RESEARCH PAPER

YOUTH VIOLENCE AND WELL-BEING

LITERATURE REVIEW
DEFINING WELL-BEING AND VIOLENCE
QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE
RESEARCH

FROM:
LATVIA
BULGARIA
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ABOUT THE PROJECT AND THIS RESEARCH

Reinforced and upgraded youth group methodology on building healthy relationships (Re-GROUP) is a strategic partnership project funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The project focuses on the use of the Youth Group methodology, developed by the MARTA Center in Latvia, as well as on research in the partner countries of the project - Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Spain.

In 2010, MARTA Centre started a prevention program – Youth Group methodology. It was created through years of piloting by young people for young people (ages 12-18) who are building their adult selves so this transition can be as free, healthy and empowering as possible. The methodology has proved itself to be a meaningful educational tool in the context of Latvia. Re-GROUP as a project has covered the need for bigger and broader piloting of the methodology, but also for research on the topic.

From the most important topics of the Youth Group Methodology, Re-GROUP as a partnership decided to focus on conducting national research in our four countries, focusing on well-being and violence among young people. As our work has proven that far too often, young people don't have their voices heard about their own needs, we conducted large parts of this research by reaching out directly to young people. To balance and provide scale to the research, we also reached out to youth workers, who have daily interactions with young people and know their struggles and victories closely. We also examined the existing data, legal framework and literature, to provide the needed framework of this research paper.

We believe the findings of this product will be useful to youth workers and others in the field of youth, for future policy frameworks, for reference, and for future initiatives. The insight that the Re-GROUP Research paper provides on the topics of youth violence and well-being could be impactful for future actions not only by project partners, but by all actors in the field of youth and violence prevention in the partner countries.

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All project partners contributed by collecting data from their respective countries as follows:

Bulgaria – The Future Now Association

Latvia – MARTA Centrs

Romania – CRIDL

Spain – Asociación Mundus

You can find more information about the project at our webpage, at our Facebook or Instagram profiles.

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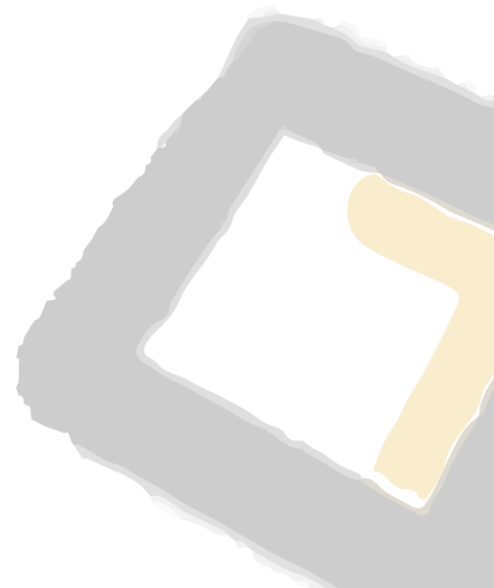**Disclaimer**

INTRODUCTION

When researching the meaning that 'violence' has for young people and youth workers as well as how they define 'well-being', regardless of their nationality and gender, there are certain resemblances on how different individuals from the targeted group experience these complicated phenomena. The project Re-GROUP has a purpose and scope to acquire an in-depth insight amongst youth and youth workers on how they define and experience violence and well-being, across four (4) European countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Spain). Through a methodology that explores both qualitative and quantitative data, the findings of the research dive deep into not just presenting but exploring a more enriched and detailed understanding of both violence and well-being amongst youth.

We can start with some important definitions, which will also pave the way for our contribution in the field.

To this date, there have been an abundance of definitions of 'violence' describing the behaviour, one that provides a holistic picture is 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (WHO et al.). Additionally:

> Violence against children takes many forms, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and may involve neglect or deprivation. Violence occurs in many settings, including the home, school, community and over the Internet. Similarly, a wide range of perpetrators.
>
> UNICEF

Both violence and well-being are inclined to have multiple subtypes, and degrees that when unfolded, shed light on how they impact young people in a physiological, psychological and socioeconomic length. Particularly, 'violence' may take place in a variety of settings and environments as studies show that there are many young individuals that face of violence and act of aggression, primarily in their homes from a parent and secondary at their school amongst their peers. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the form of such behaviour was not exclusively recorded as being physical amongst youth, but rather also as emotional; including with the use of social media that would then be defined as 'cyberbullying' (UNICEF Results from Research of Violence Against Children in Bulgaria, 2021).

Similarly, 'well-being' is significant and impactful to young people in an intricate way. Though health can be defined as the absence of any sort of illness, it does not necessarily

acquire nor entails the presence of quality living and an overall a balanced life. Physical health is primary and crucial for the wellbeing of youths; however, it does not ensure the purpose, quality and healthy living conditions that might be hindering a person(s) day-to-day. Hence, relating to the concept of 'a resource for everyday life, not the object of living'. It is thoroughly studied that building a stable structure that is framed by healthy relations amongst peers, financial stability, qualitative free time (including time dedicated to extracurricular activities amongst peers) and a healthy household setting, accumulates to the overall improvement in quality life and assists in motivating the community to further develop (*Section 3: Concepts of Health and Wellbeing | Health Knowledge*).

Well-being defies short definitions. From the start of our desk research, we compiled from our professional experience and various leading resources of well-being, the following operative definition for well-being:

Well-being consists of:

- Relative health & access to healthcare (mental and physical health)

- Feeling of happiness

- Feeling of community & social connection (belonging)

- Engagement in activities

- Relationship with family and significant others (extended family, friends, teachers, etc.)

- Access to education (and to preferred education)

- Financial stability

- Time affluence

- Online wellbeing (connection, access to useful resources, etc)

Re-GROUP Operative definition of wellbeing

Additionally, the absence of these conditions has shown to cause obsessive thinking that would distract them from attending and performing the schoolwork, whilst impeding on their mental health (Konstantinovs, N.S, et.al, 2020). To best serve the targeted group of the research, it is necessary to grasp the definition of well-being for young people and then focus on providing prevention measures of violence in accordance with their needs. Hence, providing for instance a safe space environment within their household with their parent(s), establishing and adopting an open, healthy, and accepting environment along with healthy habits and practices will offer young people the proper tools and opportunities to allow

quality of life to improve. Equally noteworthy to mention is the importance of developing strong relations and likewise setting amongst peers. By establishing similar conditions within a group of peers, it contributes to the sense of belonging and environment in which young people will feel free to express their desires, difficulties, and challenges as others might relate and have a deeper understanding than adults. Nonetheless, the importance of the presence of both parents-young people and peer-to-peer social relations is crucial and in no study has it been mentioned that one factor is more significant than the other nor does one factor fulfill the other. (Paricio del Castillo and Pando Velasco, 2020).

In terms of the target group addressed in our research: even though the European Commission defines young people as between the ages of 13 and 30, in our project and research we have specifically focused on those aged 13 to 18, as this has been our focus target group in other project activities as well (piloting of the Youth Group Methodology).

Due to the geographical diversity of the project Re-GROUP research, there is the unique opportunity to examine the matter of research on national levels. This presupposes to shed a light on the national legislations, regulations as well as prevention measures that are implemented and conducted on a national, state, or local level. The conducted schemes and tools of detection and prevention of violence aim to reduce incidents of violence in schools and guide both youth and youth workers throughout the process of resolution whilst developing and sustaining good practices. Moreover, each partner of the research has conducted a review of their nation's current or latest reports on violence and the national, state, or local response, while constructing supporting factors that would assist young people to seek help and prevent violence and violent incidents.

In the current research, we focus on violence and well-being in young people for each partner country - through a literature review, which covers the above-mentioned policies, currently existing research and findings, and through the presentation of our own primary research, which consists of a questionnaire, aiming at least 100 young people in each country, supplemented by focus groups and interviews with both young people and youth workers.

We aim to understand the current situation and the needs of our target groups, to have a sober look on the situation, to enable youth workers and policy makers to act in educated ways towards improving the well-being of young people and reduce violence among and towards them.
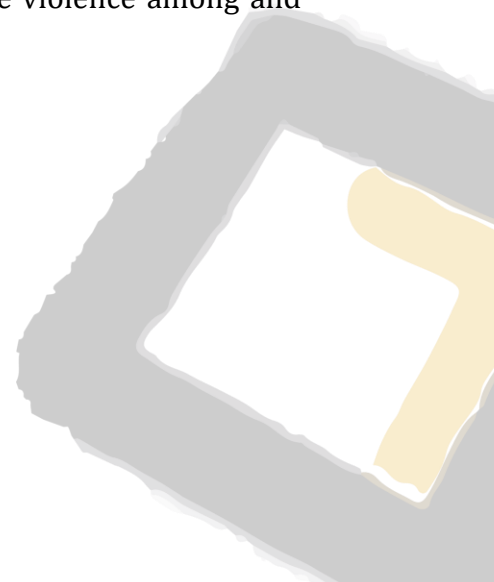
LITERATURE REVIEW

BULGARIA

The scale of violence - the amount of young people it impacts, among other factors, creates urgency and importance of this matter in Bulgaria.

According to UNICEF, it has been reported that almost 1 in 2 young people (45.9%) (UNICEF Results from Research of Violence Against Children in Bulgaria, 2021), experience a form of emotional violence in the primary environments young people are inclined to spend, household and school. Within the same research, the study approached the parents' behaviors as well within the household and found that 4 out of 5 parents had reported screaming, threatening, or had reached to the extent of using humiliating punishments as a means of discipline. Even more, a report by the Ministry of Education on violence and reported cases from 2019 (Karayancheva, 2019) concludes that psychological violence isn't recognized in families nor institutions (and isn't properly reported), and that physical violence is still being used by teachers for discipline. Further reviewing Bulgaria's school institute, it is mentioned that pedagogical specialists have the duty 'to protect the life and health of children and students during the educational process and to other activities organized by the institution' (Tsvetoslav, 2020). Though there is a law stating their duties in the 'Preschool and School Education Act' there is a generalization on when the pedagogical specialists are called upon to end a physical altercation amongst students. Thus, overlooking the high risk during the manifestation of such incidents and allowing them to escalate to a physical degree, by which the moment for intervention has passed. It is noteworthy to mention the lack of training applied for pedagogical specialists on managing incidents of conflict with emphasis on action during altercations amongst students. Additionally, it is significant to mention the state's approach towards the class/group rather on an individual level, even though they are aware of the individuals that frequently initiated the conflict.

Furthermore, it is worthy to mention the state's application of an 'Algorithm' and 'Inter-institutional action plan for the prevention of aggression and for strengthening security in educational institutions' that sets goals simultaneously on a short and permanent terms with the primary focus being interaction between pedagogical specialist and parents (Tsvetoslav, 2020). Substantially significant is the reported incidents and the preconditions in which they have been reported to the proper authority. It has evidently been shown that verbal and psychological violence has been turned a blind eye on and is not recognized by the youths' supportive figures (parent and institute) that could then report and provide the appropriate support required for those who have experienced such behavior. Consequently, leading to the inaccurate assumption and action of discipline being taught with the use of negative reinforcement of physical violence from their tutors. The aforementioned is further depicted

in findings of the research upon the LGBT+ community in which have additionally reported to a high degree the feeling of 'unsafe' due to their sexual orientation and expression of their gender. In particular, 1 out of 2 of young LGBTI student (48.3%) feel "unsafe" due to their sexual orientation. Even more students experience discriminatory behaviors by being verbally attacked (70.6%) and/or have experience being called slurs (82.9%) from their peers (Single Step Foundation, 2020). According to the findings of the research and policy applied within school environments in Bulgaria, it is evident the manifestation of on-going violence within school and young peers as well as its encouraged approach to continuously improve the lives and well-being of students. Findings from the studies as well as the demographic depicted from UNICEF present the capacity for further in-depth research to be conducted and for innovative suggestions to be made in the scope of improving young people's well-being within their household and within their school environment amongst peers. A lack of specific politics, of training for teachers, of awareness for parents on what violence is and how it manifests, is evident.

And yet, when it comes to the topic of well-being in Bulgaria, in a report from UNICEF from 2017 on the Voices of children (UNICEF, 2017) 81% of children overall claim to be mostly happy. The happiest self-reported are children who live in villages, and children of the youngest ages asked (9-11 years old); children are happiest when they are with friends (85%), with family (74%), or when they are in play (50%). However, children experience fatigue at school - for more than half of the respondents the study material is difficult, homework is a lot, it is hard to get high grades. The results of the research give reason to conclude that traditional forms of teaching and testing are not adequate for the new generation of children.

Other situations which create anxiety in respondents are most often family issues, trouble in the learning process, as well as, in 12% of respondents, being a bystander to physical violence at home. The fact that this number (12%) remains unchanged from previous years, shows that there hasn't been a change also for violence prevention, reporting and early detection of violence against children from the side of institutions. Poverty is also a significant factor in issues in the well-being of young people. The same report also discusses free time as a factor for the well-being of children and youth. Only 28% of respondents participate in a club, organized activity, or a youth association; this, together with a low number of young people actively engaged in sports, showcases an overall unhealthy lifestyle of the young. A report by Friedrich Ebert Institute (Mitev et al, 2019) showcases that while 54% of young people report to be in excellent health, 29% smoke every day and 16% - from time to time; 12% drink several times a week. The same report also examines what young people do in their free time - young people mostly report two activities - passive relaxing and communication (with family, friends); participation in civic/voluntary activities is very rare, confirming the findings by UNICEF. The interests and needs of young people in this way are obviously unmet, and their free time, potential and oftentimes health, remain unattended.

LATVIA

Data from a report of OECD (Violence against women and children in Latvia. Summary of the situation and publicly available statistics (2019) University of Latvia, Department of Anthropology) indicates that in Latvia 30,6% of students from the age of 15 experience physical or emotional violence in schools several times per month. While that is less than the figure in Bulgaria, it should be also noted that the average in OECD countries is 18,7%.

