



ResCom - Community Resiliency & Continuity for Youth Affected by Crises & Disasters

Project Reference No: 2023-3-CY02-KA210-YOU-000176655

Field Research Report

December 2024

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A few simple words about ResCom project

<p>What is the ResCom project?</p>	<p>ResCom is a project that helps young people learn how to be ready when disasters happen, like fires, floods, or earthquakes.</p>
<p>Who does the ResCom project help?</p>	<p>ResCom helps young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to be ready in a crisis. • Help others when something bad happens. • Feel better if they have been through something hard.
<p>What does the ResCom project make?</p>	<p>The project makes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A book about how to deal with disasters. • A guide for people who work with young people. • Tips to help people who are sad or hurt. • Lessons so everyone can learn how to help.
<p>Who works together in the ResCom project?</p>	<p>Two groups work together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC from Cyprus. • Poreia Ygeias from Volos, Greece. <p>These groups help young people by using what they know.</p>
<p>What research did the people in the ResCom project do?</p>	<p>The people in the ResCom project asked young people questions in Cyprus and Greece. They asked how they felt and what they did when disasters happened.</p> <p>The young people shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What they were afraid of.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What helped them. • What they need to feel better.
What was different in Cyprus and Greece?	<p>In Cyprus, young people saw fires and earthquakes. They felt fear and stress, but they were not hurt.</p> <p>In Greece, young people saw floods and a train crash. Some of them were both victims and helpers at the same time.</p>
What do young people do in a crisis?	<p>Young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help other people. • Can think of ideas to get out of a hard situation. • Have an important role in crises. •

Introduction to the Project, Partnership & Scope of Research

The ResCom - Community Resiliency & Continuity for Youth Affected by Crises & Disasters project is a transnational initiative funded by the Erasmus+ KA210-YOU programme. The project was developed in response to the increasing frequency and severity of both natural and man-made disasters across Europe and aims to explore how youth are affected by these events, as well as how they can be empowered to become active contributors to community preparedness, recovery, and resilience.

ResCom focuses on strengthening both community resiliency-the ability of a community to recover, adapt and function during adversity-and community continuity-the ongoing capacity to maintain services, cohesion, and well-being after disruptions. At the heart of the project is a commitment to youth as key agents in these processes, not just as recipients of support, but as co-creators of solutions that reflect their lived experiences.

The ResCom project is structured around four primary goals:

1. To raise awareness about disaster risks, crisis management, and emergency preparedness among youth and youth workers;
2. To equip young people and stakeholders with tools and knowledge to support individual and collective resilience;
3. To develop psychosocial and trauma-informed approaches that respond to the emotional and mental health impacts of crises;
4. To foster civic engagement and promote the values of solidarity, responsibility, and inclusion during times of crisis.

Through the project, a set of tools and outputs are being developed, including a Risk, Crisis & Disaster Management Manual for youth, a Guide for Youth Workers, and a Systemic Toolbox for Collective Trauma Management. These materials will be supported by local piloting workshops, dissemination actions, and capacity-building activities.

ResCom is implemented by two partner organizations from Cyprus and Greece:

- The Serendipitous Black Cloud Ltd (SBC) - Based in Cyprus, SBC is a professional organization with expertise in systemic psychotherapy, trauma management, risk and disaster response, and community resilience. SBC coordinates the project and leads the development of the Risk, Crisis & Disaster Management Manual.

- Poreia Ygeias KOINSEP - A social cooperative enterprise based in Volos, Greece, Poreia Ygeias focuses on holistic well-being, psychosocial support, adult education, and inclusion. The organization brings deep experience in mental health, crisis support, and youth engagement, and leads the development of trauma-informed methodologies and piloting activities.

The collaboration combines technical expertise in risk management with grassroots experience in psychosocial recovery and youth empowerment, forming a well-rounded team capable of addressing the complexity of community resiliency from multiple angles.

