



"ESTEEM - ***13-26 years old**
YOUTH WORK RESPONSES
TO YOUNG PEOPLE*
WELL-BEING"

MAPPING
REPORT

June - August 2022



ERASMUS+ project -Nr. 2021-2-LV02-KA220-YOU-000051464 - Cooperation partnerships in youth "ESTEEM - Youth work responses to young people well-being" is an innovative 24 months Erasmus+ cooperation partnership project implemented among 5 organisations from Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria and Spain.



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INTRODUCTION

"ESTEEM - Youth work responses to young people well-being" is an innovative 24 months Erasmus+ cooperation partnership project implemented among 5 organizations from Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria and Spain.

European Youth goals define well-being and mental health as priority aspects of a life of a young person and a priority area to be thoroughly paid attention to when developing up-to-date policy initiatives and youth work responses. Mental health and well-being are core qualities of life and a prerequisite for a constant development of a young person's potential, readiness to take responsibility and care about their life, build healthy relationships, choose educational and professional paths, be autonomous and active members of society.

Moreover, the mental health of young people has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Young people's (15-24 year-olds) mental health has worsened significantly in 2020-21 and in most countries, mental health issues among this age group have doubled or more. With adequate support and timely intervention, young people may be able to bounce back as we recover from the COVID-19 crisis, but there is a risk that the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis continue to cast a shadow over the lives of young people and their mental health.

It is crucial that youth workers and organizations working with young people on an everyday basis would be equipped with educational approaches, methodologies, and tools to enable and empower young people to take care of their mental health and strengthen their well-being.

The project corresponds to this need and raises the capacity of youth workers through the development of their competences on how to work with young people on well-being issues by getting to know best practices from other countries, participating in mobility activities, equipping with tools and methods and learning through educational game how to empower young people to address their mental health issues. It also develops an innovative, adaptable, and ready-to-use educational manual and a digital App, with proposed theoretical background, approaches, tools, and methods that can be used by youth workers and other youth work stakeholders in the context of youth work and non-formal education with young people.

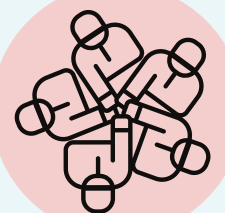


○ Aims of the project:

- To develop youth work responses to mental health and psychological well-being issues of young people.
- To improve youth work quality during and in post-pandemic realities.
- To empower young people to be happy, autonomous and resilient citizens, who are able to make their choices and take decisions.

PARTNERSHIP CONSORTIUM:

Association of Educational games and methods/ Latvia (project coordinator)
Child and adolescent resource centre/ Latvia
AC Amics de la Biblioteca de la Fonteta/ Spain
Tartu Noorsootöö Keskus/ Estonia
CVS-Bulgaria/ Bulgaria



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DEFINITION OF THE WELL-BEING FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Young people face different issues related to challenges of adolescence and transition period which may include self-perception and self-management, school, family and relationship problems. When young people get overstressed or find the pressure too high to manage, the consequences for mental health are destructive behaviours such as self-harming, mild depression, difficult relationships at home and with friends, anger management issues, low self-esteem and self-confidence, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, disengagement, isolation and dropping out from education.

European Youth goals define well-being and mental health as priority aspects of a life of young person and a priority area to be thoroughly paid attention to when developing up-to-date policy initiatives and youth work responses. Well-being is one of the core qualities of life and a prerequisite for constant development of a young person's potential, readiness to take responsibility and care about their life, build healthy relationships, choose educational and professional paths, be autonomous and active members of the society.

The intention to define well-being has been expressed by different scientists and studies, but honestly saying, there is no one that would be universal for every situation. For example, the World Health Organization defined positive mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". The psychologist Carol D. Ryff stated that well-being is combined of six different factors of positive functioning: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance, which are the important factors to be happy and live purposefully. Martin Seligman's PERMA theory defines that well-being is combined of 5 fundamental blocks that enable flourishing – Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment.

The ESTEEM project focuses on the well-being of young people and measures that youth work can develop and offer young people to improve and strengthen their well-being. As there is no unified definition of well-being, we have studied already existing ones and defined the model that keeps elements of Ryff's and Seligman's models and, to our mind, fits better the purpose and means of the youth work and specifically of this project. We do not claim it to be considered a single truth, but rather treat it as a vision of partners based on the many years of work experience with young people in youth centres, NGOs, and mental health institutions.