Whilst examining Latvia's research on the matter of violence and measurements of prevention for youngsters, it is noteworthy to mention recent studies on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic had on young people's mental health. Considering that well-being and mental health are interconnected, the urgency for an action plan facing the aftermath of both the initial and secondary wave of the pandemic has been emphasized (TBT Staff, 2021). Particularly, a study demonstrated the number of young people that had already been facing difficulties and shared that emotionally they felt "extremely bad" has doubled over the period of the second wave of the pandemic. The main obstacle for youngsters was dealing with the difficulty of learning (79.2 %) considering the length to which they dedicate the majority of their time. Secondly, the majority of youngsters shared a common feeling of depression (70.4%). This is linked with the third finding of obsessive thinking that would then progress and make them feel irritated (60%) as time would pass. While researching the above-mentioned findings, the study depicts the evident causations that, in nature, shared a common fundamental ground with previous studies. The primary challenge faced by Latvia's youth is difficulty with their school/work, the aftermath of which could be indicative of their learning difficulties as 79.2% of the target group had expressed. Moreover, as previous studies depict, the lack of both quality time after school hours and physical activity has had a significant impact on their mental health. Both time dedicated for physical activities and quality time have made it evident and are considered as key role factors in improving young people's well-being, both from a physical and psychological approach (TBT Staff, 2021).

Further interesting is Latvia's approach on shedding light regarding cyberbullying amongst youth. Though the conventional form of violent/bullying behaviors remain present to this day, it is a matter of interest and worthy of in-depth examination. A study conducting comprehensive interviews showed that students perceive the "line" between "bullying" and harmless "joking" as remaining too foggy to declare. This would then contribute to "cyberbullying" existence being questioned as a phenomenon and whether it is preventable. Furthermore, approximately 1 out of 2 young students (45,7%) seem to result to violence due to being perceived as a means or manner of self-defense, and thus, is necessary and inevitable to defend oneself in their education institution. (Dudure et al, 2019). In addition, students tended to view "cyberbullying" from an individualistic approach, rather than a collective that impacts multiple target groups simultaneously whilst diminishing its reach and significance. Though questioned, when students do face this form of violence, they are

unaware of how to seek help and who they can inform about it due to their lack of belief in effectively receiving assistance or in fear of worsening their current situation. Withal, students have shown to further be discouraged to express their difficulties towards adults, as adults were noted as either not being able to "understand" them or characterizing "cyberbullying" as a method of "toughening" one's character and thus is considered as a means to benefit the youth. In the same study (Dudure et al, 2019), there are three forms of primary components that were drawn from the interviews as a form of bullying. The initial being disseminating private information, secondly, presenting the individual negatively within inner and outer circles, causing exclusion amongst peers, and lastly, using verbal violence with the use of mean comments. Though students dealt uniform violent behaviours and means of such practices, it was noted that girls had experienced further scrutiny in comparison to boys, regarding their appearance, bodies, and sexual behaviour. The perception of violence and bullying being an inevitable phenomena in school, the frequent and recurring of cyberbullying cases and its long distant reach it has to young people, along with the sense of lack of understanding how young people feel, calls for attention and continuation of prevention of violence and education on further promoting well-being healthy practices for both young people and adults to implement.

On the topic of well-being, a research report (Latvian Child Welfare Network, 2019) discusses that in Latvia (and Lithuania) every fourth person meets material or social deprivation - economic strain, insufficient resources to buy durables, housing deprivation. About 90% of young people consider that there is a tension between poor and rich people in the society, also between racial and ethnic groups. 73% in LV indicate the tension between people with different sexual orientations. Yet additionally young people with a non-heterosexual sexual identity remain an underresearched and hidden issue in Latvia (MARTA Center, 2019).

Another finding of the research on well-being in the Baltic states shows that feeling a sense of belonging at school is lower than the average level of OECD countries. Latvia among OECD countries has the highest rate of frequently bullied students.

Based on all examined information, is it no wonder that in Latvia there is a larger than in the EU average proportion of young people who regularly feel downhearted and depressed (LV-11%; EU-5%)
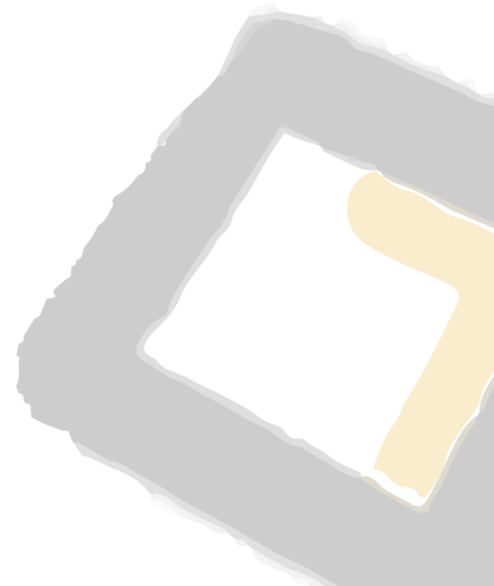
ROMANIA

Examining on an international length different nations background research on violence and well-being, it has repeatedly been shown to prioritize scrutiny in the educational institutions (school) and households, two settings in which youngsters primarily spend their time and are significantly impacted. Romania has conducted a study on a national degree, in scopes of gaining a deeper insight on abuse of youth at school, including teacher-student behavior. Parallel to the former target group and setting, the study (Grădinaru and Stănculeanu, 2013) examined abusive behaviors towards young people within their families and homes. Examining the latter, the study depicts both youths and parents' perception/acknowledgement of what is defined as abusive physical behavior and the discrepancy between both groups. On one hand, from the perspective of young people, 63% reported physical violence being utilized as a means of child rearing and punishment, a percentage that contradicts the frequency and implication in comparison to their parents. On the other hand, it had been noted that 38% of parents' do not perceive nor acknowledge behaviors such as "slapping" and "ear-pulling'' as being physically abusive and hence, the discrepancy could be attributed to the parallel definition of physical abusive behaviors. Furthermore, with the use of qualitative methods, it was established that youngsters reported to have faced a variety of forms of violence within their homes, varying from physical, verbal, psychological and child neglect - 18% of children say they have been beaten at home with a stick or a rod, 13% with a belt, 8% with a wooden spoon.

In addition, Romania's base study included and presented how this form of violence directed from parent to child was similarly directed from parent to parent within the same household. This would further contribute to the child's decline in well-being and psycho-emotional development. It should also be taken into consideration that the children of the study were also able to observe and report the primary factors that contributed to the maintenance and increase of said behaviors. Firstly, due to acute stress within their household due to socio-economic state of the household, secondly, the absence of additional educational sources of child rearing and thirdly, the lack of communication between parents and their children.

In regard to the school setting, the study took into account the factor of cultural diversity within the class of children raised in rural areas and Roma children and how that altered the teacher's behavior/manner accordingly. Thus, children that had already been facing one or multiple forms of the aforementioned types of violence within their home, would be experiencing furthermore similar and likewise behavior at their school and from their teachers. Due to the additional negative and similar abusive behavior, lead to students from further continuing their education and would eventually lead to the high erosion of school dropouts because of the negative reinforced behaviors towards children. Nonetheless, it was then suggested that teachers occupied within rural areas should attend positive educational and psycho-pedagogical training to develop positive responses and methods of teaching

towards vulnerable groups that may battle with specific needs and encourage their students to remain at school. Noteworthy is the inclusion of the children's behavior amongst peers and the similar discrepancy of what is an act of violent behavior and distinguishing the intention amongst peers. According to the study, the intention behind students' violent behavior is unclear on whether the intended purpose is to cause harm or not. However, behaviors such as "shoving, slapping, hitting with arms or legs, swearing" were excluded from the definition of "violence" and its intent remains unclear, categorizing it as an act of mild or moderate physical injury/hit. Diversity amongst young people such as their age, gender and sexual orientation are key variables and are examined in relation to their role in regards to violence and well-being. Nonetheless, due to Romania's youth cultural diverse background with young people from Rural areas and Roma students, the study included and dedicated a portion of their focus on Roma students in their attempt to capture a genuine and authentic frame of how the life of young Roma students is within the education institute and in addition to their household status.

In terms of free time and young people's interaction with the internet, a study from 2018 had some very interesting findings (Grădinaru and Stoika, 2018). 99.3% of children say they have a profile on a social network. 27% of respondents say that on a typical school day they spend more than 6 hours online or constantly check their device, while on a day off, be it a weekend or a holiday, 48.3% of children spend more than 6 hours a day online. Almost half (42%) of children say they know of situations where a friend, colleague or relative has been annoyed or upset online. Among these, we find significantly more girls and high school students; 61% of respondents say they have felt uncomfortable as a result of something seen on the Internet, significantly more girls and high school students. Yet, even if they say they are bothered by certain information they encounter online, fewer than 2 in 10 children react by either talking to someone or finding a solution to resolve the situation.

When we relate this relationship to the internet to factors of well-being, it is noteworthy that the study's respondents, who say they spend more than 6 hours online, whether it is a school day or a day off: a. are significantly more dissatisfied with their life today; b. are significantly more dissatisfied with their relationship with parents, friends and teachers; c. are significantly less likely to find everyday activities meaningful and are less optimistic about the future; d. say they have been less relaxed in the last two weeks and are more dissatisfied with their decisions. Children who say they have been a victim of cyberbullying or sexting give significantly lower scores on questions measuring emotional well-being.
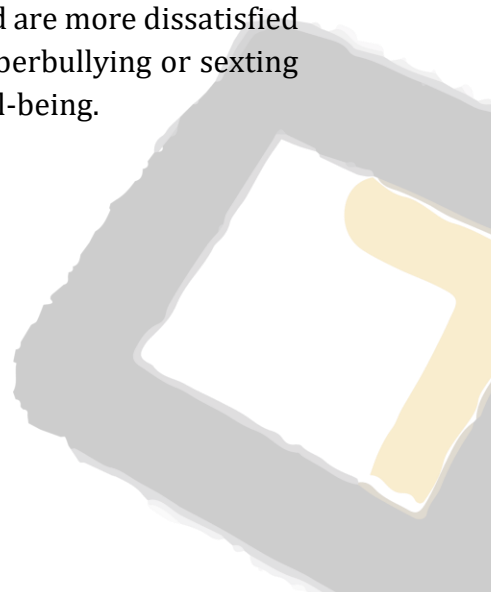
SPAIN

There has been intensive research regarding the forthcoming issues of gender-based-violence (GBV) oriented towards young women (age 16 and above). A study from 2019 conducted face-to-face interviews with a sum of approximately nine and a half thousand women residing in Spain (Government Delegation Against Gender Violence., 2019). The study was able to collect a significant amount of case studies and recorded reports from the local and national authorities (police and social services) by victims of GBV. The initial conclusion of the study showed the immense number of young women that had experienced a form of violence due to their gender was 1 in 2 (57.3%), whilst 1 in every 5 women had experienced violence in the past 12 months. The study shed a light on the matter of rape and violence of young women either single or in a relationship with their partners and found that only 6.5% of respondents had not experienced any sort of sexual violence. Even though there are numerous cases being reported to the authorities, when compared to the unreported cases of violence towards single young women, only as few as 8% of the cases are reported. The aftermath of the offenses has both a physiological and psychological consequence on the young women's lives and their relationship with their partners.

Nonetheless, according to Spain's national laws regarding violence and the well-being of youth and children, there are plans drafted for the prevention and detention of violence towards children and adolescents (Ministry of health, consumption and social welfare, 2019). Both chapter IV and IX from the preliminary draft of the law for integral protection of children and adolescents against violence, take into account the necessary requirements for Security Forces and Bodies on a state, regional and local level. These units would operate in hopes of detecting behaviors that would offend a young individual prior to the incident occurring, as well apply the unit to prevent such incidents by limiting high risk factors that could lead to a young individual facing violence. Withal, as in per the case of Romania, the draft is oriented to serve the youth by protecting them from multiple forms of violence such as bullying, cyberbullying, sexual harassment, and gender violence taking place within a school setting.

In terms of well-being, COVID-19 also had a significant impact on depression, anxiety and stress in young people (Tamarit et al., 2020). Regarding depression, girls were more likely to experience depression symptoms than boys during the pandemic. Adolescents who have experienced an important life event during the pandemic, were more likely to feel depressed. The more time adolescents spent at home without leaving the house much, the more depressed they felt. Adolescents who have experienced COVID-19 actually are less likely to present symptoms of depression.

Regarding anxiety, girls are more likely to experience anxiety symptoms than boys during the pandemic. Adolescents who were doing volunteer work during the COVID-19 outbreak were more likely to feel anxious. Young people who had experienced an important life event,

were also more likely to present symptoms of anxiety. The more time adolescents spent watching/searching the news about COVID-19, the more anxious they felt.

As for stress, girls were more likely to experience stress symptoms than boys during the pandemic. Doing volunteer work and living in a small household also contributes to stress symptoms. Another study supports these findings (Paricio del Castillo, and Pando Velasco, 2020), confirming that infectious pandemics are associated with an increase in anxiety, depressive and post-traumatic symptoms in the child-adolescent population, as well as bringing up that confinement leads to an increase in the possibility of child abuse and neglect in care.

In addition to the similarities shared between the 4 countries, it is evident that a significant percentage of young people face violence and impedes the opportunity to fully develop their potential along with their ability to seek help and support from the proper authority and group. Though in all countries, including Spain, there are policies, authorities and constructed schemes placed to prevent violence among young people, it is shown that in each nation, 1 out of 2 young people have faced a form of violence.

Therefore, further advocating for the necessity of alternative preventive methods and the encouragement of healthy habits, policies and practices that would secure the improvement of their well-being and health are deemed imperative.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

METHODOLOGY

As we already reviewed, the desk research of Re-GROUP set out to provide information through published research and reports as each partner examined 'violence' and 'well-being' in their own nation. The additional purpose of the desk research is to demonstrate the common challenges and tools each nation implemented when encountering cases of young people facing violence. Similarities in common important factors of well-being among each partner's research underline the importance of the social group (peers), family and household status, as well as socio-economic conditions within their household but also within the country. Additionally, the desk research highlights the ambition of the countries in directing their resources towards detecting and preventing violence in young people's environments, hence, improving their day-to-day psychological and physical well-being - but also underlines the failure of achieving meaningful change.

To add to the desk research already analyzed, the Re-GROUP partnership conducted primary research on the well-being and rates of violence of young people in our four highlighted countries, in order to get comparable, timely, meaningful data, with which to add to the existing body of work in this topic. The methodology of our research includes: (1) a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions, aimed at young people (13-18 y.o.); (2) focus groups with young people and (3) focus groups with youth workers; (4) interviews with young people and (5) interviews with youth workers.