To ensure that the project tools are relevant and grounded in real needs, the two partner organizations conducted national field research in early 2024. This research focused on gathering lived experiences, perceptions, and lessons from

young people and youth workers who had been exposed to disasters or critical events in recent years.

The aim of the research was to explore:

- How youth experienced and coped with natural and man-made disasters;
- What emotional, psychological, and social consequences followed;
- What support systems (formal and informal) were available and accessed;
- How young people viewed their own roles and resilience capacities;
- What gaps existed in terms of preparedness, education, and response;
- What youth workers and volunteers needed in order to be more effective and protected when supporting others.

Each partner conducted research in its own national context-SBC in Cyprus, and Poreia Ygeias in Greece-through a combination of focus groups, questionnaires, and facilitated dialogue. Special care was taken to ensure that participants included survivors, volunteers, youth workers, university students, and individuals from vulnerable or marginalized communities. The result is two rich national reports, which this unified report now brings together into one synthesis.

This unified report aims to:

- Summarize the findings from both countries;
- Identify common threads and notable differences;
- Reflect on shared challenges and opportunities;
- Lay the foundation for the next phase of the project-developing tailored resources that are rooted in the voices of young people and the real gaps they face.

National Contexts - Crisis Landscape in Cyprus and Greece

Understanding the different disaster landscapes in Cyprus and Greece is essential for interpreting how youth in each setting experience, process, and respond to crises. While both countries face increasing threats linked to climate change and infrastructure challenges, each has its own disaster typology, political structures, and cultural responses that shape young people's experiences.

Cyprus is frequently exposed to natural hazards such as earthquakes, wildfires, floods, and coastal storms. Participants reported experiencing wildfires, especially the 2023 Ayia Napa event, earthquakes, floods, and even robberies or violent incidents. Some also shared experiences of disasters while abroad. These events were remembered more for their emotional aftershocks-financial anxiety, persistent fear, and long-term psychological strain-than for visible destruction. No participants reported physical injury or death. Still, the impact was internalized and prolonged.



In contrast, Greek participants described catastrophic, large-scale disasters, notably the 2023 floods in Thessaly and the Tempi rail disaster. These events caused life-threatening situations, severe disruption of daily life, and deep emotional and moral distress. Participants not only lost access to housing, water, electricity, and education, but also reported witnessing death, engaging in rescue efforts, and carrying their own families to safety. The disasters were perceived not only as environmental events but as systemic failures: failures of preparedness, infrastructure, and public accountability.



A consistent theme in both contexts was the critical role of youth in their communities. In Cyprus, young people often acted as emotional anchors and informal coordinators. In Greece, they were both responders and survivors-rescuing others while coping with trauma themselves. This dual role added emotional complexity and highlighted the essential, yet often invisible, contributions of youth in times of crisis.

Methodology and Participant Profile

Both partner organizations conducted qualitative field research using a mix of focus groups and structured questionnaires. The aim was to capture diverse perspectives from youth and those who support them-such as youth workers, educators, mental health professionals, and volunteers.

In Cyprus, the research was carried out by SBC using a mixed-methods approach. A total of 16 participants were involved, including both youth aged 18 to 30 and youth workers or other stakeholders of varied ages. Gender distribution was evenly balanced. All participants had experienced at least one natural or man-made disaster, either in Cyprus or abroad. The events ranged from wildfires and earthquakes to robberies, pandemics, and floods. Notably, three participants had experienced multiple disasters. The focus group discussions highlighted

emotional responses, readiness levels, and unmet support needs.

In Greece, Poreia Ygeias facilitated two focus group sessions involving 10 participants. The group included young people, youth workers, a person with a disability, and individuals from different professional and social backgrounds. All had been affected by the 2023 Thessaly floods, and many also by the Tempi rail disaster. Several participants were both survivors and first responders, including volunteers who helped evacuate neighbors or distribute supplies. This dual role—living through the crisis while supporting others—was a key theme in the Greek data.

