

ENYA 2021 Blog

On the 1st and 2nd of July, alongside Mads as well as our ENYA coordinators Sophie and Rhian, I joined the ENYA Forum for 2021. ENYA is the European Network of Young Advisors and this meeting brought together young people from countries across Europe to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on children's rights and form recommendations for governments on what should be done to protect these rights. Although we were not able to meet in person in sunny Malta, it was still surreal to see the efforts made to ensure representatives from across the continent were able to come together to share what had been months of discussions in and amongst their own countries.

The work behind ENYA in Wales started months prior to this forum meeting as part of our Youth Advisory panel to the children's commissioner in Wales came together to work on our own Welsh recommendations. Our Wales group met fortnightly and initially spent time getting to know each other and getting to know 'ENYA' and what the purpose of this network is. We were all so impressed and excited by the network and the opportunities it provides for young people to present their thoughts on various issues related to children's rights.

We gradually began to build our own recommendations on this year's theme of COVID-19's impact and we focused on sharing experiences, opinions and learning from each other to help formulate recommendations that represented all of our thoughts and hopes. We voted to agree on what topics we felt were most important to use which included Education, Healthcare and Families and from there, we created recommendations based on how these areas need to be improved with regards to children's rights during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

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This whole experience was really inspiring, and we all felt passionately about the recommendations we decided were essential to be presented. As only two representatives could attend the ENYA forum with other regions and countries, we decided to elect two members of our Wales team by each giving a speech on why we would like to attend. I felt really touched and happy that my peers voted for me to attend, and I was really happy to be able to voice all of their thoughts on the topic.

Although the ENYA forum itself only lasted two days, the experience was packed and unforgettable. Prior to the forum, we finalised our recommendations and then over the two days, we did workshops on each subtopic and worked with other countries to identify which recommendations we shared and prioritised and which should be sent off to be addressed by governing bodies. It was amazing to see the work other countries had done and the shared passion that existed amongst us all. We also managed to have plenty of fun along the way with various escape rooms and even a virtual tour of Malta's archaeological site of the Hypogeum. I enjoyed my time doing ENYA thoroughly and a huge thanks to Rhian, Sophie and everyone else who helped set up such a fun experience.

Saiba Ahuja