(1) Initially, the project gathered data through the use of questionnaires with the purpose to quantify data and produce generalized findings of the large sample to then be able to adjust these findings on the population of interest (young people – youth workers). Also, through the process of random selection for the questionnaires, served the purpose of accumulating various views and opinions on a sensitive topic. Only in the case of Spain, the participants of the questionnaire were less than required due to eliminating some responses that did not comply with the requirements that were set. The questionnaires across all 4 countries were the same and included three sections:

1. Demographic questions - this section asked the participants of their country and area of the country (rural, city/big town, capital city); of their age and gender; of their family status.
2. Questions on well-being - this section invited participants to evaluate their current happiness levels; define well-being for themselves; identify where they feel happiest, which elements contribute most (and least) to their well-being, how much time they spend on their well-being; last in this section, participants are asked to rate statements, related to their well-being.

3. Questions on violence - this section invited participants to define violence and identify forms of violence; it asked if the participants have been victims of violence (and clarifying questions), if they have been a witness to violence (and clarifying questions), as well as additional questions on reporting violence and forms of violence.

(2) To grasp the targeted group's experience and factors that contributed to a sense of well-being, focus groups among young people were held. The focus groups began by defining the meaning of well-being for the participants, as well as their current state of well-being (similarly to the questionnaire) - this was also used as a way to foster communication and open sharing for the duration of the focus group. Afterwards, the focus group asked young people to reflect on different aspects of well-being (who might help in improving their own well-being; what resources are needed to improve their well-being; what challenges make this difficult), as well as on violence in their life (defining violence, witnessing it, discussing resources that might be helpful to prevent or combat violence, as well as external support for violence prevention). Finally, the focus group unites the two terms and examines them alongside each other with the young people. Focus groups were conducted amongst the target group with the presence of a member of one of the partner organizations, who was instructed to clarify questions, explain the instructions and moderate the session, creating an environment where participants can interact, discuss, and exchange experiences with one another.

(3) To add a bigger scope in findings, the Re-GROUP partnership also organized focus groups with youth workers on the same topics. This was done in order to create a fuller picture of what youngsters are experiencing from the point of view of people, who professionally pay attention to the well-being and the violence experienced among youth. Youth workers are in close contact and collaborate with young people through the duration of their occupation in scope supporting and or assisting them. An example of such would be psychologists, social workers, school librarians and so on. The extent to which youth workers have contact with young people varies according to their capacity, therefore a psychologist may perhaps provide more support and guidance to young people facing emotional violence whilst social services could provide community resources and facilities. The focus groups started from more conversationally establishing the roles of the youth workers in the lives of young people, and then moved on to the topic of well-being in youth (how they define it, what is the average level, how to improve their well-being) and the topic of violence in youth (defining it, examples of violence in their reality, their beliefs on what causes violence, how to combat and prevent violence, formal mechanisms for that and what is missing in them). Similar to the focus group with young people, this focus group ended with some questions, which united the topics of violence and well-being and examined them together.

(4) In addition to the focused group method, interviews on a one-on-one method allowed participants to explain the underlying beliefs and experience that may be excluded due to

the presence of others, also dedicating the entirety of the session on to the participant, allowing them to steer their own thought process and conversation without interruptions. Within an open environment and safe space, interviews give the participants the sense to freely express their opinions and feelings on a subject that is intricate and sensitive, as they may be revisiting prior violent behaviors that had affected them, sharing personal and deep experiences of their lives. The questions in the interviews expanded on the questions in the focus groups, on the topics of violence and well-being.

(5) Similar to the interviews with young people, the Re-GROUP research also conducted interviews with youth workers, which aimed to explore the topic in more depth and with more detail. While there wasn't a consideration for youth workers not wanting to share during the focus groups, the interviews as a research method provided to the partnership an opportunity for more in-depth dives into the topics of violence and well-being for young people, as observed in the work of youth workers.

Considering the aforementioned research methods, the purpose of the research overall was to minimize the limitation of each method and increase the opportunity for the participants to have the ability to express freely and thoroughly. Through this process, collecting sufficient quantitative and qualitative data to then extract key factors of well-being, risk factors of violence, outlining quantitative results on the demographic and finally provide suggestions on how to improve young people's well-being based on the findings of the research.

It is important to note that the questionnaires, questions for focus groups and interviews were the same and translated appropriately in the language of the country each partner researched. It is notable to mention the sample groups were informed of their anonymity as per their instructions as well as the language in which the questionnaires are written in. Furthermore, regarding inclusivity, participants were randomly selected and involved young people from both rural and urban areas within the country.
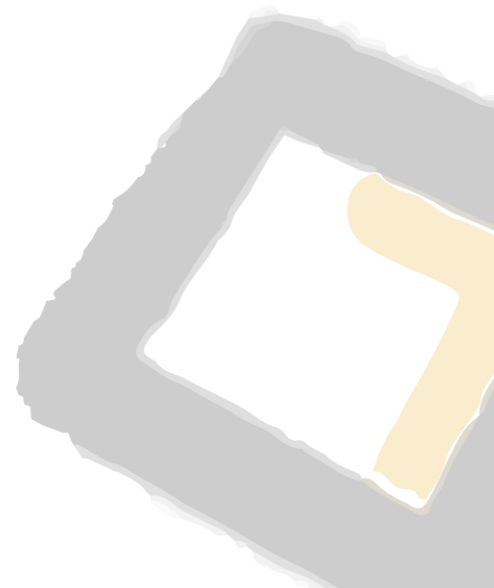
LIMITATIONS

To provide a holistic insight, the study aimed to collect data from equally sized groups from all the included geographical areas (rural and urban areas). While usually such research gathers more information from capital and big cities, the Re-GROUP questionnaire also had an issue with balance, though with more participation from rural areas and non-capital cities in the countries in which we held our research.

Another external factor that proved to be challenging to the research is the country's cultural approach towards the topic of violence and well-being. An example of such possibility is of participants being discouraged to share their past experiences when discussing violence because the cultural norm does not promote sharing feelings, emotions, and thoughts on the matter of violence, in particular for male individuals due to its conflict with male gender roles in the specific society. Additionally, as the desk research found, many instances of violence are normalized by the societies of the project, and sometimes even direct forms of physical violence are dismissed as a normal punishment, normal behavior, etc.

A noteworthy limitation is that while interviewing youth workers, we found that the scope of their work (which varies a lot) truly impacts their understanding of the well-being and violence in youth. While some types of youth workers are more in tune with these topics, others are more separated and uninformed of how young people are handling their own well-being or how they face violence in their lives. We tried to find active and very engaged youth workers both for our focus groups and for the interviews with youth workers.

An additional factor that limited the research capacity and schedule were the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic that placed all countries to a hold. The frequent changes of the protective measures meant the frequent adjustment of the researchers and participants, significantly limited physical meetings, altered methods on conducting focus groups and interviews from a qualitative standpoint. It initially resulted in exploring other pathways and resources of communication to search for participants interested to partake in the research and then thoroughly inform them of the purpose and their ethical rights.

It should be noted that the overall scope of the research is not fully representative of the population of our countries. While the scope is not statistically significant, we believe our findings, supplemented by the qualitative research methods, provide a meaningful contribution to the understanding of violence and well-being in youth.

Compiling the above challenges of the research, if resolved, future studies would then further enrich the findings of the study and scope of the project -Re-GROUP.
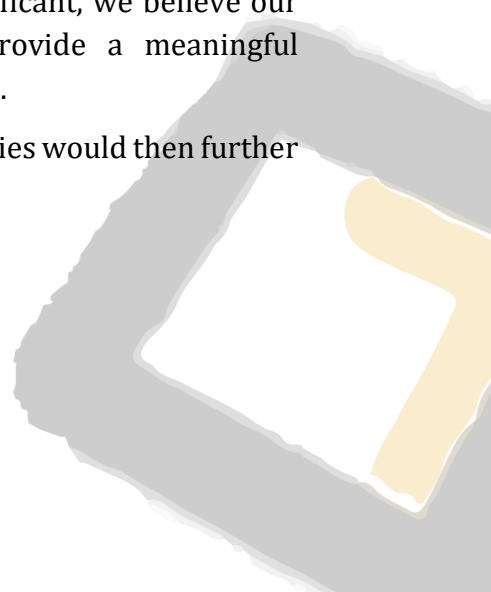
FINDINGS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

As each country implemented questionnaires as a research method, all of which were the same and translated into each country's native language, the findings demonstrate the demographic of the sample groups and the results of each question per country. Each country aimed to have at least 100 responses from young people aged 13-18. The findings below are organized into three sections, following the structure of the questionnaire, firstly providing the demographic of the sample groups, secondly, the findings on the variable on well-being and thirdly the findings on the variable of violence.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

BULGARIA

There are 109 collected responses for the questionnaire in Bulgaria, from which 103 were considered due to the focused targeted group.

The majority (53.34%) of participants reside within a large town/city, excluding the capital city of Sofia. 34% of the participants live in rural areas and the minority of participants - 10.7% reside in the capital Sofia. From the 103 individuals, 66% identified as female and 33% as male.
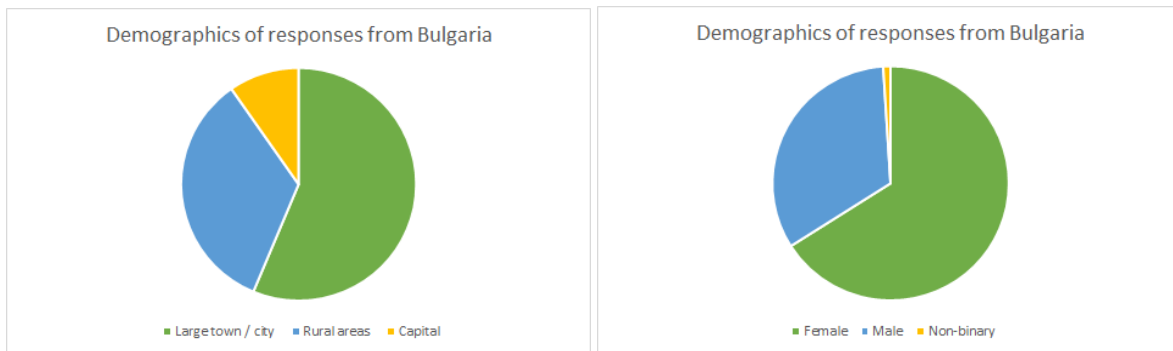
Their living arrangement varied as such: 67% of the participants currently live within a household with both parents present, 22.3% live with a single parent. The remaining percentage varied from participants living either with both divorced parents or with a single divorced parent, along with a singular case in which the respondee lives with a guardian rather than a biological parent.

Demographics of responses from Bulgaria

■ Both parents   ■ Single parent   ■ Others
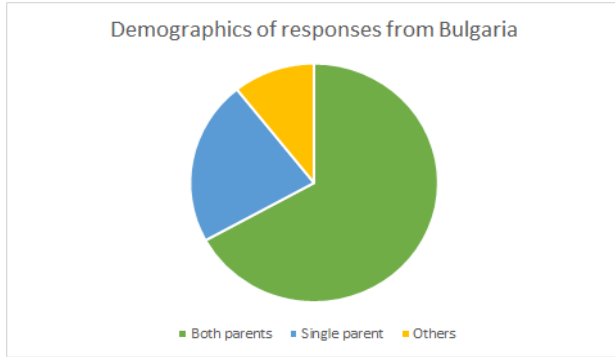
LATVIA

From a total of 339 participants, 301 were within the target group (13-18 y.o.). The majority - 69.44% of participants reside in either the city/suburbs (37.21%) or capital (32.23%) with a total of 30.56% residing in the countryside.

From the 301 participants, 64.78% identify as female, 33.89% as male, 0.33% as trans, 0.33% as gender fluid and 0.33% as non-binary.

Demographics of responses from Latvia

■ Large town / city   ■ Rural areas   ■ Capital

Demographics of responses from Latvia

■ Female   ■ Male   ■ Non-binary, gender fluid, trans
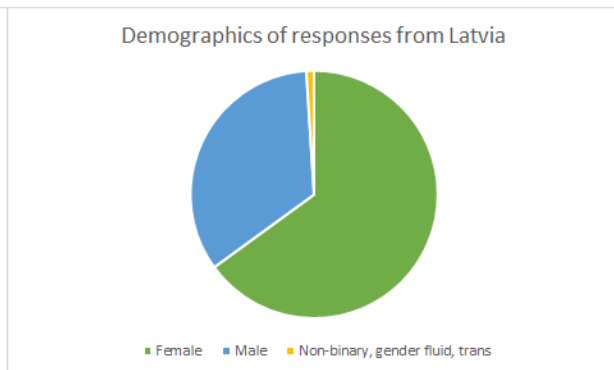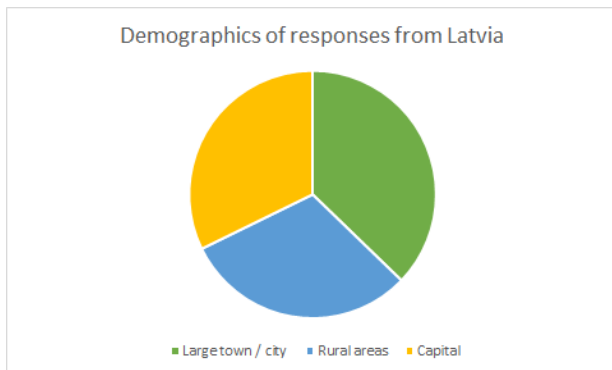
67.96% report residing within a household with both parents present, 30.10% report their parents are divorced, 0.97% report residing with a legal guardian, while 0.97% report that their parents are abroad.

Demographics of responses from Latvia

■ Both parents   ■ Divorced parent   ■ Legal guardian   ■ Other
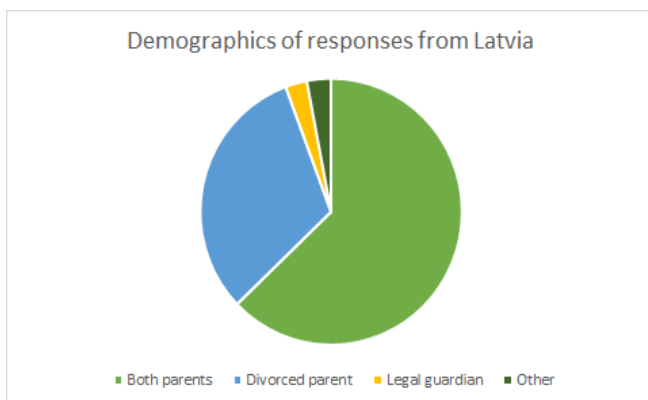
ROMANIA

From the total of 96 participants, the majority (86%) reside in rural areas, while 13% reported residing mainly in nearby towns and 1% in the capital of Bucharest. 64.95% reported their gender as female and 34.02% as male, however, there was a singular case of which a participant had reported as non-binary.