Across both countries, the participants offered rich, emotionally grounded reflections. Their contributions reflected a strong sense of community, frustration with institutional responses, and a desire for more structured support tailored to youth.

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Some simple words about the answers by young people in Cyprus and Greece

<p>What kind of disasters did young people and youth workers live through?</p>	<p>Young people and the people who help them talked about many disasters they have lived through. These disasters were different in each country.</p> <p>In Cyprus, people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talked about fires, earthquakes, floods, and pandemics. • Talked about fear, stress, and worry about the future. • Also talked about some violent events. <p>The disasters in Cyprus did not kill many people.</p> <p>In Greece, people who lived in Thessaly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Went through floods and a train accident. • Lost loved ones. <p>The disasters in Greece killed many people. Everyone was very sad for a long time.</p>
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<p>Disasters don't affect everyone the same way. The first hours after a disaster are very hard.</p>	<p>In Cyprus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People were not in great danger. • But they felt stress and worry. • They saw fires or earthquakes and had to leave their homes, but they were not hurt. <p>In Greece:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People were in more danger. • They saw floods and big damage. • Some had to help others while they were also in danger themselves.
<p>Disasters can hurt the mind, even if no one is physically hurt.</p>	<p>In Cyprus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People felt stress and fear about the future. • They were not hurt, but they felt like something bad could happen again. <p>In Greece:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People had mental health problems. • They saw people hurt or killed or were in danger themselves. • They felt panic, sadness, and guilt. Their feelings were much stronger
<p>Where did young people in Cyprus and Greece find help?</p>	<p>In both Cyprus and Greece, young people said there was no money or help from the government.</p> <p>They had to rely a lot on help from their friends and family.</p> <p>In Cyprus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were government services,

	<p>but young people didn't know how to find or use them.</p> <p>In Greece:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no working services from the government. • Young people had to organize the help by themselves.
<p>What did the youth workers say?</p>	<p>Youth workers in Cyprus and Greece felt very strong emotions. They were under a lot of pressure.</p> <p>They had to help young people, but at the same time they felt sad and scared too.</p> <p>In Cyprus, youth workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped calm and inform others. • But felt very tired. • And didn't get the support they needed. <p>In Greece, youth workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the first to arrive after the disaster. • But they had to hide their feelings to stay strong for others.
<p>Young people in both countries had similar experiences. But there were also differences</p>	<p>In both Cyprus and Greece:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone felt bad feelings, even if they were not hurt. • Young people said the government didn't help them. • They said friends and family helped the most. <p>But there were differences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Cyprus, disasters were smaller but happened again and again.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Greece, disasters were bigger, and many people died.
What is the conclusion?	It is very important to know how to help young people deal with disasters.

Comparative Analysis of Findings

Section A: Types of Disasters Experienced

The youth and youth workers who participated in the ResCom field research described a range of disaster experiences shaped by both geographic realities and socio-political conditions. These narratives reveal not only the types of crises encountered, but also how they were experienced, internalized, and remembered.

While both countries reported exposure to natural and man-made disasters, the intensity, frequency, and collective nature of those events varied significantly—shaping different perceptions of risk, response, and responsibility.

In Cyprus, participants described a range of disasters that included wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and pandemics, with additional references to robberies, violent incidents, and terrorist attacks experienced abroad. These events were remembered not for their dramatic visuals, but for their emotional aftershocks: financial anxiety, fear of recurrence, and prolonged hypervigilance.

In contrast, Greek participants—primarily from Thessaly—had recently endured two large-scale and highly traumatic events: the Daniel and Elias floods and the Tempi rail accident. These were not abstract or distant events; they disrupted every layer of daily life, affecting housing, education, employment, and safety, while also generating intense emotional responses.

