerns) and youth workers' observations (dominant topics in conversations and behaviours). Crisis content shapes not only individual emotions but also the broader collective emotional climate among peer groups.

#### **7.1.5 Low Media Literacy and Limited Support Systems**

Desk research highlights persistent gaps in digital and media literacy, with only 34% of Czech teenagers feeling confident distinguishing reliable from manipulative content. Youth workers confirm this vulnerability: young people frequently struggle to verify information or recognise emotional manipulation.

These effects are compounded by insufficient access to mental-health support.

**National data show that 40% of 9th graders exhibit moderate to severe depressive**

**symptoms and 30% experience anxiety—yet mental-health services remain difficult**

to access.

#### **7.1.6 Protective Factors and Positive Aspects**

Despite risks, social media also offers meaningful opportunities for:

accessing reliable information

engaging in civic issues



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sharing mental-health experiences

participating in supportive peer communities

Youth workers emphasise that young people can show resilience, particularly when supported by media literacy education, safe spaces, and trusted relationships.

## 7.2 Critical Reflections of the Report

While the findings of this report align across desk and field research, several critical reflections help contextualise the results and highlight limitations and implications for future work.

### 7.2.1 Differences in Platform Use Affect Exposure

**The field research reveals that crisis exposure is concentrated on three platforms**

(Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), whereas desk-research literature often assumes broader platform use. This difference affects both the format and intensity of exposure, as these platforms rely heavily on visual, fast-moving, and emotionally triggering content.

### 7.2.2 Selective Engagement Rather Than Uniform Concern

Although young people encounter a wide range of crises, survey findings show that **they are most emotionally concerned with climate change, war, mental health, and**

**economic insecurity. This selective engagement suggests that adolescents do not**

react equally to all crisis narratives; instead, they prioritise issues that feel personally relevant. Desk research, which often focuses on exposure levels, tends to overlook this selective emotional weighting.

### 7.2.3 Young People Are Active Consumers, Not Passive Recipients

Contrary to assumptions in existing research that young people mainly encounter **crisis content accidentally, field data show that many adolescents actively seek out**

crisis information to understand the world and their future. This agency complicates the relationship between exposure and vulnerability: young people are both motivated and overwhelmed simultaneously.

### 7.2.4 Uncertainty as a Defining Emotional Experience



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While desk research highlights anxiety, fear and sadness as primary emotional **impacts, the field research introduces a more specific theme: pervasive uncertainty**

**about the future. This emotional tone is strongly present in both survey responses**

and youth-worker observations and may have long-term implications for mental wellbeing and civic engagement.

### 7.2.5 Coping Strategies Show Strengths but Also Gaps

Young people use a mix of healthy (breaks, conversations, information verification) and less effective (avoidance, withdrawal) coping strategies. Desk research suggests

**the need for resilience-building, but interviews reveal that avoidance is the most**

common strategy—effective short-term, but insufficient long-term. Without structured support, young people remain vulnerable to emotional overload and misinformation.

### 7.2.6 Limitations of the Field Research

The field research findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative:

the youth sample (n=23) is small and mostly urban

the youth-worker sample (n=8) reflects diverse professional experiences but

limited numbers Still, the consistency across both groups strengthens the validity of the insights.

### 7.2.7 Overall Reflection

Together, the desk and field research show that crisis-related social media content is a structural reality of adolescent digital life. Young people navigate this space with a mixture of interest, vulnerability, and resilience. Effective support requires:

**integrated media literacy and emotional literacy**

safe and trusted relational contexts

early mental-health support

practical coping skills

These factors form a foundation for the MENRE project's next steps in designing educational interventions that truly meet the needs of young people in the Czech Republic.

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## Appendix I – Analysis and Key Results of the Survey

This appendix summarises the quantitative results of the youth survey conducted in **the Czech Republic as part of the MENRE field research. A total of 23 young people**

aged approximately 13–26 years participated in the online questionnaire.

### A. Demographics

#### Age distribution

Respondents ranged from early adolescence to young adulthood, with the highest **concentration between 17 and 19 years. This reflects typical youth programme** engagement and the recruitment channels used.

#### Gender

**The sample was predominantly female, with a small representation of male and non-**

binary respondents.

