

Politics Debate Club

CrashClubDebate



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Introduction

Crash Club Debate is a politics debating club where we, a group of 15 fifth formers, discuss current affairs, political and social issues. Over the past few weeks we have held virtual debates through Google meet. At the beginning of each week we chose a topic that interests all members of the club. We then have time to research our topic so that we are prepared to bring our points to the table when the debate begins.

At the beginning of each meeting we take a quick vote before the discussions begin to see whether members are for or against the motion.

In our discussions we encourage everyone to contribute through stating opinions, outlining ideas or hopes for a future idealistic world, responding to others points or asking questions. Ms Duggan mediates the debate and offers us advice on how to strengthen our points as well as providing some research on the topics.

Finally, we vote a second time at the end of the debate to see if members have been swayed by others' arguments.

So far we have discussed the Covid-19 pandemic from the viewpoint of our chosen countries, hopes for a post-pandemic world, should juveniles be tried as adults and the legalisation of all drugs and the morality of abortion.

The origin of Crash Course Debate Club

The "crashcoursedebateclub" was set up the club in the midst of this global pandemic. Originally Raphaella Ihuoma's idea, it quickly became a team effort with Éile Ní Chianáin, Sinead Cleary and Sveva Ciofani. We were keen to discuss and make sense of what was going on around us. We realised that when we spoke with our peers at St Columba's we learnt new things and were influenced by what others had to say, sometimes to the point of reversing our initial opinion on a topic. This is why we thought it would be a good idea to establish an official club.

Raphaella sent out emails to teachers who would help establish this club and asked the Warden for permission. They were all in full support of my idea. Ms. Duggan and Raphaella decided it would be a good idea to start a virtual discussion while the school campus was closed, so we started meeting via Google Hangout. Sveva Ciofani, Éile Ní Chianáin and Sinead and Raphaella Ihuoma gathered the initial thirteen Fifth Formers (the number has now grown to sixteen) and things started from there. If YOU would like to join our weekly discussions, we will be back in September, this time in real life. The whole team is very grateful to Ms. Duggan for helping us set up this club.

Club Members

- Gioia Doenhoff - Sweden
- Oscar Yan – Singapore
- Sinead Cleary - China
- Julia Kaptein - The Netherlands
- Raphaela Ihuoma - Nigeria
- Eliz Kolat – Turkey
- Peter zu Bentheim - Hungary
- Elise Williams – USA
- Maybelle Rainey - UK
- Sveva Ciofani - Italy
- Charlotte Moffitt - Australia
- Ana Junquera - Spain
- Alannah Hassett - Ireland
- Cadhla McGuinness - a post pandemic world
- Éile Ní Chianáin - Editor

Currently our club is made up of all 5th years but we encourage any other years that are interested to join. We hope to reconvene in September, in person, so please come and bring a friend along!

Quick Summary

ON OUR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COVID-19

When we began our discussion, most countries were just in the beginning phases of fighting the coronavirus. Because of this, we devoted two sessions to discussions about the coronavirus. Each person explained their own perspective living in their home country.

Sveva Ciofani, who spoke about Italy, explained how as the first European country to be seriously affected by the virus, Italy was in the midst of carrying out social distancing and other public hygiene policies. Alannah Hassett and Ana Junquera mentioned similar measures being carried out in their respective countries, Ireland and Spain, to a smaller extent as at the time they were still in the beginning stages of containment.

Eile Ni Chianain, who covered the UK, commented on the UK's more conservative approach in the beginning and the proposed strategy of herd immunity while Elise Williams (US) explained how the coronavirus was thought by some to be a conspiracy to get the current POTUS out of office and how the issue sparked another fierce debate between the left and the right.

Sinead Cleary spoke about China's lack of honesty during the outbreak of the virus and its stringent approach towards containment (with the use of facial recognition cameras being controversial) while Singapore, its neighbour (covered by Oscar Yan) adopted similar, albeit less extreme, forms of containment. Wearing masks, he explained, was discouraged as it was thought to cause panic and a breakdown in the medical system.

Raphaela Ihuoma explained how certain regions in Nigeria faced major challenges as densely-populated slums with poor hygiene conditions would find social distancing a near-impossible challenge but noted that local supermarkets are handing out free masks and that social distancing and hygiene policies have been carried out in areas that could manage it. Liz Kolat and Peter zu Bentheim told us all about their countries' unconventional methods- Turkey had been avoiding a full-scale lockdown and imposed curfews instead while Hungary's Prime Minister Orban was allowed to rule by decree during this period.

Gioia Doenhoff laid out the reasons that the Swedish government has deemed lockdowns a temporary solution and herd immunity, their measure of choice.

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Several Different Countries

SWEDEN by Gioia Doenhoff - March 2020

How has Sweden dealt with the ongoing Covid19 Pandemic and all its consequences ?

Sweden has recently become a country that has received a lot of attention, along with criticism and a lot of coverage of course, about how they've handled the Corona crisis so far. Their approach is very different to most countries, even though having a considerable amount of cases, and even a death rate that's a lot higher than our neighbours - Norway, Denmark, and especially Germany.

A few reasons to why the Swedish government chose / hasn't changed from this method:

- Quarantines or lockdowns are only a short term solutions that cannot function for very long. Some people might be able to work from home but that excludes the vast majority who work in stores, restaurants etc. The economy wouldn't survive this and peoples funds would just deplete (see Italy). Also it has proven to be as effective as previously thought (again see Italy with over a month of quarantine and no clear signs of improvement)
- Swedish or Nordic culture is already based on maintaining your distance from strangers / acquaintances without any influence from the pandemic. Thus it's not as likely to spread like a wildfire and until now hasn't.
- Swedish politicians have stepped back and let scientists take the lead, i.e. state epidemiologist Tegnell. He came up with the model of today and bases it on herd immunity, where the aggressiveness of the virus will just fizzle out on its own. Critics have pointed to the risk-groups, who are self isolating, saying that that would only put them in more danger once a green light is given. However, the point is not to completely stop infections, it's to flatten the curve to enable health services to cope. Herd immunity has also been proven to not just be a concept that wouldn't work in practice, it's credited with largely impeding the Zika virus. Also worth noting that not everyone immediately becomes immune after being infected once, some people unfortunately would have to go through it twice.
- Sweden at the start of the pandemic only had a 524 intensive care units. These have not been filled, but 1000 extra care units and an emergency hospital have since been opened up to accommodate. New ventilators have been bought in as well, and the state recognised that it previously was very ill-equipped to deal with Covid 19, and arguably still is. Until now we have a very high survival rate from our ICU spots - 80%

- Yes - Sweden still has their schools open, restaurants running and all the rest. However the economy is suffering with the decrease in cash flow as people are more conscious, only being served outside of the restaurant etc.