In addition, 86.18% of all participants were living in a household with both parents, approximately 5% lived in a household with either a single parent or divorced parent, while 2.44% resided with legal guardians.
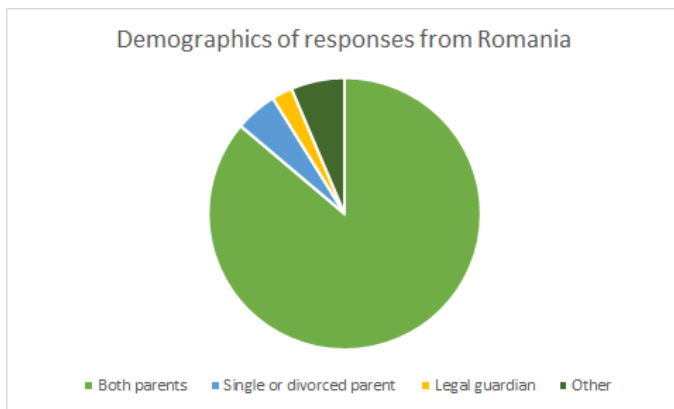
SPAIN

Each of the 65 respondees resided in Spain and was within the targeted group, from which 64.41% identified as female and 33.90% as male whilst 1 percent identified as "genderless".

Regarding the area of residence, 94.92% resided in a city (not the capital) while 5.08% resided in rural areas. There were no responses from the capital, Madrid.
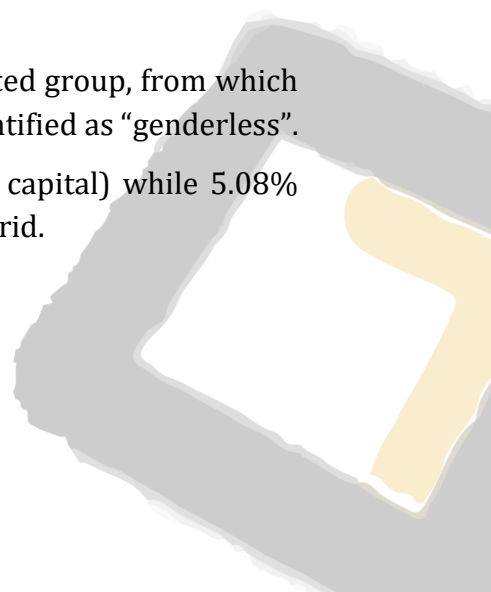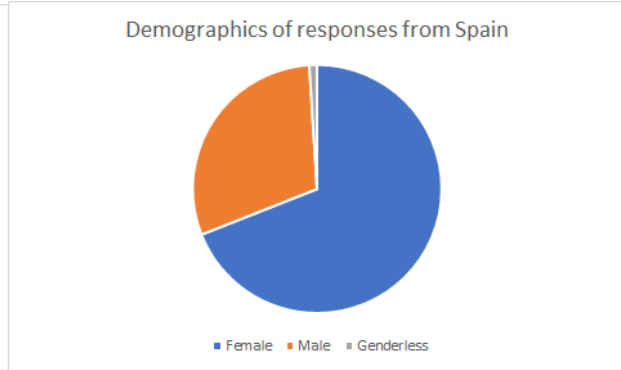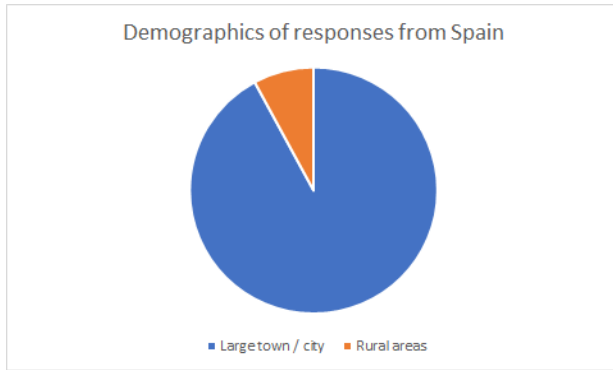
45.76% of participants declared living with both parents, 45.76% resided with a single parent in the household, 5.08% had been residing with divorced parents, while 3.39% of participants resided with an assigned legal guardian. It is also noted that a minor percentage of the sample either provided a variety of answers and few resided with older siblings.
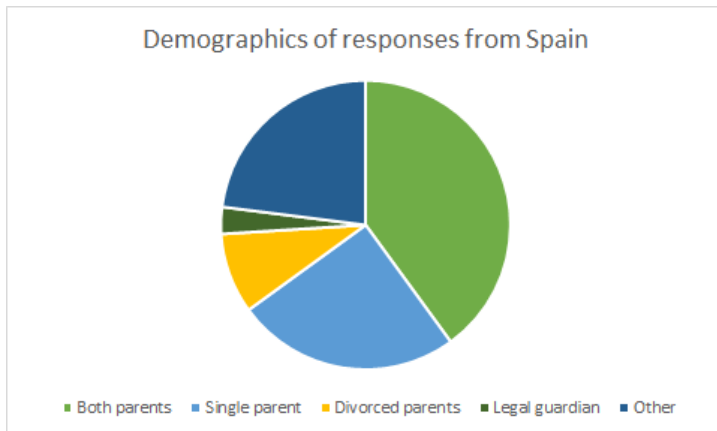
SECTION 2: WELL-BEING

QUESTION 1. The questionnaire proceeded to ask participants to state the condition of their well-being at the time of the research. The available 5 options for answers were inspired by the Well-being Indicator Tool for Youth (2015) by The University of Minnesota. Below are the findings from each partner country:

BULGARIA

27% of young people in the research report their well-being is 'normal'; 27% report feeling 'good', 25% were 'just surviving', 10% feeling 'great' and lastly 11% of young people feeling their state of well-being in 'crisis'. The following table provides a clear picture of the findings:

State of Well-being	Response
In crisis	11%
Just Surviving	25%
Normal	27%
Good	27%
Great	10%

Table 1.1

LATVIA

32.89% of respondents reported doing 'Normal', 26.2% reported as being 'Good', 27.24% reported as 'Just Surviving', 5.65% reported as 'Great' while 7.64% reported as in 'Crisis'. The following table provides a clear picture of the findings:

State of Well-being	Response
In crisis	7.6
Just Surviving	27.7
Normal	32.9
Good	26.2
Great	5.6

Table 1.2

ROMANIA

From the total of participants, 26.80% reported feeling 'Normal', 32.99% were feeling 'Good', 24.745% were 'just surviving'. 13.40% were 'doing great' and lastly though significant 2.06% were feeling 'in crisis'. The below table provides a clear depiction of the responses:

State of Well-being	Response
In crisis	2.07%
Just Surviving	24.74%
Normal	26.80%
Good	32.99%
Great	13.40%

Table 1.3

SPAIN

For 32.20% of the participants, their well-being is 'normal', 45,77% are feeling 'good', 10.17% were 'just surviving', 10.17% feeling 'great' and lastly 1.69% of young people feeling their state of well-being 'in crisis'. The below table provides a clear depiction of the responses:

State of Well-being	Response
In crisis	1.69%
Just Surviving	10.17%
Normal	32.20%
Good	45.77%
Great	10.17%

Table 1.4

To summarize the findings of this question, the table below allows for combined analysis of the received responses:

State of Well-being	BULGARIA	LATVIA	ROMANIA	SPAIN
In crisis	9%	7.6%	2.07%	1.69%
Just Surviving	24.6%	27.2%	24.74%	10.17%
Normal	29.8%	32.9%	26.80%	32.20%
Good	26.9%	26.7%	32.99%	45.77%
Great	9.7%	5.6%	13.40%	10.17%

Table 1.5

QUESTION 2: Next, participants were asked to share a definition of 'well-being' according to their own interpretation. The question was fully open-ended.

BULGARIA

The participants responded by describing a state of 'happy', 'calm', 'secure and balanced', 'feeling good', 'being healthy', additionally proving a further sentimental and personal touch 'being satisfied with what you have achieved' and 'being surrounded by people who support you'. In addition to participants definition, financial stability and-or wealth to afford their lifestyle, was a factor contributing and assists establishing their definition of well-being.

LATVIA

A part of the participants described well-being as achieving inner satisfaction and a good self-image, whilst others had described well-being as an absolute state where well-being is perfected, and they achieved excellence with the absence of any bad situation. There were only a few cases in which participants struggled to define or were not able to provide any sort of definition of well-being.

ROMANIA

The responses varied though involved a similar state of closeness with their immediate relatives and friends, happiness, including the absence of feeling 'bad', anxious and other related negative emotional states that risk and disrupt well-being.

SPAIN

The responses varied and revolved around the idea of 'peace' and 'tranquility' in relation to health and the sufficient financial ability to provide for themselves. Among other responses, feeling good and fulfillment, living in the present, the sense of love and a sense of internal well-being.

The word cloud below was generated from the responses of participants, to summarize the definition of well-being, as created by the respondents.

QUESTION 3: Further on examining the attributed factors of well-being, each participant was inquired to vote on the type of environment that made them feel happiest. Respondents had the opportunity to choose more than one of the offered options, as well as to add a response of their own.

BULGARIA

The results show 'extracurricular activities' is the leading factor with a vote of 45.6%, following is time spent at 'at home' with 42.7%, then is school with 23.3%, use of internet with 18.4% and less voted was the time spent at work with 2.9% vote from young people. Though, it is noticed that 20.3% of participants added a variation partaking in activities with friends in various locations and a minority of young people responded family oriented or time spent in nature.

Environment feeling happiest	Response
Extracurricular activities	29.8%
Home	27.9%
School	15.2%
Online	12%
Work placements	1.9%
Friends	13.2

Table 3.1

LATVIA

The majority voted 'extracurricular activities' as the predominant factor for well-being, followed by 'Home' at 26.8%, 'School' at 8.1%, 'Online' presence at 4.4%, 'Friends' at 3.5% and work environment at 1.0%. The table below depicts the order of the aforementioned findings.

Environment feeling happiest	Response
Extracurricular activities	55.7
Home	26.8
School	8.8
Online	4.5
Friends	3.5
Work placements	0.7

Table 3.2

ROMANIA

Findings demonstrate that the majority (71.88%) of participants expressed that their environment in their home played a key role to their well-being, following are extracurricular activities at 15.63%, school at 4.13%, time spent with friends at 6.25% and time spent online at 2.11%.

Environment feeling happiest	Response
Home	71.88
Extracurricular activities	15.63
School	4.13
Friends	6.25
Online	2.11
Work placements	-

Table 3.3

SPAIN

Examining the factors that contribute to well-being, each participant voted on what made them feel happiest. The concluding results show that 'home' is the leading factor with a vote of 59,32%, spending time 'at school' with 11.86%, activities at 22.03%, use of internet at 5.1%, while friends was voted at 1.69%. A few other responses were mentioned such as traveling, being around nature and spending alone time at home.

Environment feeling happiest	Response
Extracurricular activities	22.03%
Home	59.32%
School	11.86%
Online	5.1%
Friends	1.69%

Table 3.4
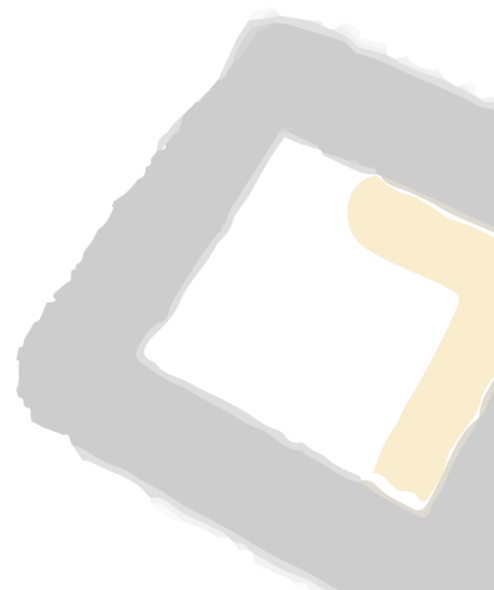
To compare and summarize the results, the table below puts the data side by side:

Environment feeling happiest	BULGARIA	LATVIA	ROMANIA	SPAIN
Extracurricular activities	29.8%	55.7	15.63	22.03
Home	27.9%	26.8	71.88	59.32
School	15.2%	8.8	4.13	11.86
Online	12%	4.5	2.11	5.1
Work placements	1.9%	3.5	-	-
Friends	13.2	0.7	6.25	1.69

Table 3.5

QUESTION 4: Factors that directly attributed to the participants' well-being were also included within the questionnaire. In this question as well, participants could choose multiple pre-written options for which of the elements contributes the most. In this question, there was no opportunity to add other responses because the options chosen are the identified main factors for well-being according to the agreement of the partnership.

BULGARIA

Participant answers reveal that 'friendship' and 'mental health' are predominant factors of well-being with 22.4% of young people equally voting both factors. Followed by 17.5% response is time affluence, 13.3% chose 'relationships', 'financial stability' with 11.4% choosing physical safety at 8.2% and 'sense of belonging' with 4.9%.

