

The cost of changing the world: New study shows that young social innovators in Europe have massive positive impact, yet struggle with high levels of burnout and financial insecurity.

Berlin, December 10th, 2021 - A report by "The Possibilists", an alliance of 16 of the world's largest youth social innovation networks, found that only 1 in 5 young social innovators in Europe can compensate themselves for their work on their ventures, with over 60% having experienced burnout. Entrepreneurs from underserved communities experience these challenges more acutely.

Key findings from the report include:

- 58% of young social innovators in Europe cannot compensate themselves beyond a symbolic amount for their work on their initiatives. Women are 15% less likely to be able to compensate themselves financially compared to men.
- 78% of young changemakers have other ongoing professional commitments in addition to their initiatives, often as a way to finance themselves.
- 61% reported having felt completely burned out, to the point of needing external help. Burnout levels are highest among women (65%) and among innovators who identify as part of a marginalized group (65%).

"Young changemakers and activists are resilient, innovative and intrinsically motivated to change the world and improve the lives of others. But, in doing so, they are risking their own wellbeing and financial security. As a society, we need to rethink the expectations we place on youth and better support young people who dedicate their lives to social and environmental causes," says Nick McGill, Co-Founder & Managing Director at ChangemakerXchange, the umbrella organization that hosts *The Possibilists*.

Key recommendations from The Possibilists Alliance include:

- Governments and grant makers should provide more funding to youth to ensure their personal financial stability, as well as that of their ventures.
- Support networks should offer wellbeing support and mental health programming, and grant making organizations should avoid placing additional or unnecessary pressure and demands on young social innovators.
- Policymakers should give young social innovators a seat at the table by facilitating access to decision-makers and grant young social innovators access to places of power and influence.

"Young social innovators can play a key role in building digital, inclusive and sustainable economies that work for everyone. But this study clearly shows that much more needs to be done to help them overcome significant barriers, such as access to capital, skills and support networks. These insights have enabled us to better understand how we can be most helpful. Today we're excited to be committing €20 million in cash funding through the Google.org Social Innovation Fund to support underserved social entrepreneurs across Europe".

~ Rowan Barnett, Head of Google.org for Europe, Middle East and Africa.

ENDS

Initiated by ChangemakerXchange, *The Possibilists* is a global alliance of youth communities that are leveraging their resources and networks to improve the living and working conditions for young changemakers. Members of the alliance include Ashoka, ChangemakerXChange, Global Changemakers, Kofi Annan Foundation, MasterPeace, Obama Foundation, One Young World, Peace First, Social Impact Award, Social Shifters, SOS Children's Villages, The Diana Award, Unleash, We Are Family Foundation, Young Sustainable Impact, and Yunus & Youth.

The Possibilists is supported by the SAP Foundation and [Google.org](https://www.google.org).

The study includes 200 respondents from 32 European countries. The most represented countries in the sample are Germany (18%), the UK (14%), Spain (9%), France (8,5%), Romania (8%) and the Netherlands (6%). The report also pays specific attention to the challenges and needs that young social innovators who self-identify as belonging to a marginalized group face in developing their initiatives.

More information is available at: www.thepossibilists.org/europe

Notes

[1] The Report is available [here](#).

[2] Key Findings are available [here](#).

[3] Quotes from young changemakers are available [here](#).

[4] Photos are available [here](#) (action shots) and [here](#) (portraits of young changemakers).

Additional Quotes:

"In order to create inclusive and sustainable solutions we have to overcome the systemic and structural inequality young people who are being marginalized are faced with today. Our societies and economies won't ever really work for all unless everyone is represented in the innovation processes and decisions that shape them." says Matthias Scheffelmeier, Co-Founder & Managing Director at ChangemakerXchange.

"If we want to tackle systemic barriers that impact access to funding, access to growth and learning opportunities, access to influential networks, and so much more, we have to start with understanding just how people have been excluded and impacted by them. A lot of this work is taxing and uncomfortable, because they challenge the status quo and systems and societies in which we've grown up and adapted to. But discomfort is the price we pay for

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growth, progress, and to live a fulfilling life. So let's get uncomfortable!" ~ Binta Jammeh, France, a study participant, young social innovator and co-founder of [Konexio](#).