Even though other countries closed their schools Sweden is keeping theirs open to help people working in vital responses to the pandemic such as healthcare staff or grocery workers.

Personal opinion :

I respect Tegnell for going against the grain and doing what he genuinely thinks works best for all aspects of the country. I also think that this is a decision that they thought through and are not randomly signing out. The only thing that really would concern me is the lack of testing caused by the lack of equipment. Since then they have increased their capacity and have said that they would start testing healthcare workers as well, although results are to be seen. It also concerns me that no-one in the general populations is being tested, so we have a very vague idea of the real scale of the virus here in Sweden. Also, it's said that because of the lack of testing a lot of cases, and deaths have slipped through the cracks and been written off as pneumonia or similar diseases

Cases: 11 445

Deaths: 1 033

SINGAPORE by Oscar Yan - March 2020

How Singapore has dealt with Covid 19 and its impacts?

Singapore received its first case of the coronavirus on the 23rd of January. Following this, preventative measures began to move into place with more stringent temperature screenings and forced quarantine from all arrivals from China who displayed symptoms. A multi-ministerial task force was assembled to handle the situation.

As the situation began to deteriorate, a ban on entry was enforced for all visitors with travel history to China, a measure that would be extended to include more countries affected, from South Korea to Germany. Surgical masks were distributed to each household but a word of warning was given to only wear masks if you were ill. For the most part, the government openly discouraged the wearing of masks, with Trade Minister Chan Chun Sing saying that if everyone in the government wore a mask like in Hong Kong, it would lead to panic and thus a breakdown in the medical system.

Contact tracing was put into practice, which effectively meant tracing down all individuals who had recently interacted with a person positive with Covid 19. This was further implemented with the government's rollout of the world's first contact tracing app, TraceTogether. This app uses bluetooth to track whether the user has come into close contact with a person who has tested positive for Covid 19 and

advises them on the appropriate measures to take, be it quarantine or seeking medical assistance.

On April 3rd, Singapore announced a much stricter set of measures known as Circuit Breaker which closed all non-essential workplaces. Schools were closed and all food establishments were ordered to only provide takeaway and delivery services. All private gatherings were banned and mask-wearing became compulsory.

In terms of impact, Tourism has dropped by 30% with the local retail and transport industry being massively hit. The Ministry of Trade forecasts that Singapore's economy would shrink by up to 4%. Panic buying and price gouging has also affected Singapore, which experiences a spike in these two activities whenever the government raises the Disease Outbreak Response System Condition(DORSCON) level.

Opinion on Singapore's performance has undergone huge variation. In the first two months of the outbreak, Singapore was praised worldwide for its expert handling of the situation, most famously by WHO Chief Tedros Ghebreyesus. However, with the huge increase in the growth of infections (record high of 447 15th April), praise is no longer as forthcoming. The government and local media mainly attribute the increase to foreign worker dormitories, which have been exposed to be cramped and unsanitary. However, in my opinion, this growth is mainly attributed to the government's refusal to support mask-wearing and close businesses and schools early on. Governments around the world have used various tactics to push the blame away from themselves either onto foreign nations or minority groups and I believe that Singapore's is trying the same, especially with this year being a crucial election year.

Cases: 3,699 Deaths: 10

UPDATE by Oscar Yan - June 2020

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Circuit Breaker measures have since eased up significantly as increases in new cases slow. Schools have been reopened with many humorously remarking that Singapore is the only country where students have returned to work first. After 18th June, Singapore will be moving into Phase 2 of the *Breaker*, with dine-ins, tuitions and private clubs available once again for the public. Many are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I believe that this has been an enlightening experience for Singapore and Singaporeans. The issue of racism and unequal treatment of foreign workers has been brought to light and many are now beginning to understand the importance of better labour policies to favour the essential workers.

Cases: 40,969 Deaths: 26 June 16th 2020

CHINA by Sinéad Cleary (March & June 2020)

How China Has Dealt With The Coronavirus

China, being the original site of the outbreak of the coronavirus, has had a vital role in controlling the spread of the virus and providing information to the rest of the world in anticipation of the spread. Having faced another similar respiratory virus outbreak relatively recently (SARS 2003), China had access to a real-life case study and has been using this precedent to evaluate past mistakes.

That being said, China did not have a great start in the containment of the virus. For about a month after the first confirmed case, authorities kept the public in the dark, in particular about how contagious the virus is. It made the same mistake in 2003 to an even graver extent, keeping the virus a secret for three months. While the WHO applauded China's covid-19 responses, it faced criticism for censoring whistleblowers and information in general.

On the other hand, China has been more willing to employ drastic measures quickly compared with Western countries, which has been instrumental in the effective containment of the virus in the past few months. Following is a brief, simplified list of China's measures:

- On Jan 23, China put virtually the whole city of Wuhan on lockdown.
- Mass gatherings and events were suspended, schools were shut, traffic was restricted and social distancing was encouraged and promoted by the government
- A hospital was built in a fortnight and used for emergency response towards the virus
- Satellite cities in the Hubei province were also shut down. In an area of roughly 60 million people, all were asked to stay at home for a month
- People with milder symptoms were quarantined in temporary isolation facilities like gyms, stadiums and event halls
- Checkpoints were established at building entrances while officials went door-to-door checking people's temperatures
- Tech companies gave people a means to access a "health rating" through an online form about travel history and health history, providing them with a personalised QR code that
- would be scanned at checkpoints and used to determine whether or not isolation was necessary.
- Facial recognition cameras were upgraded to scan crowds for fever and identify individuals not wearing masks

China has since reported that there have been no new deaths from coronavirus anywhere in the country for the first time since the outbreak. There is growing concern that the Chinese government may have fabricated this information. The POTUS has famously expressed suspicion, as well as the British government minister Michael Gove. However, there is no denying that the epicenter of the virus has since moved to Western countries and there has been significant improvement in China's condition. China's response has been praised as being bold and necessary by some and criticised as too drastic and invasive by others.

Yuval Noah Harari published an article in the Financial Times expressing concern over the influence our measures will have on how our society will operate in the future, a concern that many people shared- would this temporary measure of mass surveillance give legitimacy to a terrifying new totalitarian surveillance system?

I believe this is a crucial time for China not only in terms of health and wellness, but also politics and ideology.

Cases: 82,367 Recovered: 77,944 Deaths: 3,342

THE NETHERLANDS by Julia Kaptein (June 2020)

How the Netherlands are dealing with the virus

In the Netherlands the Corona virus felt as if our busy lives were put on hold. People quite quickly adjusted to the restrictions. At first people started to excessively buy products which they thought would be necessary to “survive” the virus. It felt like everyone panicked, but they didn’t really know what the panic was about. The streets were empty and restaurants closed their doors. We found ourselves in a so-called “smart lockdown”, which felt like a vacation. After not seeing my family for some time, we had so much to catch up with. Laying in the sun was probably one of my favourite Corona activities. People were very cautious and responsible about seeing others. Facetime was used to call loved ones and tell each other Corona updates. The impact has been massive but the Netherlands is recovering slowly. Restaurants have opened and it all feels more normal now. Overall the pandemic felt like we were living in a slow motion movie. I hope that we do not have to experience a second wave. Most of all I am excited to return to the College!

