

# European & International Cities Virtual Student Exchange: The Covid Effect:

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# Introduction:

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The theme of our international collaborative group project is **'The Covid Effect'**.

This project covers the following sub-themes:

1. The pandemic's role in contributing to positives and/or long-lasting changes in our communities.
2. The Green Impact in our communities as a result of the pandemic (Negative/Positive)
3. Online Communities – Can you create a sense of community and bring people together as a team whilst only communicating virtually?
4. Has the pandemic changed the mindset of Employers?
5. How has the media coverage of the pandemic in your country / community shaped your understanding, views and perception of it?

# Meeting 4: Has the pandemic resulted in any positives and/or long-lasting changes in your community?

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## Canada:

- The pandemic has brought more awareness regarding local support for local businesses.
- Local businesses, community members and politicians have come together to promote one another and keep the local economy going during lockdowns and restrictions.
- The pandemic has allowed my community to come together, remain informed and show support for global demonstrations that have happened from 2020 to now (ie: BLM, Indigenous Rights, Asian Hate etc.)

## Russia:

The pandemic has definitely increased the level of people's anxiety. It also caused financial problems in most families especially in the regions. While many businesses have closed others have become very successful and profitable due to the pandemic. Besides, a lot of new great services which make our lives much easier appeared. Finally, I want to believe that people are more careful about their health now.

## England:

- Some families have had the opportunity to grow stronger connections and learn more about each other whilst quarantining.
- Online school has impacted student's mental health and made it difficult for student's to study due to lack of resources and accessibility to technology.
- Communities have come together to commemorate the national effort of NHS (National Healthcare System) staff in treating Coronavirus patients.
- Scientists have collaborated within communities and internationally to create a vaccine. They have also communicated science to the public to spread awareness about Coronavirus and how to prevent spread.

# Meeting 4: Has there been a Green Impact in your community as a result of the pandemic?

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## Canada:

- During the start of the pandemic there was reduced air pollution due to remote work. Commuting was less prevalent therefore there was less traffic during the week.
- Sustaining and conserving nature has gained importance due to more people going on local walks and finding trails within their cities.
- There has been more waste due to more takeout orders from restaurants and single use plastics since hygiene and sanitization are prioritized.
- More litter is apparent in public spaces and conservation areas.
- There was been a rise in online shopping and amazon orders resulting in more plastic waste from packaging.

## Russia:

- Air pollution was reduced because of the lockdown. However, the difference wasn't great.
- Consumption of plastic has increased due to the rise of online shopping, take outs and products delivery.

## England:

During the pandemic, students and members within the Nottingham community were becoming more conscious of their unsustainable habits and actively researched ways to reduce their contribution to Global Warming. Students across Nottingham like myself actively attended Carbon Literacy Training to learn more about how to reduce carbon emissions individually and collectively within a community. We are developing sustainable habits such as reducing plastic and food waste, recycling and switching to cleaner fuels. Communities in Nottingham are becoming increasingly conscious of their carbon emissions and use of unsustainable materials. They are a key part of Nottingham's ambitious plan to be the first carbon neutral city in the UK with a target of net zero emissions by 2028.

## Meeting 5: Is it possible to create a sense of inclusive community that brings people together whilst only communicating virtually?

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### Canada:

- With the use of video/remote meeting platforms like Zoom and Microsoft teams like minded people can come together (like this virtual exchange.)
- Being forced to connect remotely and virtually has allowed for more international connections to be built since travelling is not a factor.
- The growing popularity of virtual connections may be the start of more schools offering virtual exchanges like NTU's to give students various opportunities to grow their network and meet fellow students from across the globe.

### Russia:

Yes, it is. Our exchange program is a great example. However, I believe it depends on a person because a lot of students feel bad about online-education. It's more difficult to express emotions, to debate and to concentrate. Obviously, online-meetings will never change personal communication.

### England:

Students can collaborate and develop their cross-cultural communication skills through attending and hosting virtual international meetings with students in different countries on platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams. Through using this medium, students can learn about other cultures whilst also collaborating on international projects. As part of the European and International Cities Virtual Exchange (EICVSE), we are all working together on 'The Covid Effect' project despite being in different regions of the world. We have fostered an inclusive international community solely by virtual communication via platforms such as MS Teams and Instagram and yet have used this project as an opportunity to learn about each other's cultures, English, Russian, Canadian in the comfort of our own home without needing to travel.

## Meeting 5: Has the pandemic changed the mindset of Employers?

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### Russia, Canada, England:

- Employers are more open to work life balance arrangements.
- Supporting the mental health of employees and creating initiatives targeting isolation.
- Awareness of employee accessibility and equity.
- Access to technology, internet connection, remote office spaces.
- Accessibility for those with disabilities (i.e. closed captioning for those needing hearing accommodations).

Verdict: Employers must be reactive, adaptive and innovative.

## Meeting 6: How has the media coverage of the pandemic in your country/ community shaped your understanding, views and perception of it?

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### Canada:

- News channels highlighted demonstration groups who were opposed to lockdowns and pandemic rules, dividing some communities due to their beliefs.
- The media gave the public relevant and recent statistics on the pandemic, but also used numbers to "scare" people into being hyper cautious.
- Triggered fear amongst some Canadians and "cave syndrome"/anxieties in others.

### Russia:

Older generations got the information from the TV and federal channels. Meanwhile young people used different independent sources to stay informed. It caused misunderstanding and confrontation in the country.

### England:

- Increased release of science articles and science communication to inform the public of the coronavirus characteristics, appearance and symptoms.
- Occasional fearmongering in the news.
- Confusion in communication of lockdown updates and what they mean in terms of rules, regulations and social distancing.
- Public have been well informed on Covid regulations and symptoms e.g. hand washing.





Lace Market



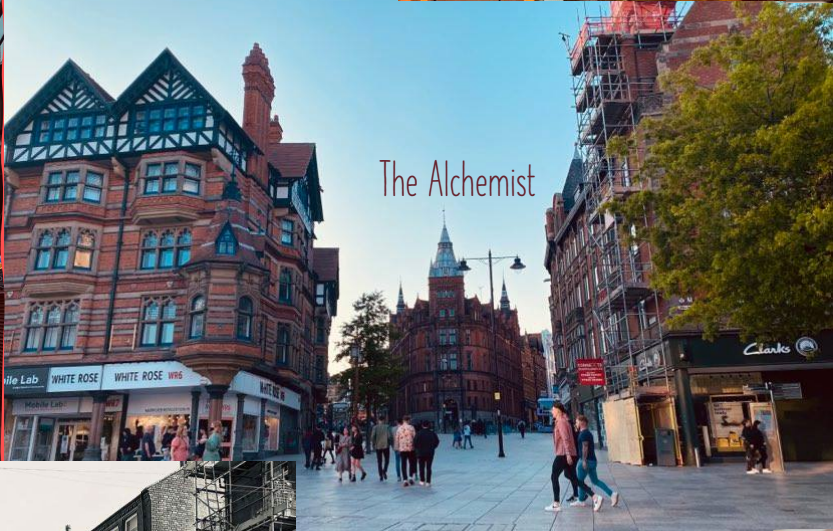
Old Market Square



Victoria Centre



Wollaton park



The Alchemist



Hockley



NTU Waverley Building



Nottingham City Centre, Old Market Square





# Dysert et al, Ontario, Canada (Cottage Country)



# Toronto, Ontario, Canada (City)







# Krasnodar