Examples of solutions from young Europeans:

Some of the most globally acclaimed organizations working for a better society have been founded by young adults. Boyan Slat, the Dutch entrepreneur, founded *The Ocean Cleanup* at the youthful age of 18. Greta Thunberg, is a renowned Swedish activist who started the youth climate protest known as *Fridays for Future* at the age of 15. That protest has grown into a global movement that is challenging world leaders to take immediate action for climate change. Alex Holmes, a teenager in England who after getting bullied himself, founded *Anti-Bullying Ambassadors*, which is now the world's largest anti-bullying initiative. Often pioneers in their sector, these young and ambitious entrepreneurs are applying fresh ways of thinking to some of the world's most pressing problems.

PRESS RELEASE OF GLOBAL REPORT, LAUNCHED IN JUNE 2021

Young changemakers sacrifice their financial security and wellbeing to change the world, new report says

Berlin, June 16 2021 - *The Possibilists*, a new study - the first of its kind - conducted by a global alliance of youth communities, reveals the pressing needs of young changemakers worldwide who dedicate their lives to social and environmental causes.

"Young changemakers are resilient, innovative and intrinsically motivated to change the world and improve the lives of others. But, in doing so, they're sacrificing their wealth and wellbeing. As a society, we need to step up our game and better support young people who dedicate their lives to social and environmental causes," says Nick McGill, Co-Founder & Managing Director at ChangemakerXchange, the umbrella organization that hosts *The Possibilists*.

The study surveyed a diverse group of about 800 young social innovators aged 16-35 from 137 countries who all lead impact-focused initiatives, social businesses, non-profits and campaigns related to every single one of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, from lobbying for the rights of migrant construction workers to supporting sexual violence survivors.

Key findings from the report include:

- Young changemakers are sacrificing their financial security and wellbeing to change the world.
- Financial issues: 66% cannot compensate themselves beyond a token amount for their work on their initiatives (41% not at all), and only 9% can live off their ventures.
- Wellbeing issues: 59% have experienced some degree of burnout since they started work on their initiative.
- 64% feel their work is negatively affected by systemic inequalities.
- The COVID-19 crisis has increased both their capacity and desire to make a change in the world.
- Only 3% have been forced to close down activities due to COVID; the majority are innovating, adapting and responding to the challenge.

"If you want to spark change in the world and demonstrate what's possible, look to the youth for inspiration. The valuable impact that these social entrepreneurs are delivering can be attributed to their fresh perspective; the world has a lot to learn from their ingenuity and perseverance. SAP is proud to support this research, connecting people and information to accelerate solutions for the world's most complex challenges," says Alexandra van der Ploeg, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at SAP.

"Young social innovators can play a key role in helping our societies recover from the pandemic and in building digital, inclusive and sustainable economies that work for everyone. Google.org is proud to support many young changemakers through our programmes and grants. We're also

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delighted to support this important research which shows that so much more can be done to help them overcome significant personal and financial barriers, and provide access to capital, skills and support networks to enable them to tackle some of the world's biggest systemic challenges"

~ Rowan Barnett, Head of Google.org for Europe, Middle East and Africa.

The participants in the study come from the different organizations supporting young changemakers; Ashoka, ChangemakerXChange, Global Changemakers, Kofi Annan Foundation, MasterPeace, Obama Foundation, One Young World, Peace First, Social Impact Award, Social Shifters, SOS Children's Villages, The Diana Award, Unleash, We Are Family Foundation, Young Sustainable Impact, and Yunus & Youth. The Possibilists is supported by the SAP Foundation and Google.org.

The report outlines eight recommendations for organizations to better support changemakers on a personal level and in their work with their initiatives and organizations. Support programs for youth social entrepreneurship need to:

- Focus on young social innovators as people and on their personal needs and not just on their initiatives;
- Ensure the personal financial stability of young social innovators;
- Offer wellbeing support, and avoid placing additional or unnecessary pressure and demands on young social innovators;
- Strengthen the local–international connections of young social innovators and how their work helps to translate global matters into concrete local action;
- Focus on working to reduce systemic inequalities;
- Give young social innovators a seat at the table by facilitating access to decision-makers and grant young social innovators access to places of power and influence.

ENDS

Initiated by ChangemakerXchange, *The Possibilists* is a global alliance of youth communities that are leveraging their resources and networks to improve the conditions for young changemakers. Following the launch event on June 16, *The Possibilists* will kick off an open application process for innovators, leaders, funders, and policymakers from around the world who work on ecosystemic solutions that make it easier for young changemakers to be successful and create impact.

More info at: www.thepossibilists.org

Notes

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