Elements of well-being	Response
Friends	22.4
Mental health	22.4
Quality free time	17.5
Relationships	13.3
Financial stability	11.4
Physical safety	8.2
Feeling of acceptance	4.9

Table 4.1

Physical safety
8.2%

Financial stability
11.4%

Friends
22.4%

Feeling of acceptance
4.9%

Relationships
13.3%

Mental health
22.4%

Quality free time
17.5%
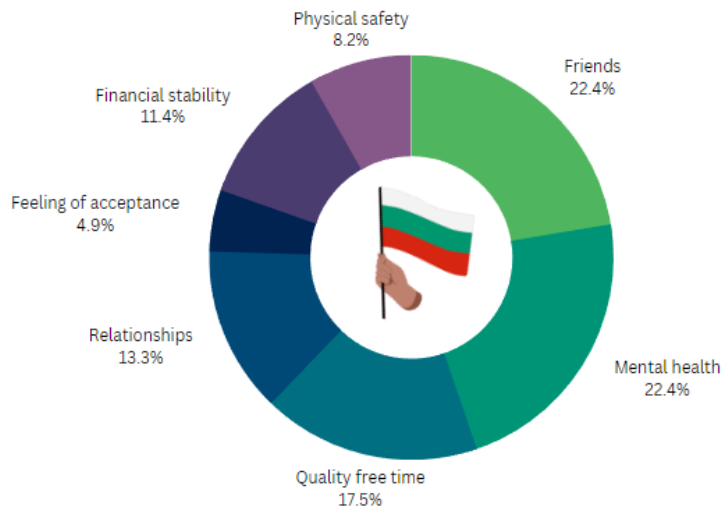
LATVIA

The predominant attribute to the participants' well-being are their friendships, followed closely by emotional security at 21.7%, time affluence at 21.1%, sense of belonging and acceptance at 15.4%, financial stability at 11.4% along with physical safety at 4.0%.

Elements of well-being	Response
Friends	26.3
Emotional security	21.7
Time affluence	21.1
Feeling of acceptance	15.4
Physical safety	4
Financial stability	11.5

Table 4.2

Physical safety
4%

Financial stability
11.5%

Friends
26.3%

Feeling of acceptance
15.4%

Mental health
21.7%

Quality free time
21.1%
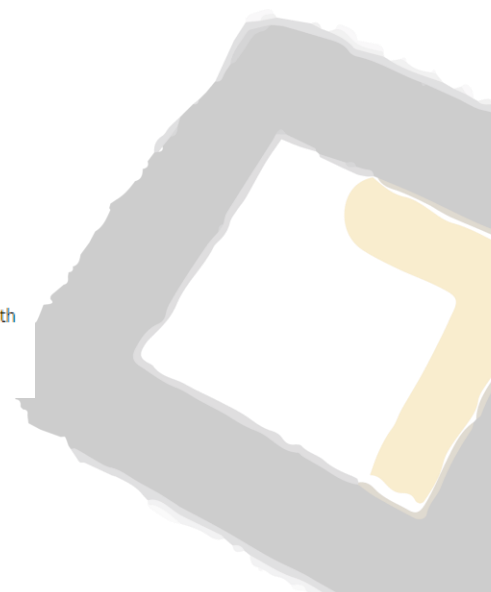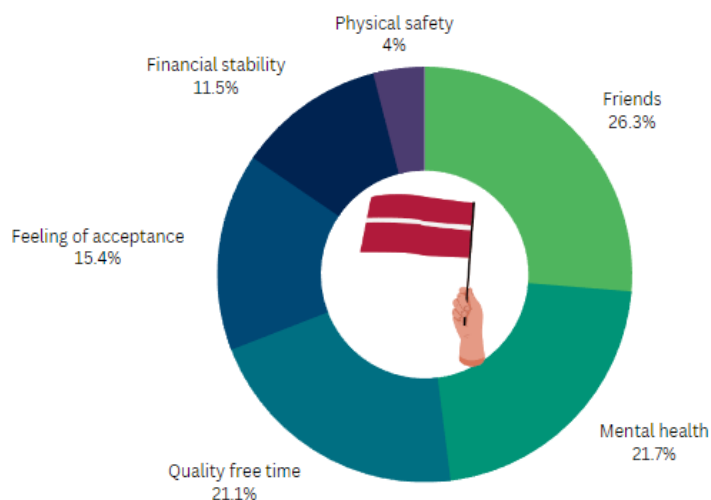
ROMANIA

Most of the participants chose friendships as the main factor, 'emotional security' came as a secondary factor (14.58%) along with time affluence (8.33%), a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst peers 4.17%, physical security 3.13%,financial stability at 2.8% and lastly by order was relationships at 1.04%.

Elements of well-being	Response
Friends	66.67
Emotional security	14.58
Time affluence	8.33
Feeling of acceptance	4.17
Physical safety	3.13
Financial stability	2.08
Relationships	1.04

Table 4.3
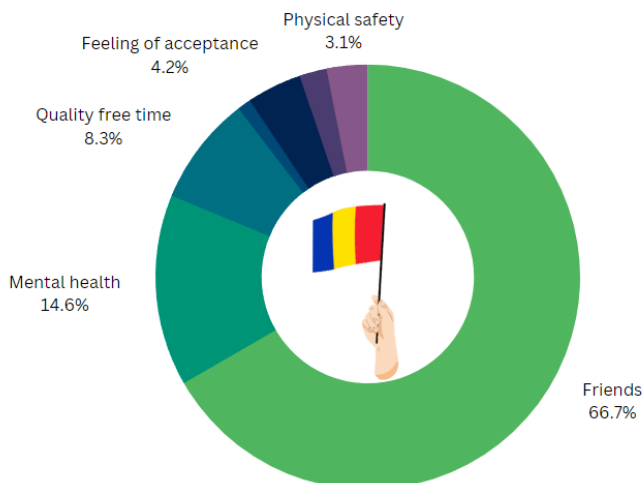
SPAIN

Results demonstrate that 'friendship' and 'mental safety' are predominant factors of well-being for young people. Following attribution with 3.39% response is time affluence, 1,69% chose physical safety, 1.69% chose relationships and lastly, feeling of acceptance and belonging was chosen by 1.69% of respondents.

Elements of well-being	Response
Friends	71.20%
Mental health	20.34%
Quality free time	3.39%
Relationships	1.69%
Feeling of acceptance	1.69%
Physical safety	1.69%

Table 4.4
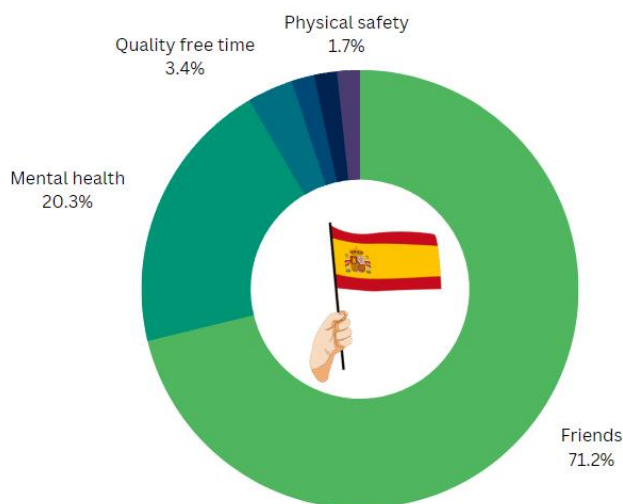
Summarizing table for this question:

Elements of well-being	BULGARIA	LATVIA	ROMANIA	SPAIN
Friends	22.4	26.3	66.67	71.20
Mental health	22.4	21.7	14.58	20.34
Quality free time	17.5	21.1	8.33	3.39
Relationships	13.3		1.04	1.69
Feeling of acceptance	4.9	15.4	4.17	1.69
Financial stability	11.4	11.5	2.08	-
Physical safety	8.2	4	3.13	1.69

Table 4.5

QUESTION 5: Once the definition along with the attributive factors that entail each participant's well-being were defined and stated, the frequency and practice per week of well-being was measured through a similar method of choosing from a pre-selected list of options. Participants were asked to choose a range that best suits their reality - from 1-2 hours a week to 9+.

BULGARIA

The two most chosen answers, both with 26.2% of respondents choosing them, were spending 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours per week on their well-being. While 23.3% of young people are able to spend 5-6 hours per week on their well-being, 7.8% of young people responded to being able to spend 7-8 hours per well and 16.5% were able to report spending more than 9 hours per week invested in their well-being.

Hours per week	Response
1-2	26.2
3-4	26.2
5-6	23.3
7-8	7.8
9+	16.5

Table 5.1

LATVIA

The findings indicate that the majority of participants were able to dedicate 3-4 hours per week on their well-being, followed by 27.2% for 5-6 hours per week, 20.2% for 1-2 hours per week, 13.3% for 9+ hours per week and 10.9% of participants were able to apply 7-8 hours per week on activities that attribute to their well-being.

Hours per week	Response
1-2	20.2
3-4	28.2
5-6	27.4
7-8	10.9
9+	13.3

Table 5.2

ROMANIA

Findings show that 1-2 hours and 3-4 hours per week on their well-being were equally chosen at 21.95%, while 17.7% spent 5-6 hours, 13.1% spent 7-8 hours and the remaining majority of participants were able to spend 9+ hours per week on activities that improved their well-being.

Hours per week	Response
1-2	21.92
3-4	23.96
5-6	20.79
7-8	12.50
9+	20.83

Table 5.3

SPAIN

Findings display that the majority at 33.90% spend approximately 1-2 hours per week on their well-being, whilst 32.20,7% spend 3-4 hours per week on their well-being, 13.56% spend approximately more than 9 hours per week, 10.17% spend 5-6 hours per week and lastly, 10.17% were able to spend 7-8 hours per week on doing things that improved their well-being.

Hours per week	Response
1-2	33.90
3-4	32.20
5-6	10.17
7-8	10.17
9+	13.56

Table 5.4

In summary, it is an interesting observation that in all examined countries at least half of young people spend no more than 4 estimated hours per week working on their well-being - a figure that indicates less than 1 hour daily. 1 or more hours a day for their own well-being manage only between 24 and 39% of youngsters. Further summary can be examined in the table below:

Hours per week	BULGARIA	LATVIA	ROMANIA	SPAIN
1-2	26.2	20.2	21.92	33.90
3-4	26.2	28.2	23.96	32.20
5-6	23.3	27.2	19.79	10.17
7-8	7.8	10.9	12.50	10.17
9+	16.5	13.3	20.83	13.56

Table 5.5

QUESTION 6: In contrast with the attribution of well-being, participants were inquired to share which factors pose a risk to their well-being or which they see as least contributing to their well-being. The participants were again given choices between the already selected as accepted by the partnership elements of well-being. Respondents could choose more than one element.

BULGARIA

The primary finding with 27% was their online presence, following was the sense of belonging with 15%, their relationships and financial stability were equally chosen at 14.5%, their physical safety with 10%, friendships with 9.5% and lastly, their mental health at 5% and time affluence at 4.5%.

Risk of well-being	Response
Online presence	27%
Mental health	5%
Friendships	9.5%
Financial stability	14.5%
Relationships	14.5%
Physical safety	10%
Feeling of acceptance	15%
Quality free time	4.5%

Table 6.1

LATVIA

The findings of the questionnaire depict the predominant factor being online presence, followed by mental health at 17.1, relationships at 13.3%, feeling of acceptance and belonging at 12.0%, quality free time also referred as time affluence at 11.8%, financial stability at 10.9%, friendships at 8.6% and lastly physical safety at 7.0%. The table depicts the results.

Risk of well-being	Response
Online presence	19.2
Mental health	17.2
Friendships	8.6
Financial stability	10.9
Relationships	13.3
Physical safety	7
Feeling of acceptance	12
Quality free time	11.8

Table 6.2

ROMANIA

The primary identified risk factor is 'friendships', followed by order is mental health at 19.79%, online presence at 15.63%, physical safety at 9.38%, while both financial stability and the feeling of acceptance were equally at 8.33%, relationships at 7.29%, and least chosen was quality free time at 6.25%.

Risk of well-being	Response
Online presence	15.63
Mental health	19.79
Friendships	25.0
Financial stability	8.33
Relationships	7.29
Physical safety	9.38
Feeling of acceptance	8.33
Quality free time	6.25

Table 6.3

SPAIN

The primary risk factor chosen was mental health at 32.20% and online presence at 18.44%, following by physical safety at 15.95%, financial stability at 10.66%, the feeling of acceptance and belonging at 10.17%, their friendships at 5.8% and their quality free time at 6.78%.

Risk of well-being	Response
Online presence	18.44%
Mental health	32.20%
Financial stability	10.66%
Physical safety	15.95%
Feeling accepted	10.17%
Relationships	-
Friendships	5.8%
Quality free time	6.78%

Table 6.4

A summary of these answers points us not only at which are the biggest risk factors for young people (online presence, financial stability) but also in which pillars of their life they predominantly feel safe in (free time). The table below shows all results in summary:

Risk of well-being	BULGARIA	LATVIA	ROMANIA	SPAIN
Online presence	27	19.2	15.63	18.44
Mental health	5	17.1	19.79	32.20
Friendships	9.5	8.6	25.0	5.8
Financial stability	14.5	10.9	8.33	10.66
Relationships	14.5	13.3	7.29	-
Physical safety	10	7	9.38	15.95
Feeling of acceptance	15	12	8.33	10.17
Quality free time	4.5	11.8	6.25	6.78

Table 6.5

SECTION 3: STATEMENTS

In addition to the questions, the participant was asked to evaluate and rate a series of statements to the length in which the statement was most applicable to them. These statements were positioned at the end of the second, well-being related section. Below is a series of tables that depict the findings per each statement, united from all countries for easier comparison and understanding. It is noteworthy to take into consideration that each partner implemented the same exact series of questions towards the target group. Additionally, you will notice that for each country there are two columns with results - the first one is with the specific direct results, and the second summarizes the answers in three categories:

Negative - uniting the answers "Strongly disagree", "Disagree" and "More or less disagree", marked by red (pale: under 50% when combined; regular: between 50% and 80% when combined; dark: over 80% when combined);

Neutral - just the "Neutral" answer;

Positive - uniting the answers "Strongly agree", "Agree" and "More or less agree", marked by green (pale: under 50% when combined; regular: between 50% and 80% when combined; dark: over 80% when combined).

The category, which has a stronger support as a statement is marked in the appropriate color, so as to support visualization of the results.
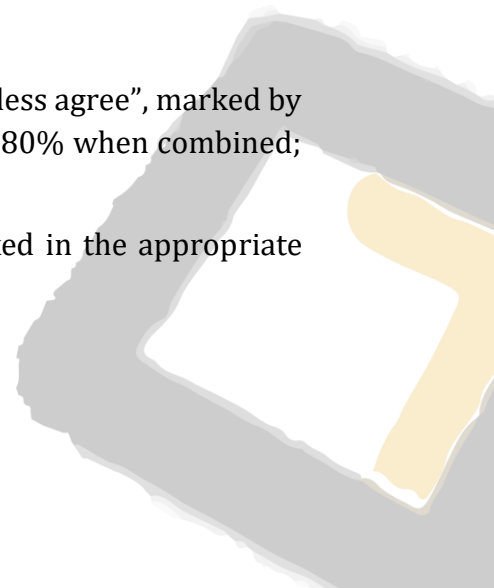
STATEMENT 1: I FEEL A SENSE OF BELONGING (TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, SCHOOL, ETC.)