WELL-BEING



1
Healthy
behaviours

General focus in this project
is on these
two Well-being aspects:

2
Psychological
factors



HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS



Sleep, sleep habits and quality of sleep

Healthy eating habits



Physical activities



Use of mobile devices



Substance abuse (addictions)



PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS



Self-acceptance

Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life (Ryff)

Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values (Ryff)

Environmental mastery



Positive relationship

Has warm, satisfying, trusting, meaningful relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships (Ryff)

Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness (Ryff)

Personal growth



Autonomy

Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards (Ryff)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS



Emotional intelligence

Able to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others

The ability to cope with the ordinary demands and problems of life; relative freedom from extreme emotional distress, such as anxiety, and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life (based on APA dictionary)

Mental health



Engagement and meaning

Belongs to and serves something bigger than the self, e.g. religion, family, science, politics, work/youth organizations, justice, the community, social causes (e.g., being green) etc. (Seligman)

Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living (Ryff)

Purpose in life



Competence and accomplishments

The ability to demonstrate control over one's life, to cope with problems effectively, and to make changes to one's behavior and environment (APA dictionary). Ability to set goals, self-motivation, and perseverance in achieving goals (Seligman)

Within the ESTEEM project, in the center of partners' attention there are **2 blocks of measures** to be explored and developed:

1

preventive and educational practices for young people for improvement and strengthening of their well-being, and

2

educational practices and informative resources for youth workers that would help them to provide professional first aid help when young people need it and work preventively

Based on the results of the first intellectual output of the project the model can be revisited and revised.

LITERATURE THE CONCEPT IS BASED ON:

- Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in Science and Practice
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4241300/>
- World Health Organization. The world health report 2001: mental health: new understanding, new hope. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2001
- Dr. Martin E.P. Seligman. Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being
- Youth work essentials
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/youth-work-essentials>
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work
<https://rm.coe.int/1680717e78>
- Emotional Intelligence
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/emotional-intelligence>
- APA Dictionary of Psychology. - <http://dictionary.apa.org>



DATA USED FOR MAPPING REPORT

Altogether 5 organizations from Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Spain participated in creating the Final Mapping report.

Each country gathered the following information to create the Mapping report:

40 interviews

Latvia - 10 interviews
Estonia - 10 interviews
Bulgaria - 10 interviews
Spain - 10 interviews



More than 80 existing studies, research, articles, resources, etc.

Latvia - 25 materials reviewed and analyzed
Estonia - 30 materials reviewed and analyzed
Bulgaria - 25 materials reviewed and analyzed
Spain - 10 materials reviewed and analyzed



Each country made a summary and drew the main conclusions of the conducted interviews as well as a summary of the analyzed existing studies, research, and other resources. Based on these summaries the Final Mapping report was elaborated.

Summary of interviews
+
Summary of existing data research



**FINAL
MAPPING
REPORT**

FINDINGS

In this chapter we will focus on the main findings we have discovered that can help youth workers to understand how to address well-being issues with young people as well as to know better the existing challenges and solutions of the last year or two.

CHALLENGES

Challenges young people are facing in Latvia:

- Well-being support system problems.
- No unified support for youngsters.
- Psychoeducation level is low.
- Difficulties in promoting healthy behaviors (sleeping habits, poor diets, and little physical activity, daily routine) in young people.
- Lack of knowledge about healthy sexual behavior.
- Excessive mobile phone use and substance use (i.e. process and substance addictions).
- Isolation, daily routine change, screen time increase during pandemic.

Challenges young people are facing In Bulgaria:

- Limited communication, interaction, and relationships with people around (family, friends, teachers, relatives, etc.) during pandemics.
- Difficulties in creating meaningful relationships (not shallow communication).
- Youngsters were highly influenced by the mental state (stress, worries, etc.) of their parents, and do not have enough knowledge and skills to deal with the emotions of parents.
- Unsupportive family environment.
- Poor physical health - bad sleeping habits, junk food, no exercise, using energy drinks, substance use, smoking, alcohol use, early sex life, high consumption of sweet food and drinks.
- Poor mental health - not enough autonomy, low self-confidence, not enough practical life and social skills, not enough safety, no meaning in life and believe in future, overwhelming amount of information.
- Not enough access and information about mental health support.
- Lack of support.

Challenges young people are facing In Estonia:

- Sleeping disorders.
- Keeping healthy eating habits.
- Anxiety and depression levels.
- Excessive play of video games.
- Lack of meaningful relationships.

Challenges young people are facing in Spain:

- Isolation.
- Problems to engage in social life after the pandemic.
- Excessive use of digital devices.
- Usage of face masks as a “shield” to hide.
- Sleeping disorders.
- Lack of everyday schedule.
- Unknown and unpredictable future, “dark future”, “worst life” (connected to labour market, climate change). That is also connected to a feeling of responsibility to solve these problems.
- Lower self-confidence.
- Suicide level increase (3 times more men than women in 2020).
- Living with parents till 29 years of age (average in Europe – 26 years old).