One particularly striking difference lies in the presence of human casualties. The disasters reported in Cyprus, while serious, were not associated with mass death or direct loss of human life. In contrast, the Greek participants were deeply

affected by mass casualties, particularly the Tempi rail disaster. This distinction suggests that while both groups faced real hardship, the emotional landscape of disasters involving human loss tends to be heavier, more complex, and more public.

The findings confirm that disaster experience among youth is not limited to a single type of threat, and that both natural and human-made crises contribute to the emotional and practical challenges they face.

Theme	Cyprus	Greece
Most Frequent Disasters	Wildfires, earthquakes	Floods (Daniel & Elias), Tempi rail accident
Other Disaster Types	Robberies, terrorism, pandemics, disasters abroad	Fires, storms, social/economic disruptions
Disaster Scale	Varied, some recurring but localized	Catastrophic, region-wide, highly disruptive
Emotional Impact	Persistent fear of recurrence, stress, and alertness	Shock, grief, moral burden, long-term instability
Experience Type	Mix of personal and collective experiences	Shared collective trauma with dual survivor/rescuer roles

Section B: Immediate (Direct) Impacts

Disasters do not affect everyone in the same way, even in the same place. The immediate aftermath of a disaster often determines how people remember and respond to it long-term. Youth from Cyprus and Greece described the very first hours and days following disaster exposure, shedding light on their personal sense of danger, disruption, and emotional state.

In Cyprus, most participants did not report being in immediate physical danger. Their experiences were marked more by disorientation, temporary evacuations, and emotional stress than physical harm. Some reported being woken up in the night by earthquakes, feeling confused during wildfires, or having to temporarily leave their homes due to police recommendations. There was no record of hospitalizations, injuries, or direct loss, but many described being shaken,

stressed, and emotionally drained in the aftermath.

In contrast, the Greek participants-especially those in Thessaly-experienced immediate danger and large-scale systemic collapse. Some had to carry children through floodwaters, evacuate homes without clear evacuation orders, or operate in areas with no power, drinking water, or transportation. In addition to physical threat, they also faced emotional pressure from having to help others while being equally affected themselves.

This contrast shows how direct impact is not only about physical exposure, but also about the ability to act, recover, and understand what's happening in real-time.

Theme	Cyprus	Greece
Physical Danger	Low - no immediate life threat reported	High - multiple participants in life-threatening situations
Property Damage	Minor to moderate	Extensive - homes, vehicles, infrastructure
Power/Water Loss	Occasionally disrupted	Severe and prolonged
Emotional State	Shock, alertness, fear of recurrence	Trauma, panic, emotional numbness
Role Conflict	Less prominent	Central - survivors who were also responders
Disruption of Services	Minimal to moderate	Total suspension of normal life

Section C: Emotional and Psychological Effects

Disasters leave emotional traces long after the physical signs have faded. For young people in both Cyprus and Greece, the most enduring consequences were psychological. Youth reported anxiety, fear of recurrence, loss of focus, and emotional exhaustion, even when no physical harm occurred.

In Cyprus, the emotional impacts were subtle but persistent. Many described anxiety during weather changes, difficulty sleeping, and a general sense of vulnerability. The lack of visible damage or injury made their feelings harder to validate, even for themselves.

In Greece, emotional responses were intense and often traumatic. Many participants had witnessed or narrowly escaped life-threatening events. They described panic, guilt, grief, and burnout-especially those who also supported

others during the disaster. The psychological toll of being both a survivor and a caregiver was a common thread, compounded by the lack of professional mental health support.

These emotional burdens were often carried silently, especially among youth workers, who felt the need to appear composed and resilient for the sake of others.

Section D: Resource Availability and Systemic Gaps

Across both countries, participants described relying heavily on informal support networks. Formal systems were perceived as either unresponsive (Greece) or inaccessible and poorly communicated (Cyprus).

In Cyprus, some services were available, but few youth knew how to access them. Psychological support was not always advertised or youth-friendly, and practical help like emergency kits or clear evacuation instructions were rarely seen.