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	5.80		3.65		3.13		22.3	
Disagree	5.80	26.2	6.31	16.27	3.13	8.34	5.6	33.4
More or less disagree	14.6		6.31		2.08		5.5	
Neutral	10.6	10.6	14.96	14.95	16.66	16.67	20.5	20.5
More or less agree	21.4		20.60		16.67		11.5	
Agree	27	63.4	32.89	68.78	38.54	75	15.6	46.1
Strongly agree	15		15.28		19.79		19	

STATEMENT 2: I PREFER TO SPEND TIME IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES (SCHOOL, AFTER SCHOOL, ONLINE)

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	11.01		5.98		8.33		13.5	
Disagree	8.26	43.1	12.62	39.20	7.29	19.79	20.3	43.97
More or less disagree	23.85		18.6		4.17		10.17	
Neutral	9.17	9.17	18.23	18.23	12.50	12.50	13.6	13.6
More or less agree	29.36		16.67		22.92		18.7	
Agree	8.26	47.7	20.27	44.57	30.21	67.71	16.9	42.43
Strongly agree	10.09		7.63		14.58		6.83	

STATEMENT 3: MY SURROUNDINGS MAKE ME FEEL GOOD

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	2.75		3.65		4.17		13.2	
Disagree	2.75	17,4	3.99	11.96	6.25	20.84	1.7	22.1
More or less disagree	11.93		4.32		10.42		15.2	
Neutral	11.09	11.1	13.95	13.95	11.42	11.42	17.2	17.2
More or less agree	26.61		20.27		18.88		8.8	
Agree	24.77	74,2	34.88	74.09	41.63	71.91	33.4	65.9
Strongly agree	22.85		18.94		11.4		23.7	

STATEMENT 4: ACCESS TO MEDICAL SERVICES IS RELATIVELY EASY TO REACH

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	4.59		2.99		2.08		13.5	
Disagree	4.59	23.9	1.99	6.97	4.17	18.75	1.7	23.9
More or less disagree	14.68		1.99		12.50		8.7	
Neutral	12.84	12.8	5.65	5.65	17.71	17.71	10.1	10.1
More or less agree	20.18		14.29		22.92		13.5	
Agree	28.44	63.3	46.51	87.38	27.08	63.54	18.6	66
Strongly agree	14.68		26.58		13.54		33.9	

STATEMENT 5: ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IS RELATIVELY ATTAINABLE

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	9.17		7.97		8.33		13.43	
Disagree	15.6	44.1	8.64	25.91	10.42	35.42	13.43	38.69
More or less disagree	19.3		9.30		16.67		11.83	
Neutral	23.9	23.9	18.94	18.94	15.62	15.62	22.2	22.2
More or less agree	9.17		20.93		19.79		10.40	
Agree	20.9	32.05	24.25	55.15	21.88	48.96	13.51	39.11
Strongly agree	2.75		9.97		7.29		15.20	

STATEMENT 6: I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS HOBBY ACTIVITIES AROUND ME

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	2.75		3.65		7.29		11.86	
Disagree	8.26	22.02	3.65	13.6	3.13	16.7	6.78	27.14
More or less disagree	11.01		6.3		6.25		8.50	
Neutral	7.33	7.33	13.29	13.29	8.33	8.33	15.27	15.27
More or less agree	15.60		19.60		10.42		11.86	
Agree	28.44	70.65	32.89	73.09	40.63	75	23.73	57.59
Strongly agree	26.61		20.60		23.95		22.0	

STATEMENT 7: I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AROUND ME

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	1.83		2.99		1.04		8.47	
Disagree	4.59	18.35	3.99	14.95	3.13	13.55	8.47	23.72
More or less disagree	11.93		7.97		9.38		6.78	
Neutral	9.18	9.18	20.27	20.27	7.29	7.29	13.25	13.25
More or less agree	17.43		20.93		16.67		13.84	
Agree	27.52	72.47	28.57	64.78	35.42	79.16	22.75	63.03
Strongly agree	27.52		15.28		27.07		26.44	

STATEMENT 8: I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO MYSELF

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	11.01		6.31		11.46		13.56	
Disagree	11.01	40.4	13.95	36.21	10.42	29.27	15.25	37.28
More or less disagree	18.38		15.95		11.46		8.47	
Neutral	9.14	9.14	14.29	14.29	10.41	10.41	20.34	20.34
More or less agree	25.69		21.26		18.75		16.95	
Agree	17.43	50.5	20.93	49.5	18.75	56.25	13.57	42.38
Strongly agree	7.34		7.31		18.75		11.86	

STATEMENT 9: I FEEL SAFE SHARING WITH THOSE AROUND ME

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	11.01		6.31		15.63		8.47	
Disagree	9.17	33.9	9.97	26.25	11.46	38.55	13.56	30.05
More or less disagree	13.76		9.97		11.46		8.47	
Neutral	8.25	8.25	16.61	16.61	12.50	12.50	13.56	13.56
More or less agree	22.94		16.61		20.83		13.56	
Agree	19.27	57.8	28.90	57.14	20.83	48.95	22.04	55.94
Strongly agree	15.60		11.63		7.29		20.34	

STATEMENT 10: I FEEL ACCEPTED BY THE PEOPLE AROUND ME

Scale	BULGARIA		LATVIA		ROMANIA		SPAIN	
Strongly disagree	3.67		4.65		13.54		8.47	
Disagree	5.50	26.6	5.65	22.26	4.17	26.04	6.78	27.11
More or less disagree	17.43		11.96		8.33		11.86	
Neutral	7.34	7.34	14.95	14.95	10.42	10.42	16.96	16.96
More or less agree	19.27		22.26		19.79		6.78	
Agree	22.94	66.06	28.57	62.79	27.08	63.54	22.03	55.93
Strongly agree	23.85		11.96		16.67		27.12	

The statements evaluated the well-being of participants with the goal of seeing any potential patterns, from which some conclusions can be drawn. Sense of belonging, as well as a general feeling of safety and positivity about the people around the participants is observed in all countries, although to different extents. Their surroundings were generally perceived positively. Hobby and educational activities seem to be widely accessible and recognizable as such everywhere as well. There were more split results on how much participants like the

educational activities available, which may put into question the quality of these activities. This can be also related to findings of the desk research of young people having continuous trouble with education and the approach they receive from educators. While access to medical services seems accessible to the participants, access to mental health services is not perceived so favorably. There is a big contrast in this metric, especially between Latvia and the other countries. These results suggest either a lack of mental health services (especially in Bulgaria and Spain) or a lack of awareness of their availability.
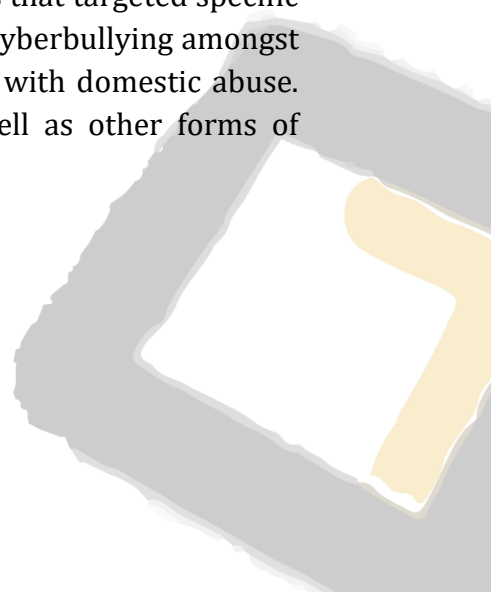
SECTION 4: VIOLENCE

QUESTION 7: Following on to the findings for the second variable of the research, the last section of the questionnaire was dedicated to the topic of violence. Similarly in regards to the questionnaire's approach, participants were inquired to generate and provide initially their definition of 'violence' and identify different forms of violence. The question was left completely open to inputting answers.

BULGARIA

Predominantly the definition of violence is descriptive of physical violence, while few noted psychological violence and expressed the act of "hurting people", "doing things against someone", "makes others feel threatened and unsafe" and "applying force against someone". There were only a few mentions of harassment and the sense of neglect - isolation from others, as forms of violence.

LATVIA

Most participants define violence as being a physical act with the purpose to physically harm others. Nonetheless, their responses depicted further the altercations that targeted specific groups, violence that occurred in and during school amongst peers, cyberbullying amongst peers and situations in which they had encountered others dealing with domestic abuse. Some answers also include verbal violence, sexual violence, as well as other forms of psychological violence such as neglect or manipulation.

ROMANIA

Findings presented that participants did not exclude verbal nor psychological violence and were in fact approximately equally mentioned with physical violence. Participants expressed bullying of any type and subtype that exists, physical and verbal altercations amongst peers and parents and emotional and psychological violence were included in their definition of violence.

SPAIN

The answers mostly focus on physical and mental violence. There are related forms that were mentioned as well, such as verbal and sexual violence, gender-based violence, domestic violence, and family violence. It is noteworthy to mention that few participants included the form of school bullying in their definition, while simultaneously, few mentioned self-hurt as a part of violence. For a deeper understanding, participants provided statements on how they perceive violence, including participant preference to not share more than they feel comfortable with.

The word cloud below was generated from the responses of participants, to summarize the definition of violence, as created by the respondents.

QUESTIONS 8, 9 & 10: The next three questions asked participants about their personal experience with violence - if they had been a victim of violence ever, and if yes - what they were willing to share, and how often violence had occurred. The first question had two options only for answer - Yes or No. The second question was open and completely free to choose to leave empty, as many respondents did. The third question, while also open to leave empty by respondents, had the pre-selected options of ranges of frequency, as well as the ability for respondents to add their own answer.

BULGARIA

53.4% participants reported that they have been a victim of violence in their life. Some elaborated the form of violence as isolation, bullied by teachers and peers, made fun of due to their appearance and physical attributes, acts of discrimination such as homophobia and multiple cases of sexual violence.

Of the respondents to the third question, 54.4% reported to not have experienced violence over the past year. This cannot be cause for neglect of the 11.7% of young people experiencing violence 1-2 times per week in the past year while 2.9% currently experience violence daily.

LATVIA

The majority with 52.82% has personally experienced violence; the remaining 47.18% had reported no incident. When asked how often they have faced violence the past year, 55.48% report 'Not at all', 16.61% report 1-2 times per week and 7.64% report 3-4 times per week, 1.33% report 5-6 times per week and 1.33% report facing violence daily. The remaining of the responses varied in frequency and reported rare cases of violence. The participants shared as experience with violence sexual assault, abuse from parents, physical and emotional abuse.

ROMANIA

61.7% have not experienced any form of violence, and 38.21% have experienced. From the participants that had confirmed, 1.64% reported experiencing 1-2 times per month, while 16.9% reported experiencing 1-2 times per week, 7.4% experienced 3-4 per week, 2.46% experienced 5-6 times per week. From the confirmed cases, participants shared additional comments on the type of violence and their environment, mentioning bullying, sexual violence and assault, verbal violence and aggression in school.
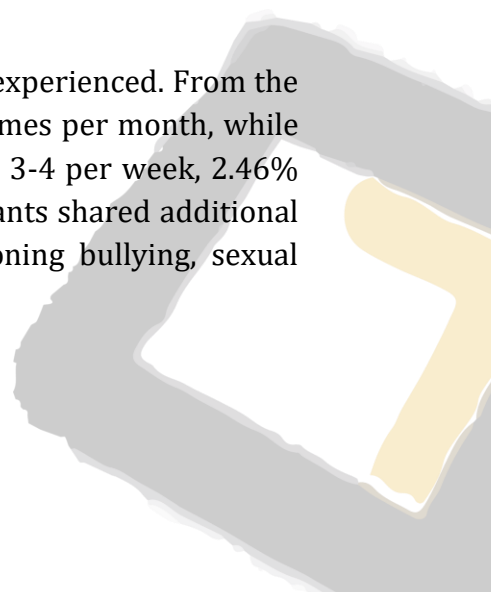
SPAIN

43,6% of the participants report experiencing some form of violence while the remaining 56,4% did not report experiencing any incident of violence. Regarding how frequent the incidents occurred in the past year, 16.8% of participants voted 1-2 times per week, along with the majority of 63.4% had reported no such incidents during the past year, the remaining percentage entailed a variety of responses, therefore, receiving low scarce percentages. However, it is noteworthy to mention that 7 reported violence within school premise, 6 respondents reported sexist harassments in the streets,2 experience violence in a relationship, 2 respondents reported cases of rape and nonconsensual acts, 2 experienced violence from within their family and father, 1 reported domestic abuse and 1 cases of racial violence.

5 OUT OF 10 have faced violence in Bulgaria

6 OUT OF 10 have faced violence In Latvia

4 OUT OF 10 have faced violence In Romania

4 OUT OF 10 have faced violence In Spain

QUESTIONS 11, 12, 13: The next three questions replicate the previous three in formatting, while putting in the spotlight the topic of being a witness to violence. As was discussed during the literature review, well-being is not only affected by direct violence - living around and with violence also has a negative impact on young people's well-being. In terms of structure and possibilities for choosing an answer, questions 11, 12 and 13 are identical to questions 8, 9, 10.

BULGARIA

74.8% of respondents report having witnessed people around them being victims of a violent act, including bullying within school and outside, harassment due to physical attributes, physical and domestic violence within intimate relationships. However, in comparison with the previous question, even though the number of responses remains the same, the percentage of respondents increases when the question is rephrased in another question:

"How often have you seen people around you become victims of violence", depicting 77.7% had witnessed violent acts committed to people around them. 24.3% of respondents report seeing violence 1-2 times per week, 11.7% witnessed 3-4 times per week, 1.9% reported 5-6 per week, 3.9% of young people witness violence daily. There were only a few cases with a variety of responses that witnessed violence more infrequently than weekly.

LATVIA

Findings show that 57.14% of participants have witnessed others fall victim to a form of violence, while the remaining 42.86% reported not witnessing any sort of violence. On the topic of frequency of the witnessed incidents, participants had many and varied responses, much more varied than in other questionnaires because of the possibility to add their own answers. The majority, 30.4% report witnessing violence 1-2 times a week. The participants also shared details of the environment in which they witnessed and the form, most of which displayed their peers in school being bullied both physically and verbally. Participants provided a description that frequently took place in school and had resulted in self-inflicting violence; harsh bullying and fights in school.

