



COVID-19: VOICES FROM UKRAINE



In face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Scort has reached out to Young Coaches all over the world to give them a platform to share their experiences and challenges.

Ukraine, 07. July 2020

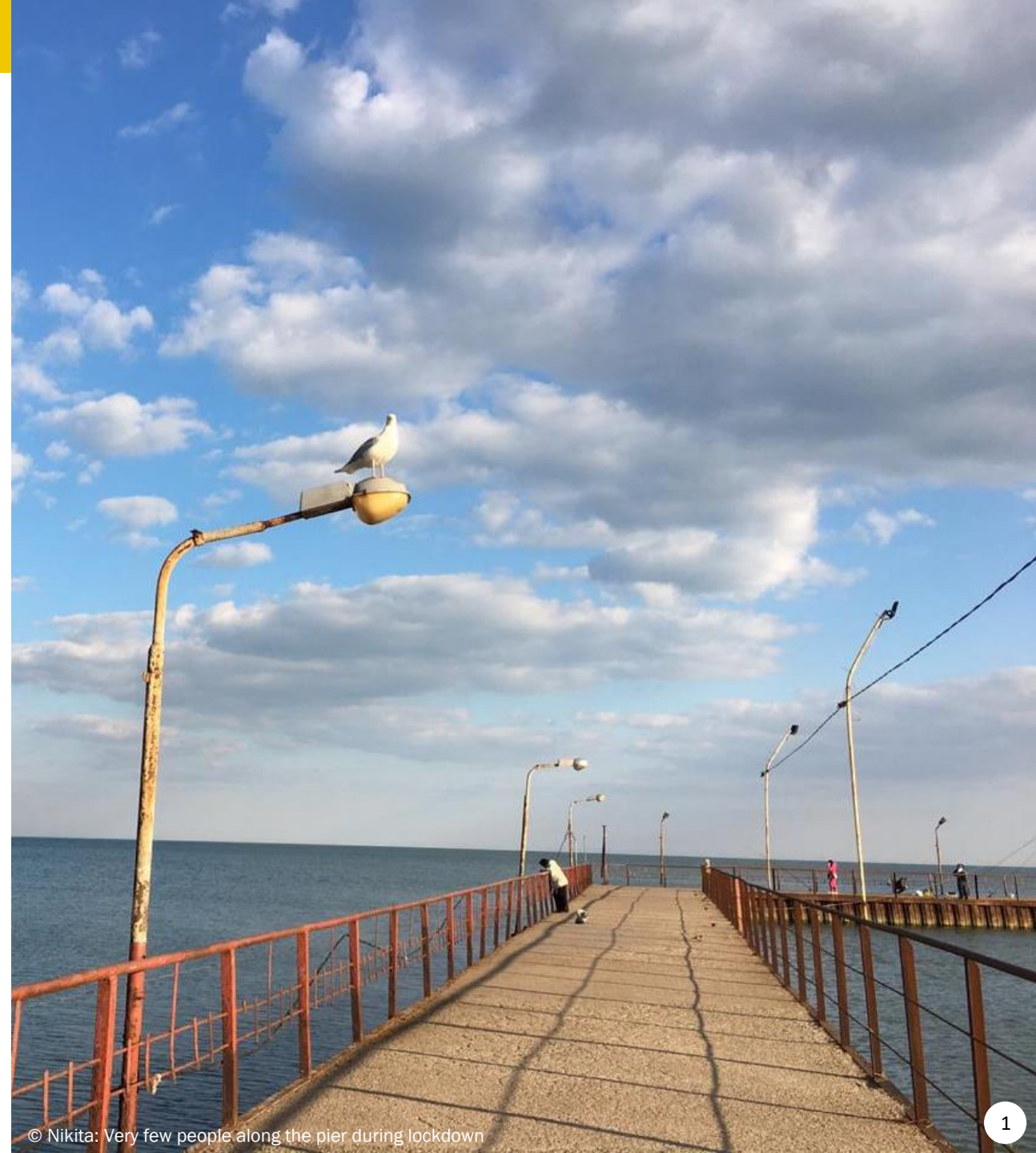
Compared to other European countries, Ukraine has reported relatively low COVID-19 numbers. Nevertheless, the lockdown had an emotional and economical effect on the citizens of Ukraine; especially those who had already been impacted by the conflict. Three Ukrainian Young Coaches who completed the FCSA Young Coach Education in 2017, tell us about their experiences and challenges during the pandemic.