NIGERIA by Raphaela Ihuoma (April 2020)

HOW NIGERIA HAS DEALT WITH COVID-19

Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country and the sixth most populous in the world, was the second African nation to confirm a case of coronavirus. As it stands Nigeria has 302 confirmed cases of Covid-19. Nigeria received its first confirmed case of Corona virus on 27th February from an Italian citizen who had returned from Milan back to work in Lagos state.

On March 20th as Nigeria announced 5 new cases, Nigeria applied a travel ban to countries with over 1000 cases. These include Italy, the UK, USA, Germany, France.

Out of 200 million, 69 million Nigerians have no access to clean water. In Lagos with a population of 25 million and with over 100 slum areas, about 80 people can be found sharing a 10-room building with only two toilets and a bathroom being shared by all with non pipe-borne or treated water available. Social distancing may be difficult for these people in the slums in unsanitary conditions.

Surgical masks have been handed out at local supermarkets, Lagos and some other states introduced restrictions on large gatherings (of more than 50 people), more than 5,000 samples have been tested in Nigeria. Schools have shut down, while all non-essential travel has been banned, in most states workers, including civil servants, have been told to work from home, but with a lack of reliable electricity supplies and poor internet connections, it is hard to see how most people will get any work done.

Many Nigerians live on less than a dollar and cannot stock up on essentials, therefore president Muhammed Buhari outlined some measures to ease hardships, including one monthly payment of 13 dollars given to the poorest of the poor. On February 29th the Federal Government had identified 10,695,360 poorest individuals in 35 states across the country.

The record budget of Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer estimated at 34.6 billion dollars for the year 2020 will likely be revised downwards, according to the Ministry of Finance.

This is due to the sharp drop in the price of crude oil which is also related to the coronavirus pandemic. The proposed revised figure will be 1.5 trillion (about \$5 billion) less the original figure of 10.9 trillion naira. Nigeria is still struggling to emerge from the 2016 recession, which was caused by the collapse of oil prices at the end of 2014, with economic growth currently hovering around 2%. Nigeria's economy is expected to shrink by 3.4 percent this year and Africa's largest economy could face a recession lasting until 2021.

Since Nigeria has been hit by coronavirus, the demand for energy has grown mainly caused by the global lockdown against covid-19, and the country's jobless rate, already at 23 percent, is expected to climb even higher. Before coronavirus the unemployment rate was expected to rise to about 30 percent, and this was before coronavirus. Africa's economy will lose from 37-79 billion dollars on output, and Nigeria is expected to account for a substantial amount of that loss

The price of crude oil (the mainstay of the Nigerian economy) tumbled like never before in the last 20 years. It went to as low as below \$20 per barrel from above \$60 just before the pandemic. It has never been this bad in the last two decades and this has made a mess of the Nigerian federal government's budget estimates for 2020; making salaries payment, debt obligations and other projections uncertain. This is clearly so because the price of crude oil, which contributes over 90% of Nigeria's externally-generated revenue, now hovers around \$30 per barrel, which is far less than the budget's benchmark of \$57 per barrel, and this signifies tough times ahead.

April 17th

Confirmed cases: 442 Recovered: 152 Deaths: 13 Active cases: 277

UPDATE by Raphaela Ihuoma- June 2020

As of 17th of June there are 17,148 cases. 455 people have died from the virus and 5,623 have recovered. According to reports this sudden surge has come from the lack of testing. On June 14th, 403 new cases had been confirmed and an additional 13 deaths. To date, approximately 16,085 cases have been confirmed, 5,220 patients have been discharged and 420 deaths have been recorded in 35 states and the federal capital territory.

It is believed by many Nigerians that health institutions have not conducted enough testing for this deadly pandemic, hence the recent surge.

Nevertheless, lockdown has slightly been eased. Supermarkets are slowly starting to get back into business, some roads are beginning to open. However, many religious buildings and places of worship still have restrictions. Many religious leaders are demanding that churches and mosques open. Some even feel threatened and have formed conspiracy theories. Many Nigerians have a strong attachment to religion hence this urge for mosques, churches etc. to open.

A ban on large gatherings is still in place and a curfew of 8pm to 6am is still implemented. As well as that people are obligated to wear a mask when in public. Lagos offices must be shut by 3pm while commercial buses have a limited number of passengers in order to maintain social distancing. More than 90% of the workforce are employed in the informal sector with no access to government support. Small companies have been hardest hit and many have been forced to lay off staff with no help from the government. Only the country's very poorest households have received 54 dollars to live off for the next four months.

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June 17th

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TURKEY by Eliz Kolat - May 2020

Turkey's response to the pandemic

Turkey has reported more than 4,000 coronavirus cases per day since April 8, a sudden burst that's alarmed health experts. It has now recorded the highest number of cases outside of the United States and Europe. The number of cases has exceeded China and continues to grow rapidly. Experts are worried it could become a new Corona virus hotspot.

The president of the country of 82 million, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been avoiding a full scale lockdown, preferring weekend curfews instead. Turkey's economy was in bad shape before the pandemic hit, and is now in an even tougher spot. After nearly 2 years of a weakening currency, high debt and growing unemployment, Turkey is in a particularly bad place to be hit with a pandemic like this. Unemployment in January was already 14% and it will probably increase greatly due to the coronavirus. Turkish officials had held talks with the US on securing a swap line from the bank. The Turkish currency recently plummeted to a near historic low of 6.95 lira to the US dollar and is currently trading at 6.88 to the dollar.

At the moment, people older than 65 years old and younger than 20, are quarantined by the government and can not go outside. On the weekends, nobody is allowed to go outside. On the following Thursday (23rd April) a 4 day long quarantine

will be taking place. The lockdowns are not nationwide, only within the big cities (Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara...) and a smaller city called Zonguldak (which is on lockdown due to its large mining industry and the lung diseases that have been affecting citizens by that).

Erdogan claims his government has dealt with the virus better than any other country, but facts prove him wrong. "It is evident that hospitals in the city have not prepared adequately in the two and a half months since this deadly virus first came into the spotlight," the Istanbul Chamber of Physicians said in a statement in early April. The government has dealt with this issue unprofessionally and irresponsibly. Things are very unstable in Turkey, more than they were before. An example of how rapidly the virus is spreading - when I started writing this confirmed cases in Turkey were 90,000 now it's 95,000.