ROMANIA

Findings show that 65.85% of participants had witnessed others around them who became victims of a form of violence, while also providing that 43.44% witnessed violent incidents approximately 1-2 times per week as others' response to how frequent they view violence is scattered and had varied. Moreover, participants were given the option to provide a brief description of the incidents they had encountered. The participants describe bullying and cyberbullying; sexual assault; peer aggression; various acts of physical and verbal violence.
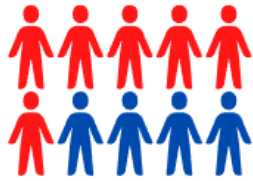
SPAIN

The findings show the majority of the participants have seen others around them experience violence while the remaining 34.7% have responded by stating that they have not been witnesses to any violence. In regard to the frequency of witnessed cases of violence, 23.8% share that they witness violence once per month, 43.6% have never witnessed, the rest of responses had received low percentages. From the total of participants that witnessed violence, approximately 30 individuals reported altercations of fights, bullying, violence in relationships, gender violence, violence amongst peers, domestic and verbal abuse, violence between siblings, sexual violence, and lack of respect. Moreover, participants shared comments that provide further insight to the type of violence witnessed and used on others - violence related to homophobia and racism; parental abuse; bullying.

7 OUT OF 10 have witnessed violence in Bulgaria

6 OUT OF 10 have witnessed violence In Latvia

6 OUT OF 10 have witnessed violence In Romania

6 OUT OF 10 have witnessed violence In Spain

QUESTION 14: The questionnaire continued with a question for reporting violence, asking if the respondents have ever reported violence, along with a list of possible mechanisms of reporting (school counselor, emergency line, social worker, etc). This question had three possible answers - yes, no, and maybe; and also had the option for participants to add a different answer for clarification.

BULGARIA

52.4% of the participants report not using such a mechanism while 18,4% reported as "maybe" and 22.3% reported to using mechanisms to report violence.

Remaining participants respond with stories of unsuccessfully intervening to help and stop the violent act or contacting a teacher for assistance, while a particular response reported "I am not a gossip." to the above question.

LATVIA

The majority - 61.46% had replied with 'No' on reporting the act of violence to anyone, followed by 21.26% with 'Yes' and 17.28% with 'Maybe' as they either did not recall whether they had informed someone, or it was not clear whether they had reported the incident to the appropriate focal point.

ROMANIA

From the total of 123 participants, 51.22% had responded with 'No' to utilizing any sort of mechanism, 30.08% responded to using such a mechanism while 18.70% responded with 'maybe' as they were unsure on whether they had used a mechanism to report violence.

SPAIN

58.4% report they did not use any source or mechanism, 26.7% have confirmed using such mechanisms, 9.9% reported with 'maybe' while the rest of the self-inserted answers describe that participants had reported similarly by informing to the teacher or not being informed to whom they should have addressed their issues to.

2 OUT OF 10 have **reported** violence in Bulgaria

2 OUT OF 10 have **reported** violence In Latvia

3 OUT OF 10 have **reported** violence In Romania

3 OUT OF 10 have **reported** violence In Spain

In all countries, the majority had not used any reporting mechanism when witnessing violence, even though from previous responses we saw how prevalent violence is around them. The free side of the question (the opportunity to add their own answer) provides some context on why this happens - from the more comical-sounding "I am not a gossip", which invites a lot of questions on the culture of being quiet about violence; to many instances of not knowing who to approach and many instances of reporting but being discouraged of doing it again because of negative responses from individuals (mostly teachers), who do not act supportive to reports of violence.

QUESTION 15: The final question asked "Which forms of violence do you believe are the most difficult to address?" in order to reflect on and provoke thought in participants about the perceived impact of types of violence around them. The answers listed 7 types of violence and gave the opportunity for respondents to choose more than one option and add additional replies and provide clarifications.

BULGARIA

The majority of the participants - 79.6% selected psychological violence, 76.7% sexual violence, 70.9% as domestic violence, 60.2% emotional violence, 51.5% physical violence, 44.7% bullying, 33% cyberbullying along with 7% of participants adding a different answers including a variety of forms of "all types of violence". In the opportunity to add clarifications,

participants add "Sexual violence leaves a scar for the whole life."; "Bullying isn't something you overcome easily, no matter where it is or by whom."; "Every person is different, so it depends on the person, not on the type of violence."; "Every kind of violence has consequences for the victim."

LATVIA

From 301 responses, 19.23% selected bullying and cyber bullying, 19.15% selected domestic violence, 18.12% sexual abuse, 16.58% emotional abuse, 15.98% psychological abuse, 10.51% physical abuse, while 0.17% believed all of the above are considered to be the most challenging acts of violence to prevent and to tackle. The following are statements made by participants that were shared in order to shed light on their views: "All forms of violence are difficult to deal with, it all depends on how mentally strong a person is to start dealing with the problem. It would be unfair to make any form of violence more important."; "Bullying is talked about so much lately, but nothing changes and people, especially children in schools face a lot of mobbing, which then has a big impact on their lives."; "Sexual for example is hard for people to make excuses and blame you. And psychological because it's not always easy to spot especially if it's Home because then where do you run away from your family? To an orphanage?".

ROMANIA

27.86% choose bullying and cyber bullying, then follows sexual violence at 16.50%, psychological violence at 15.77%, physical violence at 14.70%, emotional violence at 12.09%, domestic violence with 11.76 and approximately 1.35% choose economical violence. The following are statements made by participants that were shared in order to shed light on their views: "Cyber-Bullying: I consider it very difficult to approach because of the anonymous character that gives the abuser"; "I think our learning system, but also the society focuses too much on insignificant problems such as insults, mites, etc. instead of concentrating on real problems (physical violence, substance abuse, etc.)".

SPAIN

The findings depict that the type of violence with the highest perceived impact is 65.3% psychological abuse, 63.4% domestic abuse and 58.4% sexual violence. The participants reported having struggles to intervene out of fear when violence occurs in their households, social and peer environment. Following are statements made by few of the participants, providing their own internalized perspective: "I think that all violence is difficult to manage, of course there are some that are stronger and others that are less so, but they are all difficult

to manage because the person who has received this violence has been affected a lot and for him/her it is something very hard and complicated to handle"; "In my opinion, the most complicated thing is to treat mental/emotional damage because minds can react in one way or another and they are all different."; "Domestic - because I always see them and psychological and emotional because I think that if it affects from within it is difficult to get it out or talk about it.".

FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUTH WORKERS

The main objectives of the focus groups with youth workers was to discuss the same topics in a bigger scale - from their observations of constant work and contact with young people. The youth workers approached are active in the profession and often deal with the well-being and either violence prevention or case management in their communities.

Moreover, the questionnaire identifies the elements that contribute to the well-being of youth and how violence is defined and observed in local communities. We also attempt to identify the reasons why youth become violent, from all perspectives, and how they experience and deal with violence.

According to the study design, written consent was provided by all participants prior to the discussion, upon thorough information of the project and its goals.

With due consideration to the fact that some of the questions might be a bit heavy and uncomfortable for some, it was advised that in the beginning the facilitator will describe the overall project and its goals, the importance of their honesty and sharing. Additionally, if a participant did not wish to answer some questions, they may choose not to. The participants agreed that the facilitator may take quotes and note them down. It was further guaranteed that confidentiality would be maintained both among participants and with regard to the recordings, notes and transcripts of collected data.

While the same research design was employed in all countries, there are discernible discrepancies in the number and size of focus groups, the age range of participants (which doesn't affect the results, since the target group of these focus groups was related to their professional development - being youth workers) and the way that the discussion was developed.

In Bulgaria, there was one focus group consisting of 6 participants in total, 4 female and 2 male individuals, aged 21-44 years old. The Latvian focus group consisted of a total of 5 participants with a wider age range. Spain's focus group consisted of 6 participants in total, 4 female and 2 male individuals, aged 21 years old and above. Finally, Romania's focus group with the highest attendance of 11 participants, from which all of them resided in rural areas from 7 different municipalities.
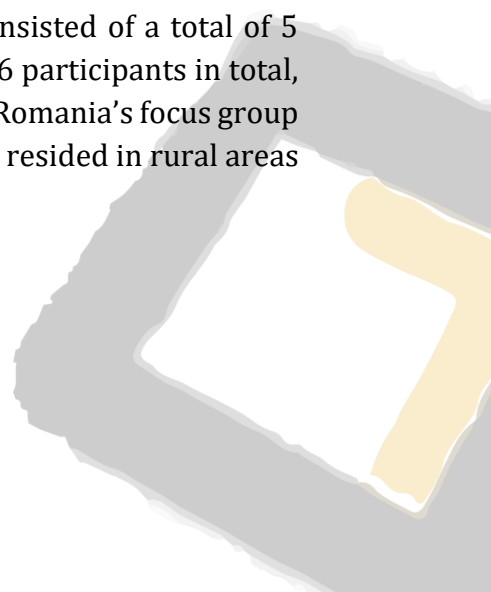
QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR MAIN ROLE AS A YOUTH WORKER? WHAT DO YOUR DAILY TASKS INVOLVE?

BULGARIA

The youth workers in the focus group had different professional paths so they mentioned: leader; mentor; instructor; educator; social worker; social mediator. Their tasks involve: supporting young people with troubled backgrounds in finding work and accommodation (and supporting them in their living arrangements); finding volunteers; creating campaigns for prevention of violence; organizing volunteers and managing their work; creating event**s** for young people; promoting volunteering; supporting youth with career counseling; one is also a youth group leader.

LATVIA

The participants occupational background of Latvia's focus group varied and entailed positions as mentioned: juvenile probation office; health promotion consultant; project manager; history and social sciences teacher as well as social educator and a MOT coordinator. The description of their duties and tasks revolved around youngsters and health promotion activities; lectures on topics such as substance abuse; workshops on social and emotional skill development; collaborating with mental health professionals and social services within a juvenile probation center and rehabilitation programs.

SPAIN

Participants' occupation varied and entailed professions such as: mentor; coordinator; career counselor; educator and social mediator. In a brief description, their tasks involved conducting and arranging both educational and sports activities, mediating with troubled youngsters' parents, external psychologist, guiding them in finding work and creating a safe environment in which young people could go to and express their concerns; one participant is also referred as a focal point for troubled youth to reach out to.

ROMANIA

From the group, the participants' professional background varied and entailed: mentor; psychologist; coordinator; facilitator; leader; trainer and librarians. As a collective, their tasks and daily duties revolved around youngsters and aimed to identify and support young people's needs, providing psychological support, preparation for daily responsibilities; fixing a safe space for youngster to feel safe and not judged to express themselves; facilitate discussions, activities and projects that promote well-being through their educational and cultural activities; volunteering; guiding and supporting the young person in developing the identified skills.

QUESTION 2: WHAT DOES WELL-BEING MEAN TO YOU?

BULGARIA

The group defined well-being and divided it into three separate categories: a) physical, including safety, basic needs and health, b) mental: friendships & surroundings and mental health and c) social: school and work. From the above categories, participants distinguished category b) and c) regardless of the possibility of the two sometimes overlapping.

LATVIA

An overall definition generated from the group is: the state of comfort in one's skin and self-being. In addition, well-being is having the ability to feel confident in oneself without having insecurities or fear that they will get harmed physically or psychologically; it is the sense of belonging amongst peers, with the absence of psychological and emotional insecurities.

SPAIN

From 6 participants, 5 agreed that well-being is a feeling of comfort with the absence of stress and negativity. Additionally, well-being was also defined as having a sense of fulfillment, freedom, calmness, and health from both the aspect of physical and psychological.

ROMANIA

Most of the participants had mutually agreed on the common definition that well-being derives from the quality of life and their health of both physical and mental state, as well as the balance of both without having to sacrifice the other. In addition, a participant elaborated in their definition that well-being includes access to education; quality social services; material conditions and a sense of satisfaction with their life.

QUESTION 3: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE AVERAGE LEVEL OF WELL-BEING OF YOUNGSTERS YOU INTERACT WITH? *WHAT DEFINES THAT LEVEL OF WELL-BEING? ARE THERE STARK DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM?*

BULGARIA

Rating from a scale of 1 to 10, the group collectively agreed that the well-being of young people on a large scale, compared to other places in the world, is on average 6-7 out of 10. Their collective response was a result of considering their country's current state with an absence of war, with good access to education and healthcare. The next level of understanding the well-being of young people is more focused on individual cases. Participants referred to the effect of isolation due to the COVID-19 measurements being placed by the government, resulting in the deterioration of young people's mental health. In addition to the aftermath of the COVID-19 quarantine, youth workers believed that many

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young people had missed out on personal development and educational opportunities. The political situation in Bulgaria, which also creates a lot of instability, was also mentioned.

One participant wanted to separate their "grades" by saying that mental well-being is lower than physical, because of COVID and the measures they endured from the government. Because the measures were inconsistent and confusing, young people were constantly uncertain about the next days, the demands from them, along with the effects on their families.

Aside from that, there are also many changes in the educational system in Bulgaria, which causes a lot of stress. New exams were added after the 10th grade, which created a lot of worry, took a lot of extra time and confused the young people.

LATVIA

The diversity of the occupational background of participants caused further discussion and in-depth conversations amongst participants. Some were teachers who worked with well-performing students from high-income families, others worked with juvenile offenders, therefore there wasn't a consensus on the well-being of an average youngster. A common element that most responses of the participants converged on was related to the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the development of young people and the aftermath after the mandated quarantine. It was commonly agreed upon that a) the quarantine had greatly impacted the daily well-being of young people and disallowed for active and motivating activities to take place that would serve as a distraction and that b) the state of well-being of young people would variate frequently according to the family-home situation and their relationship with peers, as incidents that would occurs perhaps in school would immediately negatively change their state of well-being. In addition, educators noted that the expectations and pressure applied by the parents on to their students, would significantly determine how young people viewed themselves and how agile their self-esteem would decline.