In Greece, the perception was more severe: systems collapsed entirely. Youth had to organize food distribution, emotional support, and rescue operations themselves. They filled critical gaps, but at great emotional cost. The absence of clear roles, communication, or professional backup left many feeling abandoned by the institutions meant to protect them.

Both contexts highlight a strong need for systems that recognize youth as active participants and support them with clear, accessible resources.

Theme	Cyprus	Greece
Existence of Formal Services	Yes, but poorly communicated or perceived as inaccessible	Present in theory, but functionally absent during crisis
Youth Awareness of Resources	Low - uncertainty about where to go or who to contact	High - but services were not functional or not trusted
Community-Based Support	Main source of emotional and logistical help	Primary-and in many cases, only-response mechanism

Government/NGO Role	Limited engagement; some services existed but felt irrelevant	Minimal visibility; response seen as insufficient or performative
Impact on Youth	Frustration, reliance on peers, emotional strain	Burnout, moral injury, loss of trust, sustained exhaustion

Section E: Youth Workers and Volunteers - Navigating Role Conflict and Burnout

A powerful cross-cutting theme was the emotional toll on youth workers and volunteers who were expected to provide care, coordination, and leadership during crises-often while being equally affected.

In Cyprus, youth workers provided reassurance, helped distribute information, and coordinated informal support, often without training or backup. Many described emotional fatigue and the difficulty of balancing their own stress while being a calming presence for others.

In Greece, the experience was even more intense. Youth workers and volunteers acted as first responders-rescuing people, distributing aid, and leading coordination efforts amid disaster. They often suppressed their own emotional responses to “stay strong” for others. The lack of psychological debriefing or professional acknowledgment led to burnout, moral injury, and a sense of invisibility.

In both countries, youth workers asked for tools to protect their well-being while fulfilling their roles. They expressed a need for emotional training, structured reflection, and spaces to process what they had been through.

Section F: Shared Themes, Divergences, and Implications for Future Tools

The field research revealed several shared experiences across both countries, as well as important differences. These insights will guide the structure and content of the ResCom Manual and related tools.

Shared themes included:

- Emotional responses were universal, even without physical damage.
- Youth felt unsupported or excluded from formal systems.
- Peer networks were the strongest form of support.
- Youth workers and volunteers experienced emotional strain and burnout.

Key divergences included:

- Cyprus faced smaller-scale but repetitive events with less institutional breakdown.
- Greece experienced catastrophic crises with large-scale casualties and infrastructure collapse.
- Greek participants had deeper feelings of systemic betrayal and visible trauma.

These differences highlight the importance of flexible, inclusive tools that can be adapted to varying levels of crisis exposure. The ResCom Manual will aim to validate emotional experiences, build basic crisis literacy, strengthen community ties, and equip youth with both preventive and reactive strategies.



Conclusions and Next Steps - Laying the Groundwork for the ResCom Manual

The stories, insights, and reflections gathered from young people, youth workers, and volunteers in both Cyprus and Greece form the heart of this report. What they shared was not simply a record of what went wrong during moments of crisis—it was a quiet, powerful testimony of how young people think, feel, act, and

carry others through disruption. Their experiences revealed gaps in preparedness, shortages in support, and emotional tolls that often go unseen. But they also revealed community strength, solidarity, and an instinctive drive to help, organize, and recover-together.

These conversations were never meant to stay as notes on a page. They were the starting point for something practical and lasting. The next step for the ResCom partnership is to take what has been shared and translate it into tools that youth can use in real life. This is where the ResCom Manual on Risk, Crisis and Disaster Management for Youth begins.

The manual will be written not from above, but from alongside—from the same place where these stories came from. It will introduce young people to the basic terms and concepts they need to understand what’s happening around them when a disaster strikes. It will explain, in simple words and relatable examples, what risk is, what crisis looks like, how disaster unfolds—and most importantly, how people and communities recover.