Recovered: 14,918 Deaths: 2,259

UPDATE by Eliz Kolat - June 2020

In May daily cases dropped below 1,000. But since June cases have started doubling again. The number of recoveries fell below the number of new cases. Naturally the most crowded city, Istanbul, was the centre of the epidemic. The over-65s and under-20s were locked down completely, weekend curfews were imposed, and major cities were sealed off. However, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has recently said Turkey is lifting stay-at-home orders as part of a further easing of restrictions. In conclusion, no strict measurements are being taken to prevent the further spread of Covid in Turkey. I'm not quite sure what the government is hoping to achieve with such irrational decisions.

Confirmed cases: 180,000

Recovered: 152,000

Deaths: 4,825

HUNGARY by Peter Bentheim - March 2020

Hungary and Covid-19

Although Hungary is a small nation both in size and in population with 9.7 million inhabitants it frequently makes headlines in the media for how it deals with its issues. Hungary's nationalist-conservative ruling party, Fidesz, and the country's prime minister Viktor Orban, are frequently criticised by Western media about how they deal with complex situations, an example being the migration crisis and now the outbreak of Covid-19.

The first cases of the Coronavirus were reported on March 4th and the Hungarian government has acted quickly and radically to prevent the virus from spreading. As a result Hungary only has 2098 confirmed cases currently (21.04.2020).

The first measure was taken March 7th and it cancelled all national ceremonies marking the anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution on March 15th. This was a key step which had to be taken as usually thousands of Hungarians gather in Budapest to enjoy the celebration and listen to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speech. Soon after on the 11th March all gatherings of more than 100 people in an enclosed space were banned.

The government took many other steps such as the closure of schools and tertiary institutions however these are very similar to what other countries did and did not attract unusual attention by the Western media. It also took the essential step on March 16th of restricting access to the country and only allowing Hungarian citizens back in.

These measures did not attract unusual attention, however, the Western media quickly pounced on the news that the National Assembly passed an act on 30th March that prolonged the state of emergency, declared on the 11th of March, for an indefinite period of time and allowed Prime Minister Orbán to rule by decree during this period of time. Hungary was heavily criticized for this move as it postponed all elections until this state of emergency is lifted. Many people considered that Hungary was turning into a dictatorship. Representatives of the government have defended this move as the Fidesz government was voted democratically into parliament with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority during free and fair elections, hence they were entrusted by the Hungarian people with this power and will implement the measures they feel are best for the nation. They have also ensured that the national elections of 2022 will take place.

Many news outlets also reported that the act passed on 30th March also made criticism of the government punishable etc. However, in my opinion, this is all "fake news" as the decree which was passed is very specific and does not endanger democracy. It does not lock up anyone who is critical towards the government, instead it makes the deliberate distribution of misleading information that obstructs responses to the pandemic on a large scale punishable by up to five years in prison.

Hungarian scientists were also the first to manage to isolate Covid-19 from a patient which is a crucial step in the race to find a vaccine. This also only received very little media coverage considering it is such an important step.

Over the years Hungary has received endless criticism by mainstream Western media outlets as they despise the Conservative government of the Fidesz party, even though it has been democratically elected. Hence the western media try to undermine the efforts of the government to do what's best for its people. Overall, the Hungarian government has acted quickly and effectively in the battle against Covid-19 which has resulted in the relatively low number of people infected in the country up until this day.

Total cases: 2098

Deaths: 213

UPDATE by Peter Bentheim - June 2020

Although Hungary received widespread criticism on its approach to fighting the Corona virus, with certain measures like the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán gaining the power to rule by decree, the nation is on the path of returning to normality after successfully battling the peak of the pandemic. Only a handful of new infections per day have been reported for the last 2 weeks, which clearly shows the success of the measures the Hungarian government implemented. Restaurants and shops have also opened across the country, indicating the country is on the path to normality. Hungarian lawmakers have also lifted Viktor Orbán's controversial emergency powers on the 16th of June 2020. This contradicts and greatly upsets the many Western and leftist media outlets who wished to report on the end of democracy in Hungary. Overall the Hungarian government and people have successfully managed to to minimise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Total cases: 4078

Deaths: 567

Recovered: 2547

USA by Elise Williams - April 2020

How America has dealt with Covid-19

We call ourselves the United States of America, but during this time I feel anything but. Our country has separated itself into two parties of people that care, and people that don't. People are marching on the streets exclaiming that this is all a government conspiracy to get Donald J. Trump out of the 2020 election, meanwhile others haven't stepped outside their apartment or house in 6 weeks. This seems to be the case in other countries though. We see a pattern of people that are either with the government or against it. What makes America different to these circumstances, is the fact that the government is completely divided during this time of crisis, just when the American people need them to be working together. This pandemic has been turned into a circus between two parties, Liberals and Conservatives, the Democrats vs Republicans. There is a real divide in America which has been proven once again, except this time it is more fatal. States are hiding from their government, in order to give their people a safe chance at protection. The president has out bid states on their shipments of protective gear so he looks like the hero. While some states struggle, others open up their boundaries again and have taken away some of their social distancing policies, allowing the virus to spread and going against the expert opinions advising them. America is seeing a huge power struggle and governors continue to beg the president to enforce stricter policies. New York, a hotspot for the virus, has been told that in a census taken one out of five residents have had or currently have COVID-19. This only led the president to criticise the New York mayor, while the governor continues to stay quiet. Americans are using this virus to create a growing racism to the Chinese government and people. Trump has moved on from Mexico and towards criticizing yet another government before his next big election.

UK by Maybelle Rainey - April 2020

How did the UK deal with Covid-19?

Over the past month, every Thursday evening at 8 pm, the UK has united in rounds of applause to celebrate and thank the tough blue suited heroes of the National Healthcare System. But many of these NHS workers don't want the applause. Instead they want to be given better testing and adequate personal protection equipment (p.p.e). They are overworked and exhausted and dying in alarming numbers (there have been over 100 NHS healthcare workers deaths so far). They want to do their job and return safely to their families. However, the UK is fifth worst affected country by Coronavirus in the world. Standing only behind the U.S, Italy, Spain and France.

But the vast numbers infected and the wildfire spread of the virus happened not only because of the shortages of testing kits and inadequate supplies of PPE but also because the arrogance of the UK government and their slowness to take action. They ignored all warnings given by countries that had already experienced the horrors of COVID19 (China, Italy, South Korea, Singapore). Instead Prime Minister Boris Johnson proposed the country should begin with herd immunity. This meant that at least 70% of the UK population needed to get ill and build up antibodies to the virus to succeed in achieving herd immunity. Nick Phin, the deputy director of the National Infection Service, explained that herd immunity is like "turning vulnerable members into guinea pigs". Even now, it is still questionable as to whether or not having had COVID19 prevents reinfection. Many people look down on this idea as, in the words of Richard Horton "playing roulette with the public". Herd Immunity, in this case, is a game of luck with no real strong strategy behind it.