“The schools and educational system in general moved from offline to online education pretty well”, Nikita tells us, when talking about life in the middle of a pandemic. Since then, some measures have been lifted as the number of reported COVID-19 cases have been relatively low compared to other European countries. Nevertheless, Ukrainians had been living under a lockdown for over two months, which has not left them unaffected. Now, the lockdown has been lifted but wearing masks in public and quarantining if necessary is still mandatory.

The economic consequences of the lockdown are a main concern of all three Young Coaches: “A lot of people and families live from month to month and salary to salary”, Oleksandr, a Young Coach from Ivano-Frankivsk in Western Ukraine, tells us. The first month of the lockdown was financially not an issue but after that, he does not know how people were able to get through the following months. The government does not have the capacity to offer financial support to people impacted by the pandemic. The economic concerns are echoed by Nikita who explains “many people have already lost their jobs and, most likely, more people will lose their jobs in the near future, which will affect the income of many families.”

After the Crimean Peninsula was annexed by Russia in early 2014, an armed conflict broke out and has caused over 14,000 fatalities, wounded over 27,000 people, and left more than 1.5 million people displaced. This makes Ukraine the country with the ninth largest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

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Nikita lives close to this zone in Eastern Ukraine and according to him, “internally displaced persons are one of the [most] vulnerable categories of people living in Ukraine.” After being forced to leave their homes, they had difficulties finding new jobs and often had to settle with low-income employment. Based on this, Nikita worries that IDPs will be the first to face unemployment and homelessness during this pandemic.

Despite the challenges, Ukrainians are resilient. During the last few months, Oleksandr has seen a lot of solidarity. He and other volun-

teers decided to take action and support those in need, as he belongs to the lucky ones who still have an income. Oleksandr – who is a lawyer by profession – can continue to earn a living whilst working from home. As a result, him and his peers distributed food and essentials to children from low-income families and to some of the staff of the *League of Tolerance*, an NGO where Oleksandr also works at. Nikita also experienced this sense of solidarity: “In general, people are feeling that they are together in this crisis” and supporting those in need is essential during this time.



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Alexandr, a Ukrainian Young Coach who currently lives in Gelendjik in Russia, has been without work during the pandemic. Nonetheless, he has continued to remain positive and, where possible, is organising activities in small groups for children and adults. For fun, Alexandr has also organised board games and drawing exercises. He stresses the importance of being physically and mentally active whilst still following government guidelines: “A lot of people are experiencing stress and anxiety, so we are trying to stay active during the current situation. As for me, physical, mental, and emotional activities can help us relieve this accumulated stress”.

© Alexandr: Board games to stay mentally fit

He recognises that for the children it is more difficult because they do not understand why they have to stay inside all the time.

In Ivano-Frankivsk, Oleksandr is creating an online course for physical educators and he uses this time to plan ahead. Although this is by no means easy, given that he also has children to look after at home. For him, however, having physical meetings with the children he coaches has only just become possible, provided social distancing is maintained. As an alternative to physical meetings, Oleksandr goes through the parents: He set up a group chat on Viber and is sharing videos



© Oleksandr: Socially distanced training



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and challenges for the kids to stay healthy. He also shares inspiring interviews with football players who are themselves faced with new restrictions. But ultimately, the kids miss playing outside. Every week they ask when they can go and play football again.

We thank all our Young Coaches for their ongoing commitment and work during this time! #TogetherWeInspire

For more information on the project in Ukraine: [click here](#).



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