It will also include a section on mental health first aid—offering small, doable ways to care for ourselves and for others during moments of fear, shock, or confusion. These won’t be clinical tools, but human ones: ideas for staying grounded, checking in with peers, and knowing when and how to ask for help.

From what participants described, it’s clear that community plays a central role in survival and recovery—especially when official services are slow to respond or not present at all. For this reason, the manual will also explore the ideas of community resiliency and community continuity—not as buzzwords, but as ways of thinking about how we keep going together when everything else stops.

It will offer practical tips for how youth can help strengthen their communities before a crisis happens and how they can build connections between people and systems—between volunteers, youth groups, local authorities, and civil protection services. The goal is not to make youth carry more than they already do, but to make sure they are never left out of the conversation again.

There will also be dedicated content for youth workers and volunteers, recognising the emotional demands they face and offering guidance on how to balance care for others with care for themselves. This will include simple tools for reflection, setting limits, and maintaining energy over the long term.

The manual won't offer every answer. But it will offer a place to start. It will give language to experiences that often go unnamed, and offer structure to instincts that already exist. And above all, it will be something young people can reach for-not just during a crisis, but in building a future where crisis doesn't catch them alone.

Acknowledgement

We want to close this report by thanking every young person, youth worker, and volunteer who took the time to share their story with us. Your honesty, your willingness to speak openly, and your trust gave shape and meaning to this entire process. This report-and the manual that follows-would not exist without you. Your voices will remain at the center of everything we do next.

Annex: Context of Referenced Disasters and Events

Understanding the events referenced in this report is important for those unfamiliar with the local contexts of Greece and Cyprus. The disasters described by participants are not just background, but they deeply shaped their emotional responses, social actions, and trust in institutions. Below is a brief overview of the key events mentioned throughout the report.

Tempi Rail Disaster (Greece, 2023)

On February 28, 2023, a deadly head-on collision occurred between a passenger train and a freight train near Tempí, in Central Greece. The accident claimed the lives of 57 people, many of whom were university students. The tragedy sparked national mourning and mass protests, revealing longstanding issues in transportation safety and public infrastructure. Participants from Greece spoke about the emotional impact of this event even if they were not physically present—citing grief, anger, and a deep sense of injustice.

Daniel & Elias Floods (Greece, 2023)

In September and October 2023, two successive storms: Daniel and Elias, struck the Thessaly region in central Greece. These events led to catastrophic flooding, with entire villages submerged, homes destroyed, and basic infrastructure like roads, electricity, and clean water systems rendered inoperable. The floods displaced thousands and were seen by many as a failure of disaster preparedness. Participants from the region spoke of being trapped, rescuing others, and rebuilding communities without external help.

Ayia Napa Wildfires (Cyprus, 2023)

During the summer of 2023, Cyprus faced a series of wildfires, including a significant event near Ayia Napa. Although no casualties were reported, the fires caused widespread fear, evacuations, and damage to natural landscapes. The incident prompted concern about the country's ability to manage increasingly intense fire seasons and underscored youth fears around safety and environmental change. Participants mentioned how even temporary displacement had lasting emotional effects.

Earthquakes in Cyprus and Abroad

Several participants in Cyprus shared experiences of earthquakes both on the island and while traveling. Though often moderate in strength, these tremors caused nighttime panic, confusion, and evacuations. Even without destruction, the unpredictability and emotional strain of earthquakes left participants feeling vulnerable and alert.

Other Events (Robberies, Violent Incidents, and Disasters Abroad)

Some participants from Cyprus also reported experiencing or witnessing robberies and violence, particularly while abroad. These were perceived not as traditional disasters, but as traumatic, high-stress experiences that disrupted their sense of safety. In the context of disaster preparedness and emotional recovery, these events revealed how “crisis” can be highly personal—even when not collectively experienced.