After the analysis of an interviews and existing researches from all the countries, we came to a conclusion of the main areas to focus on connected to youth well-being are:



Healthy behaviors
(sleeping habits, poor diets, and little physical activity, daily routine, sexual behaviour)



Digital device use and substance use
(process and substance addictions)



Communication and relationships
(with peers, parents, relatives, etc.)



Self-awareness



Vision of the unknown future



Mental health support for young people

GOOD PRACTICES, ADVICE, AND SUGGESTIONS

One of the main aims of the Mapping report is to collect good practices that can help to improve the well-being of young people. The following suggestions are going to be used in the other outcomes of this project to help youth workers to address well-being topics.

From the materials we have studied we can summarize ideas and solutions that should be in the focus on improving well-being of young people.



Promotion and education on healthy behavior: _____

- Improve time management skills.
- Planning screen time.
- Regular exercise (sport).
- Cleaning and organizing home.
- Enjoy hobbies (age group 20-30 y.o. admit that since Covid-19 they spend more time on hobbies).
- Do cooking (there is more focus on cooking since Covid-19).
- Helping others.
- Eating healthy. Vegetables, fruits. Reduce coffee – it is increasing anxiety. Healthy habits – avoid excessive usage of alcohol, drugs, and sedatives.

Promotion of social life and interactions: _____

- Promotion and involvement in different ways of non-formal education and out-of-school activities.
- Encouragement of positive and meaningful time with peers.
- Support for carrier development.
- Enhanced and more family time.

Promotion and education on psychological tools and self-help techniques: _____

- Emotion regulation.
- Positive emotion benefits.
- Cognitive techniques (reframing, reappraisal, reprioritization, etc.)
- Healthy coping behaviors.
- Mindfulness tools.
- Goal setting.
- Relaxation tools.
- Meditation.
- Visualization.
- Tools to develop optimism.

Education on different socializing forms

- Socializing face-to-face
- Socializing online

Information about and availability of professional help for mental health support and well-being issues:

- Youth centers
- Psychologists
- Psychotherapists
- Art therapists
- General Practitioners

General suggestions:

- **Communication** with young people needs to be improved and it needs to be done in all levels – family, friends, teachers, youth workers.
- Importance to **validate the emotions and feelings** of young people in general.
- **Deal with mental health issues** (suicide, have attempted suicide, suffer from depression or anxiety disorders, behavioral problems, substance and process addictions, risky sexual behaviors, and unhealthy habits), the first steps need to be in the zone of prevention, psychoeducation, and methodological assistance in all levels of social support (meaning for youth themselves, their friends, family, teachers and trainers, etc.)
- Different types of **supportive and educational work in schools**, with educators and with families are mentioned as solutions to these problems.
- Schools should introduce **socioemotional learning** curricula that will psycho-educate both teachers, young people, and their friends about how to better understand themselves and others, how to better help, validate and support when faced with difficulties, how to solve problems, cooperate in a team and much more.
- Immediate **tools are needed**, which mainly address communication and the way to provide support and help to oneself and others. They should target the young person but should also be handy for both the parent and the teacher, who play an important role in the young person's life and sometimes give the young person much more than the young person can give to themselves.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS - KEY FINDINGS

The findings and conclusions from both interviews and material research in Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Spain show that the tendencies and main problems are very similar. It confirms that there is **an urgent need for effective, available, easy-to-use material and tools for youth workers, pedagogues, psychologists, and other professionals, to help to improve the well-being of young people.**

The **main topics** that have appeared during the creation of the Mapping correspond to the general well-being concept and confirm the need to focus on them.

During the research and data collection, some **important and unusual aspects** have appeared, that are not widely discussed when it comes to the well-being of young people. They are:

- ❗ **Stress and mental health of the parents** is a very influential factor to the general well-being of a young person;
- ❗ **Young people have fears of a “dark future”** (economical world situation, climate change);
- ❗ There are appearing new ways of **how young people do self-harm**, for example, digital self-harm (Digital self-harm is a form of self-aggression that involves anonymously posting hurtful and sometimes verbally abusive remarks about oneself online.) that professionals need to be aware of in order to address these issues.

It is important to understand that helping young people to **understand themselves, to validate** their feelings, to provide them support, and to help them to create social life with meaningful relationships, as well as that improving their self-esteem and helping to set goals in life or the near future can actually prevent some tragic outcomes in the future (suicide, self-harm, depression, etc.)

NEXT STEPS

All the information gathered in this project outcome is going to be used in other outcomes of this project:



COLLECTION
of good
practices



APP
digital App
development



TOOLKIT
with different
methods to work
with young people



GAME
educational
game



MANUAL
manual for youth
workers

More about the project you can read

HERE