#### Location

**Most participants lived in urban areas, followed by smaller towns; very few** respondents came from rural regions. This supports the observation that crisis content exposure is shaped by digital environments typical of urban youth.

### B. Use of Social Media Platforms

Survey results show that young people primarily use:

#### Instagram – highest daily engagement

YouTube – widely used for information and entertainment

TikTok – major platform for short-form crisis content

Facebook – used occasionally

X (Twitter) – “almost unused” by this age group

This pattern was confirmed by youth workers, who noted that most crisis content appears on visually driven platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.



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### C. Exposure to Crisis-Related Content

Participants were asked which types of crises they encountered on social media in the last six months. The most frequently reported topics were:

#### **War and armed conflict (Ukraine, Middle East)**

- Climate-related disasters and extreme weather
- Violence and crime
- Economic uncertainty (inflation, prices, cost of living)
- Mental health content
- Political tension and social division

Almost all respondents encountered at least one type of crisis content regularly.

### D. Crises Young People Worry About Most

When asked which crises personally concern them, young people selected:

#### **Climate change**

- War
- Mental health challenges
- Economic instability

This reflects a strong emotional link between what they see online and what they fear in their own lives.

### E. Reasons for Following Crisis Content

Respondents most commonly follow crisis-related content because they want to:

#### **stay informed about world events**

- understand how crises may affect their future

#### **learn about global problems**

- follow personal stories or explanations
- satisfy curiosity

Only a very small portion reported avoiding crisis information completely.

### F. Time Spent on Crisis Content

Daily time spent watching or reading crisis-related posts:

#### **Most respondents: 15–30 minutes per day**

- A smaller but notable group: up to 60 minutes
- A few respondents: more than one hour (typically during major crises)



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This time is additional to general screen time.

### G. Emotional Impacts

The most frequently reported emotional responses include:

#### **Uncertainty about the future (highest)**

Sadness

Stress

Fear

Overwhelm

Emotional exhaustion or numbness

These findings strongly align with youth-worker observations.

### H. Perceptions of the Future

#### **A substantial portion of respondents reported pessimism or a sense of instability**

regarding their personal future due to crisis content.

### I. Coping Strategies Used by Young People

Most common strategies:

#### **Distraction**

Taking breaks from social media

Talking to peers or family members

Limiting exposure

Trying to verify information

Less frequent:

#### **Seeking professional mental-health support**

Physical exercise

Total avoidance of crisis content

These strategies show awareness but also reliance on short-term relief rather than long-term resilience-building.

## Appendix II – Protocol of the Interviews with Youth Workers

This appendix presents the semi-structured interview guide used for the field research with youth workers. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the perceived social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural impacts of crisis-related



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content on young people, and to understand youth workers' professional observations, concerns, and recommended coping strategies.

The following questions were used across all interviews (n = 8). Interviewers were free to ask follow-up questions where relevant.

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Youth Workers

#### 1. Professional Background

From your perspective as a professional, how has the psychosocial development of young people changed over time?

#### 2. Relationship Between Crisis Content and Well-Being

In your opinion, is there a relationship between the consumption of crisis-related content on social media and the social and emotional well-being of today's youth? (Interviewers provided clarification of the terms "social and emotional well-being" and "crisis content" when needed to ensure consistent understanding.)

#### 3. Types of Crisis Content Viewed by Young People

Based on your own experience, what kinds of crisis-related content do young people watch on social media? Have young people ever shared such content with you or discussed it with you?

#### 4. Emotional and Social Problems Observed

What social or emotional problems can you identify in young people relating to crisis-related content on social media?

#### 5. Influence on Concerns and Future Outlook

Based on your experience, how does crisis-related content on social media influence young people's concerns and their outlook on the future?

#### 6. Recommended Coping Strategies

Based on your experience, what coping strategies would you recommend to young people dealing with crisis-related stress or anxiety?

#### 7. Managing Exposure to Negative Content

What strategies do you know or use to help interrupt or manage persistent negative content?



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## 8. Positive Effects of Social Media During Crises

In your experience, what positive effects can social media have during times of crisis? (Possible aspects include: direct communication with friends or family, sense of community, emotional or social support, sharing help, participating in charity work, access to practical information, science communication on crisis topics, relaxation or entertainment such as humorous videos.)



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