It was only in mid-February, after the Prime Minister contracted Covid 19 and spent 10 Days in intensive care, fighting for his life, that the tables turned and the government began to take this pandemic seriously. Lockdown of travel and business was implemented, with the public being asked to stay at home to stem the spread of this highly contagious virus. This was days and weeks after the first warnings. However, it was too little, too late. The UK were warned; they had expert advice; they had time to prepare, time to take action and they squandered it.

South Korea and New Zealand who took rapid and strict action and have taken control of C19 with very few deaths. To date, more than 22,000 people are confirmed to have died in the UK within hospitals from COVID19, and it is estimated many more than that again unrecorded within the community. The clapping for the NHS and Johnson' undoubtedly genuine gratitude to the medical staff who saved his life is as nothing in the face of what went before. The negligence of the UK government has been criminal. In today's Guardian, John Crace puts this very neatly into perspective: "So far, the UK has recorded more than 20,000 coronavirus deaths in hospitals and possibly as many as that again at home and in care homes. Which would already be roughly the number of civilians who died during the Blitz in the Second World War, with the prospect of many thousands still to follow".

There is very little talk of herd immunity now, in the face of these startling and tragic facts. And once, finally, the battle against C19 has been won, the Government will have a lot of questions to answer. Little comfort, though, for the thousands of families left grieving a loved one.

ITALY by Sveva Ciofani (March & June 2020)

How Italy has delta with the Corona Virus

We all know Italy was the first European country affected by the Corona virus and that Italian citizens have been on lockdown since February. The Italian healthcare system is recognized as a good system worldwide, patients are not paying for their treatment of the virus. It is said that the reason why so many deaths occurred was that no one was actually expecting this pandemic to be as big or as serious as it turned out to be and it was hard for the hospitals to manage such a massive number of people all at the same time.

The problem in Italy was that when all workplaces and schools were shut down many citizens continued to go out causing the contagion rate to go upwards. The virus spread quickly, especially, it was thought, by the youngest citizens, who carried the virus with no symptoms and passed on to their family members. The issue wasn't seen as serious and the government took time dealing with it.

Restaurants will slowly re-open on May 2nd, but everything will be contained with a small number of people and everyone will stay one metre apart in order to avoid another wave of contagion. Some businesses are losing thousands everyday, it is necessary to re open some activities.

It was very strange when I came back from Ireland to Italy. In Ireland the situation wasn't as bad. Coming back to Italy via the airport I noticed that the streets were empty and I was totally freaked out when I saw that in the supermarket everyone was apart from each other and these were the measurements that the government had imposed. You're also not allowed to touch things without gloves on.

Economically my country will suffer a lot, Italy lives on food exports and tourism, this year people won't move and no one will buy. My parents own bed and breakfasts, and restaurants and their business activities will suffer a lot. We hope that the state will raise taxes, because let's not forget that Italy's taxes are very high. I expect the government to prioritize their citizens.

People are taking the quarantine seriously, the police are everywhere checking where people are going and whether they are doing things that are forbidden, like visiting a friend or leaving the region they live in. Everyone needs a certificate to go out, stating why and where.

Us Italians however could see the end of this as an opportunity for the rebirth of our country, a moment to start again. Italians will value the things we have in our country more and it will make us even MORE united. Italy was already in a crisis and a dark moment like this could change our perspective completely.

Fortunately, the death and contagion rates are going down and let's hope that they will keep going down. We have to also make sure that the virus stays in the north of the country, because the south is definitely weaker and would not be able to support significant numbers of citizens with the virus in the way that the region Lombardia has.

Italy was definitely not prepared for this kind of tragedy, neither was Europe, except, possibly Germany. Italy has previously suffered from tragedies like earthquakes, volcanic explosions and other major crises so we can get through this together, but we definitely need the support of the EU for this, everyone needs to stay united. I also believe that as a union we should sanction China by reducing the trade with them. In my opinion, China should have made Europeans more aware of the pandemic, and should have been clearer about the numbers infected by the virus. Many things might possibly have been prevented.

Right now Italy is in a better situation, there are fewer cases and the economy is starting to work again. People are still scared to go out, but at the same time I have seen many people not respecting the one metre social distancing policy. Italians are tired of the strict policies because they were the first to introduce lockdown. However, everyone wears a mask. The number of sick people has decreased and it seems like the virus lost its power maybe because the hot season is arriving. Hopefully everything will be opening this summer.

April 24,111 deaths 181,228 sick people
June 34,405 deaths. 24,569 sick people

AUSTRALIA by Charlotte Moffitt - May 2020

How Australia has been affected by Covid-19

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic Australia suffered from extreme bushfires. "The Black Summer" (2019-2020) was the most devastating season of bushfires Australia has ever been affected by. Over 46 million acres were scorched by the flames. 34 people were killed from the flames, with a further 416 indirectly from smoke inhalation. Over 1 billion animals are estimated to have been killed and many endangered animals are feared to have been driven to extinction. The natural disaster is Australia's most economically expensive yet with costs reaching nearly \$100 billion. The fires peaked between December and January but were not fully extinguished until the 24th of March. Their problems did not stop there however.

The first case of covid-19 was confirmed in Australia on the 25th of January. On February 1st all non-Australian citizens from mainland China were banned from entering the island. Australia then closed all its borders on March 20th. These early actions have meant that the number of coronavirus cases in Australia are relatively low. The nation has seen over 7,000 cases and the virus has claimed the lives of 103 people. Nearly half of these cases are in New South Wales. Australia's residential lockdown began on March 21st.

A similar version of the restrictions applied in Ireland were implemented in Australia, although slightly stricter. The one major difference being schools remained open in Australia as the statistics from China showed children are at low risk of transmitting the virus.

On the 1st of April interstate travel was restricted - limiting movement between states.

In response to the crisis the Australian Government offered A\$86 billion in total in income support. A further A\$70 billion in a wage subsidy package was announced for businesses affected by a loss of turnover as a result of the pandemic.

On the 15th of April, the first ever arrest was made for not complying to the isolation restrictions.

The recovery plan of the restrictions has been agreed upon by state and territory leaders. It is a 3 stage plan

- Stage 1: five visitors to a home, gatherings of ten people in public places and businesses, and food and drink premises permitted to reopen whilst abiding by social distancing restrictions
-
- Stage 2: gatherings of twenty people in homes, public places and businesses, gyms, beauty salons, cinemas, galleries, amusement parks and caravan and camping parks all able to reopen and some interstate travel to be permitted
-
- Stage 3: gatherings increase to 100 people, pubs and clubs to reopen

Stage 3 is hoped to be reached by July.

Australian officials are looking to retain their grasp on the spread of the virus by encouraging citizens to download a tracing app. So far, about 6.1 million people out of 25 million have registered on the app, COVIDSafe.

On March 6th, Australia had a gross government debt of \$573.1 billion. This is the worst it has ever been. A combination of the cost of the bushfires and the financial support needed in the lockdown have been detrimental to the Australian economy. The nation is now in a recession.

Over the past 12 months Australia has broken several of its records. Perhaps not the ones it had intended to however.... Overall Australia has dealt with the outbreak of the pandemic well in my opinion. The idea of having an app that tracks your health is slightly terrifying to me but if it keeps us safe, it is worth it.

An update on Australia by Charlotte Moffitt - June 2020

Australia is now in a recession. The nation escaped the Great Recession which plagued the rest of the world in the late 2000s. However, after remaining economically effective for the past 29 years, Australian GDP has fallen. This is the first fall in 9 years, when, in 2011 the Cyclone Yasi and Queensland's floods dented the growth of the economy. The country has done well economically during the pandemic compared to other countries, contracting economically only by 0.3% in the March quarter. This is thanks to stimulus packages and an effective lockdown. However, the combination of bushfires and the coronavirus has suspended economic growth. Australian treasurer, John Frydenberg, told reporters a recession was 'inevitable' as the economy only grew by 1.4% in the last year, which is its worst performance since the global financial crisis. The economy of the country was weak before the pandemic hit and now it is taking its toll.

18th of June

Confirmed cases: 7,391 Deaths: 102 Recovered: 6,877 Active cases: 412

SPAIN by Ana Junquera - April 2020

Spain's response to Covid-19 focusing on Barcelona

Was the Spanish government efficient in dealing with Covid-19? How has Covid 19 impacted the country generally?

No one is ever going to be able to adequately warn the world about a pandemic, but I do think that governments should, in some kind of way, be ready to deal with anything unexpected that happens. The spread of Covid 19 seemed to depend a lot on international mobility, travellers bringing the virus from one country to the next. This suggests that some kind of control should have been placed on travellers coming from previously infected areas, such as Italy. This should have happened much more quickly in order to stop the virus from entering Spain in the first place. The Spanish government was too slow to make effective decisions. The Alarm Status declaration imposed by the government on March 14th has managed to mitigate the effect of the contagion in a very significant way. The spreading of the virus has reduced significantly, once this measure was declared.

According to an investigation, the number of cases would have increased from 126 to 617,000 April 4th if the alarm status hadn't been imposed. With this measure, we've avoided around 491, 000 confirmed cases, which represents a reduction of the 79,5%. But there are other studies that show how we could of avoided even more infections if the measures had been imposed a week earlier than they were. The number of cases would now be 47,000 fewer and that could have prevented a lot of hospitals from collapsing. The first confirmed case we had in Spain was January 31st, and the virus spread rapidly to other provinces. All of the Spanish provinces had at least one confirmed case by March 14th. Social distancing was encouraged, and many school closed (and still remain closed) since March 13th to contain the outbreak. On March 14th the government declared a national lockdown of the population and declared the prohibition of public events and social gatherings. All shops other than pharmacies and stores selling basic necessities were forced to close. The authorities further extended the lockdown by instructing non-essential workers to stay at home temporarily and by extending the lockdown until mid-April. But the epidemic continued to grow.

Social distancing prevented the virus from propagating locally, within a neighborhood, city or province. The lockdown also helped to prevent the virus from spreading through the different provinces. Many citizens decamped from the cities to spend their confinement in their vacation homes, located in the provinces. They were in fact spreading the virus by doing this. Thousands of citizens also ignored the social distancing guidelines and made the propagation of the virus worse by not staying at home.

This virus will affect our country both in the short and long term. Regarding the short term; there is close to 200,000 infected people and around 20,000 deaths. Hospitals are saturated and there is a general lack of ventilators and masks to prevent infection. Once the lockdown ends still much activity, travel and mobility will continue to be restricted. The shut down of businesses, especially those open to the public and related to the tourism sector (restaurants, hotels, etc) has been difficult. There is a possibility that the government will expropriate goods that are considered essential to combat the crisis (e.g. occupation of private hospitals, pharmaceutical products, etc). There has been a dramatic increase in the suspension of employment contracts and the unemployment figure currently stands at 1.9 million people. There has been a drastic stop both in the national and international economy.

In the long term, Covid-19 will cause many mid and small businesses to close. There is definitely going to be rampant unemployment of almost 20% of the country's population, as well as a dramatic increase of insolvency situations. We can expect a significant increase in public debt (huge resources to fund unemployment and the health care system), heavy restrictions on tourism, travel and leisure activities in the country, which is 15% of the country's GDP. It is also expected that there will be cuts in civil rights, for example; freedom of speech is going to be controlled under the excuse of avoiding "misinformation" in times of social stress. Increases in taxes are expected to cover increased public spending. A severe and long economic recession looks likely and the inability of the EU to reach consensus on the appropriate financial response means that there will be problems with the European economy as a whole.

Much of this is the result of the government's slow response to Covid-19. The government should have prepared when the crisis was evident in China, due to the significant commercial relationship between Spain and China. They did not even react when the situation escalated in Italy (a neighbouring country). The day before the state of alarm decree, the government was calling for demonstrations in Madrid to celebrate Women's Day and allowed Italians to attend football matches in Spain (not closing the borders on time). As well as this there is a lack of general protection clothing in public hospitals. The government purchased deficient protective clothing from Chinese companies. There has also been a massive failure to negotiate with the EU to come up with appropriate aid programs.

To sum up, the impact of this epidemic will bring drastic consequences to the world itself, every country will be damaged in some way; socially, economically or politically.

IRELAND by Alannah Hassett - April 2020

How Ireland has dealt with Covid-19

In each case of Covid-19 in Ireland the National Public Health Emergency Team was notified and the patients were put in isolation. A Containment Protocol was put in place which means that contact tracing and a full investigation into other people

who may have been in contact with the patients gets underway. In the event of any confirmed case, a clinician will speak to the patient to get details of places they visited and the people they've been in contact with since they became unwell. This will provide information on the people who need to be contacted, such as family members, colleagues or fellow travellers. This list of people will be contacted with instructions and advice on what to do if they display symptoms. If a member of the contact list displays symptoms, they are isolated and provided with treatment if the virus is confirmed. Ireland already had advanced plans in place to deal with public health emergencies such as COVID-19. These plans have helped respond to previous incidents such as pandemic influenza, SARS and MERS.

In the containment phase, the focus is on all cases no matter how mild.

In the delay phase, initiatives are put in place to slow the spread of the virus.

In the mitigation phase, the focus is on cases experiencing the most severe symptoms.

Containment Strategy: In this phase, irrespective of case severity, all efforts are focused on identifying cases and their contacts early, in order to prevent further transmission (secondary spread).

Delay Phase: Ireland is currently in a delay phase. We know that COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is contagious and many people will catch it. Our delay strategy is planned to slow down the spread of the virus.

Mitigation Strategy: Ireland is prepared to initiate a second phase, if necessary, called the mitigation phase. This will be activated where containment is no longer effective in controlling the spread of COVID-19. In this phase, our focus will be on identifying the cases who are most severely unwell.

The deployment of these strategies is in sync with global strategies, guided by the World Health Organization and the European Centre for Prevention and Disease Control (ECDC).

The National Public Health Emergency Team, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer Tony Holohan, meets weekly to assess the international data, receive guidance regarding the outbreak and to review Ireland's ongoing preparedness in line with advice from the WHO and the ECDC.

The HSE High Consequences Infectious Diseases Planning and Coordination Group (HCID) has been working at a detailed level on this situation since early January and has put in place detailed plans and issued guidance and information in preparedness across the health service.

An Expert Advisory Group was established in early February. The group is chaired by Dr Cillian De Gascun, Laboratory Director at the National Virus Reference Laboratory and provides advice to the National Public Health Emergency Team, the HSE and others on an ongoing basis.

That work by the HSE was successful and we now have around 2,000 vacant public beds, plus critical care beds and sufficient staff, to meet the current demand and further pressures.

"In terms of the fund's outlook for Ireland, it expects the economy to contract by 6.8 per cent this year, before bouncing back strongly next year, growing by 6.3 percent against a euro-zone average of 4.7 per cent. However, the agency said the jobless rate here will rise to an average of 12 per cent in 2020, up from a low of 4.8 per cent in February, and will stay elevated at almost 8 per cent in 2021" - colin gleeson, the irish times (17/04/2020).

16,040 total cases 730 total deaths 315 critical 22,598 tests

Imagining a post-covid world

Bullet Point entries by Oscar Yan, Sinead Cleary, Éile Ní Chianáin, Raphaela Ihuoma, Sveva Ciofani & Cadhla MCGuinness.



OSCAR YAN

- Increased Social Welfare in terms of Medicare for All, raising minimum wage for workers
- Penalties for governments which attempted to cover up or dismiss viruses (sanctions on China, US etc.)
- Increased investment in green energy sources rather than returning to “business as usual”
- Stepping down of WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus for his bias and mismanagement
- More attention towards human rights abuses and propaganda efforts by the Chinese Communist Party
- Support for democracy and freedom of press worldwide especially since this has been increasingly undermined in countries like Hong Kong and Poland. Free press has proved its importance in China due to conflicting reports of infection numbers

- Increased efforts to separate fake news from facts (Trump's claims)
- No more bailouts for fossil fuel companies and big conglomerates
- International plan for the next pandemic. Lay down the rules for penalty and proper management. Make a thorough investigation of the different methods employed and decide what's best for each nation.

SINEAD CLEARY

- In general, more understanding and appreciation for essential workers and health workers
- more support and fairer wages for those who work in the medical field
- persist in climate change aid efforts
- make sure that the need for re-building the economy doesn't mean that environmental aid and awareness takes a backseat
- see more international collaboration over common problems as we've seen with covid-19
- international efforts to crack down on China's wet market hygiene issues, in addition to other at-risk areas
- implementation of more pre-emptive measures to protect the homeless and financially disadvantaged during any future pandemics/ public health issues
- Persistence of movements and protests in Hong Kong and Chile etc. that hold governments accountable for suppression



ÉILE NÍ CHIANÁIN

POSITIVES TO THE PANDEMIC AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE TO DISCUSS

- GLOBAL CEASEFIRE
 - suggested by António Guterres at the UN
 - conflicts in countries such as Syria and Yemen
 - food and medical supplies

ENVIRONMENT

- Mass reductions in fossil fuels
- oil price lowest ever seen
- Greenhouse gas emissions decreasing
- Air quality of urban areas improved
- Wild animals braving roads and urban areas
- environmental dimension to all economic policies

UNITED

- Bring communities closer together
- Learning to work together for a common good
- promote freedom of information
- prevent 'fake news'
- Collaborations and connections made between governments

HEALTHCARE

- recognition and good remuneration for frontline workers
- Importance of being prepared for pandemics
- Hope that healthcare for all will be made free in the future

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

- Realisation of vulnerability of those in compromised situations
- Those living in refugee camps and direct provision centres
- Townships on the outskirts of cities
- Homeless
- Medication to be delivered to rural areas
- Improve sanitation in these areas

SVEVA CIOFANI

- more money spent on healthcare, and equip hospitals better
- sanctioning who tried to cover the issue
- more collaboration in the EU union
- be more eco friendly
- attention to human rights, in some countries the excuse of the pandemic is causing oppression (poland or hong cong)
- as a society we need to be more united and appreciate what we have
- in the future we need to protect more the homelessness, that are struggling a lot right now
- stop the illegal wet markets in China and regulate them
- less fake news that causes harm. (don't inject disinfectants in your body, for example).
- the school system should be more prepared in emergencies and use more technology.

RAPHAELA IHUOMA

- Remove tariffs from china on medical equipment (testing kits, surgical masks)
- Penalizing countries that try to dismiss/lie about viruses (e.g should we put sanctions on China for initially lying about the virus?)
- Promotion of healthcare for all and investments in social housing
- More eco-friendly: in about a week we have seen mass reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases. Particularly in the bay area of california, air quality improved by almost 50 percent.
- Making more human centred decisions- put people first
- More cautious of sanitary practices
- Implementing hand sanitizers, and other sanitary equipments
- More respect for medical workers and raised wages. In particular immigrant/foreign workers who are continually harrassed (they are **NOT** taking your jobs)
- Maybe an annual remembrance for the lockdown
- Increased/fairer minimum wage
- Collective effort to tackle the issue of transparency, particularly in China
- Make more thought through decisions- americans protesting to go back to work and leisure= selfishness
- Preparing for similar events in the future- this was not the “democrat’s new hoax” according to Trump
- Mass attention to the breaching of human right- no freedom of religion in china, ethnic cleansings
- People over capitalism and party

A POST PANDEMIC WORLD by Cadhla McGuinness

A Post - Pandemic World

Since the tragic spread of Covid -19, economically and socially the world has changed completely. There is a lot of speculation as to what our post pandemic world will look like. The hope of a global ceasefire, the mass reductions in fossil fuels, unity of the world, healthcare, and the protection of the vulnerable has been brought to the attention of governments during this time. At the UN Antonio Guterres suggested there could be either a global ceasefire or war after the pandemic. Conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen and America could result in a larger spread of the virus or a second spike in the future. In Syria and Yemen there is a fear of shortages of food and medical supplies as they are currently at war, while also in a pandemic. The social and economic outcomes for both countries may take decades to overcome.

The environment and climate has seen beneficial impact to the lockdown. There have been mass reductions in the use of fossil fuels, with the lowest prices of oil ever seen. There has also been a mass reduction in greenhouse gases, particularly in the bay area of California with the air quality improving by almost 50 percent. Water quality in urban areas has improved, for example in Venice, Italy the canals, which

are usually cloudy, have been transformed into clear water as gondolas which produce sediment to the surface, have been cleared for the first time in years. Wild animals have been braving roads and urban areas now that people are not out polluting their habitats. Nature is currently flourishing and the oceans have never been as clear due to the fact that human civilization has been paused. This is a positive that the pandemic has uncovered.

There has been more attention towards collaboration between countries and learning to work together for a common good and making more human centred decisions. Currently in America, the Black Lives Matter movement has raised questions about black civil rights and demanded equality for the black community. The influence of the murder of George Floyd has shaken the world and created a movement all around the world.

There has been a new appreciation for healthcare workers across the world along with raised wages for them. In particular immigrant/foreign workers that are harassed for taking jobs are being appreciated and considered heroes across the world. The importance of being prepared for pandemics, epidemics and other diseases have been studied and planned better by governments and healthcare boards, along with the WHO. There is now hope that everyone in the future will receive free healthcare across the globe. Protection of the vulnerable and people's lives have been reconsidered and put into place by governments. People in refugee camps, townships in South Africa, the availability of medication to rural areas and the homeless have been appreciated.

Due to the pause of the economic cycle in the world, all businesses, industries and governments have been affected negatively. Unemployment rates have risen to the highest levels it has been in years. The standard methodology for Monthly Unemployment, shows a seasonally adjusted Monthly Unemployment Rate for May 2020 of 5.6% compared to 5.1% in 2019. There has also been an Increase in Social Welfare in terms of Medicare for all, in Ireland the dole has risen from 150 euro per week, to 360. It will take on average 1-2 years for countries to recover medically and economically from this pandemic.

Besides the economic effects there has been a drastic change in human social rights throughout the pandemic. There has been some discussion of penalties for governments which attempted to cover up or dismiss viruses (sanctions on China, US etc.). There has been more attention on human rights abuses and propaganda efforts by the Chinese Communist Party as they are in denial that the virus came from their communist ideology country.

18th of June:

Confirmed cases: 8,468,727

Recovered cases: 4,439,805

Deaths: 451,980

Active cases: 3,576,942

Summaries of past discussions and debates

Éile Ní Chianáin reports on the latest session of the Fifth Form virtual politics debating club:

Today we discussed 'the legalization of all drugs.' Sinead Cleary introduced the topic and highlighted why she suggested this motion. We decided to begin each of our meetings with a quick vote before the discussions began on whether we were for or against the motion. Interestingly, we were an even split. 7 of us were for the legalisation of drugs and the other half against. In our discussions we encourage everyone to contribute through stating opinions, outlining ideas or hopes for this future idealistic world, responding to others points or asking questions.

This discussion raised thoughts and questions on:

- Should we decriminalise drug users?
- the power drug cartels hold over society and governments
- whether the sale of illegal substances gives rise to secrecy and mistrust in society?
- Can substance abusers and addicts get the help they need for rehabilitation and recovery within prisons?
- Is reforming corruption in governments that facilitate drug trafficking the solution?
- if drugs were legalised what restrictions would be put in place?
- the practicality of implementing drug legalisation in LEDCs
- The real-life effect of the legalisation of drugs in Portugal

In our next meeting we plan on voting at the beginning and end of the debate to see if members have been swayed by others' arguments.

Raphaela Ihuoma writes:

On Wednesday our weekly Politics Debate Club came together and discussed whether juveniles should be tried as adults for serious crimes and also whether ex-criminals can reform and reintegrate back into society. Raphaella introduced the motion in a neutral way and the group discussed the following points and issues:

- Are ex-criminals able to reintegrate back into society after committing such serious or heinous crimes? If so, how?
- Should they get a second chance? Should society forgive them?
- Is it the government's duty to provide work and reintegrate former convicts so they can be part of society, pay tax and pay their way?

- The UK case of Jamie Bulger, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson was discussed. Some asked whether prison is the best way to deal with juvenile 'criminals'? Or whether justice should be about retribution or reformation?

Our hopes for next year

Next year we hope to convene in person! We also hope that we can encourage more members to join, from any year group. In the first term we will be focusing on topics around racism and the discrimination of minority groups and how we can educate ourselves to be more welcoming for all cultures, ethnicities, religions and genders. The Black Lives Matter movement has opened our eyes to the injustice black people have to face not only in America but in Ireland too.

All of our phones have been blowing up with news about the death of George Floyd. It's a painful reminder that discrimination, racism and prejudice aren't behind us yet, as much as we'd like to believe we live in a post-racial world. The incident has reminded us that the issue isn't simply an American one but one that can live within the walls of our school or any school, if we do not actively guard against it.

We are an anti-bullying, anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-discrimination school and we want to see what more we can do make sure that we always live up to the high standards we have set for ourselves. We want to do more and understand that change has to happen from within. We'd like the opportunity to discuss ways in which we can help, even in a small way, to make things better. We hope that our small politics group can make a change in our school in educating our pupils.

Links available for further reading

<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/john-fitzgerald-accelerate-action-on-climate-change-during-recovery-1.4241816>

- https://rethink.ft.com/articles/pandemic-transform-live/?utm_source=FT&utm_medium=editorial_backfill

- https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/one_page_summaries.html
<https://www.ft.com/content/9e832c8a-8961-11ea-a109-483c62d17528>

- <https://www.ft.com/content/de643ae8-9527-11ea-899a-f62a20d54625>

- <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/coronavirus-exposes-inequality-and-shows-how-it-can-be-tackled-1.4236926>

- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/may/06/better-world-coronavirus-young-europeans-democracy-universal-basic-income>

- <https://www.ft.com/join/licence/64c159d0-2d01-4f0f-9ae9-5737cd5bce93/details>

- <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/all-eyes-on-sweden-s-liberal-gamble-with-coronavirus-1.4233658>
<https://www.broadsheet.ie/2020/03/29/we-need-to-just-park-human-rights/>
<https://www.ft.com/content/8f76a4c6-7d7a-11ea-82f6-150830b3b99a>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/23/coronavirus-pandemic-is-becoming-a-human-rights-crisis-un-warns>

Newspapers to consult:

<https://www.irishtimes.com>

<https://www.theguardian.com/international>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk>

<https://www.ft.com>

<https://www.nytimes.com>