SPAIN

All 6 participants had agreed on the difficulty to set up the average level of well-being of youngsters as their necessities may vary and require different variables. A young person may depend on and be required to set certain conditions to be able to achieve their average level of well-being, while for others, their family and household background and status may play an essential role. In addition, they argued that the provision of decent education or decent work is sufficient and key to their well-being. Likewise, participants added that young people participating in education programs, such as Erasmus+, provide learning opportunities and broadens their views and knowledge from traveling. The participants mutually agreed on the importance for young people to develop a sense of acceptance and belonging amongst

their peers as well as to connect within their own environment as it would significantly increase their level of well-being.

Participants noted that due to the frequent changes and transition phases in both their relationships and education, young people frequently experience crises, feeling insecure and unstable. In addition to the challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on their educational performance and more importantly and gradually, on their mental health. Overall, all of them, regardless of the background – had agreed that the average level of well-being of youngsters – was quite low. 6 of the participants, 5 of the youth workers underlined that youngsters developed unhealthy relationships amongst close circles with their peers while often creating conflicts between them. Additionally, the group agreed on the frequent and recent issue of parents nowadays controlling and accompanying the young people in every activity and step, hence, not allowing them to have the space to express freely.

ROMANIA

Participants mentioned there are differences between the average level of well-being for each young person according to their personal struggles. It was suggested that each young person may be having different and difficult challenges, varying from financial, social relationships, educational performance, and mental state. According to the form and type of difficulties youngsters faced, the participants would attempt to address by providing the appropriate solution and creating a safe space.

QUESTION 4: WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUNG PEOPLE MIGHT NEED TO HELP THEM REACH A BETTER LEVEL OF WELL-BEING? *IS IT SOMETHING LIKE MONEY, PEOPLE, TIME, ACCESS TO CERTAIN PLACES? SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?*

BULGARIA

Young people need some security. Bulgaria has been facing prolonged political instability and there is no faith in the system or respect to authority.

They need to have more access to youth services and centers. They need spaces like the youth groups, in which when they have issues in their families, for example, they have who to turn to.

There needs to be better access and services, related to active citizenship, so youngsters can feel more empowered and responsible for the future stability.

There need to be changes in the system, generally, so it takes care of people, and there needs to be more education for parents.

Covid hit hard. Everything, including school, became online. Many activities were dropped off. A lot of freedoms got taken away. Interactions were missing.

LATVIA

Most of the interviewees agreed that it's not necessarily money or time that young people would need to improve their well-being. Instead, the majority argued that the change has to come from within - in their opinion, showing initiative, being willing to step out of your comfort, making an effort to implement some changes within your local community, is key to a better level of well-being. As one interviewee pointed out, a lot of young people have no motivation or interest in anything, which accordingly affects their well-being.

Several youth workers emphasized the importance of physical exercise in order to reach a higher level of well-being. In their opinion, the most positive impact will be achieved if the physical exercises are done in a community setting where the youngsters could feel included and supported. Another agreed-upon idea was the meaningfulness of employment. As several youth workers pointed out, having a job and an income provides a sense of freedom, independence, and a higher self-esteem for youngsters.

SPAIN

The focus group noted that young people first need to fulfill their necessities to be able to achieve a good level of well-being. Such examples vary from access to work, to education, sense of belonging, having friends and a sense of safety. In addition, a healthy living environment, social skills, a sense of self-esteem as well as a balanced relationship between support and autonomy and access to a psychologist and social services were also considered significant to the achievement of well-being. Additional suggestion from the group was for your people to aim and have the chance to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment deriving from traveling, having passion for their work, even learning new skills and languages.

The de-escalation of online presence and escalation of physical activity in the young person's life is a suggestion that would benefit the young person's life. The increase of physical activity was considered by the group quite significant. An additional suggestion made by the group had emphasized the significance of young people learning and developing the ability to mitigate and manage their own emotions.

ROMANIA

According to their opinion, the group had noted that financial stability, sufficient to cover both necessities and desired materials, is a factor that for many young people would satisfy

and provide would benefit their emotional state of well-being. Meanwhile, the group also included the necessity to include inner and cultural satisfaction, a sense of understanding and healthy relationship with their parents, teachers, and peers as well as inclusivity within their community are judged vital for the holistic well-being of youth.

QUESTION 5: WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD VIOLENCE IN TERMS OF YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY? *TRY TO DEFINE IT, BRING EXAMPLES, ANY FORM OR TYPE OF VIOLENCE*

BULGARIA

Participants defined violence as an act that negatively impacts either physically or mentally. Similar to when answering the question on well-being, participants collectively rated from 1 to 10 on how much violence is a part of young people's life. In total, participants rated 4 to 8, in which the gap occurs due to the significance in young people's living conditions and specific targeted group participants were discussing. The participants perceive violence as a popular topic among young people, as violence around them spans from school fights to murders that occur in their surrounding environment. Violence is present in most of young people's life at least in one environment - at home, school, in social groups or in an environment of increased hare and xenophobia. Psychological violence was also mentioned as an unseen and acknowledged part of young people's lives.

LATVIA

All interviewees agreed that violence involves not just physical, but also emotional and sexual abuse. Sexual and physical abuse was not emphasized during the discussion, instead all participants discussed emotional violence and bullying in great depth. Youth workers argued that "real" violence is deliberate intention to cause harm to anyone. As one of them explained, very young people (7th grade and below) do not seem to have an understanding of the consequences and impact of their actions - that is, they might tease someone without realizing that the other person is deeply hurt by their actions and/or words. According to the youth workers, a situation like this would not fall under violence, but is definitely something that needs to be discussed with the adolescent to prevent further violence.

SPAIN

Participants listed what they perceive as violence as: physical; verbal; psychological or negligence; isolation; symbolic violence; disrespect; hate or intolerance; institutional violence towards young people and psychological violence like bullying and cyberbullying.

A participant explained the mismanagement of cases of abuse and the delay that exist throughout the duration of protecting a victim. It was further explained that removal of a victim from the environment in which they were abused usually follows last rather than a first step to assure the youngster's well-being. A participant explained how social services

staff were not motivated to assist young people, but rather to close as many cases as they could during their working hours.

In addition, a participant viewed violence as a lack of mechanism for peace, along with factors that promote violent behaviors such as a low income, drugs, alcohol, peer pressure and youth gangs. Another participant noted that violence is also verbal and it can still do harm without physically harming others. Another response described how they have noticed that within a youth center, young people tend to normalize violence as they verbally insult each other, without thinking of the other's life and feelings, which may be hurt.

ROMANIA

Overall, most participants noted both physical and verbal violence is frequent and impactful within their community, schools, and homes. The most common example of verbal violence is slurs, name calling and bullying, particularly when there are conflicts and altercations between communities such as ones in which young Roma people are involved. In addition, most of the participants referred violence as physical aggression towards others yet by also small actions, such as shoving in school, that would initiate an emotional reaction from the other person, causing the altercation to escalate with the use of verbal violence.

QUESTION 6: HAVE YOU EVER WITNESSED VIOLENCE/ABUSE AS A YOUTH WORKER IN YOUR EXPERIENCE? *WHAT TYPE, AS AN OBSERVER OR WITNESS. WERE YOU ABLE TO RESOLVE IT AND WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?*

BULGARIA

Participants expressed their inability to either prevent or resolve conflict altercations between young people. Further emphasizing the lack of support from the proper authorities and lack of effort from the state's perspective. The alternative option, meaning youth workers, are not yet equipped with conflict resolution skills in order to essentially help.

LATVIA

The group agreed that it is unavoidable to witness violence and/or indication of abuse while working within a school environment and with young people. In addition to the unavoidable witnessed violence, it is noted that even though violence is the "norm" in their society, it was also noted that usually 6th to 7th graders, including high schoolers, would eventually grow out of it as they grow to realize the unacceptable use of violence. Moreover, it was noteworthy that the group mentioned repeatedly the sense of helplessness from the perspective of young people as they feel unassisted and their attempts to report remain meaningless due to the lack of effort from the teacher's side on preventing and intervening during abuse and/or violent acts. In addition, physical abuse was also noted to reach an

extreme length to which young people would be physically injured and in need of hospital assistance, while adding the minor note that in most incidents, boys tend to be more physically violent than girls.

Specifically mentioned were LGBTQI+ youth, who get targeted more often due to their sexual orientation and were more likely to fall victim of violence amongst peers than other groups of their age. According to the educators, the students that would most frequently act violent and/or would lash on to others were noted to be victims themselves of past trauma and violence.

SPAIN

All participants had witnessed violence, either physical or verbal, almost on a day-to-day basis within their working environment. All the participants agreed that the way young people treat each other is crucial and have witnessed many cases in which young people treat one another with disrespect and emotional violence. Moreover, a participant wanted to add to the discussion their experience by describing their daily work life involves separating fights and youth gangs after they have been physically violent. While also attempting to provide a nonhostile environment for victims of sexual abuse routing from within their household as they aim to provide support and react appropriately. The groups suggestion was to develop the habit and promote verbal resolution by communicating with youngsters while also giving them space in a calm and proper environment to express themselves and to listen to their challenges and issues. As an additional suggestion to resolve altercations amongst peers, all participants agreed that it is more beneficial for young people to prevent prior acts of violent behavior from escalating both physically and verbally. The method suggested was by teaching young people how to express themselves and how to resolve their conflicts via verbal communication, hence, preventing violence rather than addressing it after it occurs. The group acknowledged their own limitations by explaining how they themselves may not be adequate to react properly to certain violent situations that may occur.

ROMANIA

Similar to the above responses, most of the participants had experience with youth violence and had witnessed violence be initiated or even escalated due to verbal and emotional violence. Even though most participants had witnessed violence, some took it upon themselves to intervene and prevent the situation from escalating and used communication methods to reduce the tension and to come to a resolution between the youngster's altercation. In an example of a participant, they used humor as a means to reduce and change the tension between two youngsters and found it quite useful when intervening verbal altercations amongst youth. Most of the participants had witnessed verbal violence used

when youngsters aimed to bully one of their peers, that would eventually escalate further into physical violence.

QUESTION 7: WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOUNGSTERS VIOLENT? *ELEMENTS SUCH AS: INEQUALITY, PREJUDICE, FANATICISM, EXTREMISM, TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS ETC. THINK OF STORIES OF PEOPLE THAT CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS AND PROGRESSIVELY BECAME MORE VIOLENT.*

BULGARIA

The primary response of the group is that violence stems from the violence young people have in their households and secondary the sense of insecurity within society. The participants describe that young people need limits and they aren't meeting any authority that would draw the limits for them. They test limits through physical fights and verbal fights - yelling at each other, cursing, etc. However, they don't meet reactions by the police or anyone else because the system is slow and ineffective, so they continue.

Additionally, participants point to a lack of prevention and intervention campaigns in Bulgaria.

LATVIA

The group expressed how impactful the household and upbringing of young people is when examining the causation of violent behaviors. All participants had agreed on the common ground that young people develop violent behaviors once they themselves fall victim of abuse, particularly domestic abuse, and therefore once they have accepted violence as part of their lives, they tend to normalize the violent behaviors and act on to others as others had acted on to them. In addition, a couple of participants had conveyed that simple parenting is insufficient if it is not accompanied with learning how to manage and control their child's emotions, hence, a role model setting goals is considered to be a key essential and determining factor. Furthermore, other few participants had added to their argument in regard to exposure to domestic violence and suggested that an additional key determinant is the local environment and encouragement of young peers to act out in violent manner amongst peers, therefore making young people normalize violence and allowing it to become a frequent phenomenon.

SPAIN

The group mentioned three factors that play a key role in young people's lives. Firstly, the group explained how toxic and unhealthy relationships with their peers and parents at home play a major role on young people's behavior and way of thinking, causing them to lash out and act violently. Secondly, most of the participants mentioned that youngsters had

expressed to them that the use of social media and online presence significantly impacts their state of well-being due to the constant criticisms, particularly when different opinions are expressed.

Thirdly, the lack of a role model or the presence of negative role models were agreed-upon factors. When youngsters' role models react negatively to situations and/or behave inappropriately due to the lack of management of their emotions, young people learn and develop similar behaviors.

ROMANIA

The group's discussion revolved mainly around two arguments, while a few participants briefly noted that they would agree with all the above-mentioned elements as being valid reasons for young people becoming violent. One argument mentions toxic relationships with both their parents and peers, lack of role models and unhealthy and/or abusive relationships within home are key elements that would make youngsters more aggressive and violent. The reason explained by participants is that the exposure to violence within their home and/or by role models deteriorates young people's well-being and in cases normalizes the concept of violence, hence making young people develop aggressive and violent behaviors. The second argument is that young people tend to be violent when certain conditions are present or absent such as lack of care, lack of financial support for a decent life, lack of mental support, prejudice and inequality will likely turn a youngster to lash out and become violent due their living conditions and challenges.

QUESTION 8: WHAT TOOLS, RESOURCES OR TRAINING WOULD YOU NEED IN ORDER TO COMBAT/IDENTIFY VIOLENCE OR TO PREVENT IT?

BULGARIA

The group mentioned the use of a sort of checklist that would point out signs indicating abuse such as domestic violence and similar violent acts. In addition to the checklist, the group described the use of youth group methodology being popularized in hopes of reaching a larger group of young people who need help. An interesting turning point occurred when a participant mentioned the country's current state of normalizing violence is the key issue and not the absence of prevention and intervention tools.

LATVIA

The group shared a common ground and agreed that most professional teachers had been overworked and underpaid and were therefore developing and showing signs of burnout. Thus, poorly recognizing signs of domestic abuse from their students and rather focusing on more visible signs such as physical violence. In hope to combat this, the group suggested to

a) provide a sort of professional counseling to teachers to help them deal with their symptoms of burnout and help recognize signs of abuse and b) to conduct a more interactive and holistic training on findings the causation of violence such as addiction, poor impulse control and family upbringing, rather than a one-off lecture on the harms of violence.

SPAIN

All youth workers agreed that it is necessary to have more training available for youth workers and in collaboration with social workers to unite and create a team. In addition, they proposed to reduce the amount of bureaucratic work, mundane reports and other tasks that would take away the time that could be dedicated to youth groups and using available time to prevent violence growing amongst youth. Creating such opportunities to merge both social and youth workers and coordinating both networks would then provide more holistic support for youngsters. An example of collaboration given was to utilize human resources in the scope of reducing violence and teaching how to manage their emotions with the cooperation of their parents.

In addition, due to the pandemics quarantine, it was advised to provide psychological support and training oriented towards youth for managing their emotions. Moreover, it was suggested that youth workers and educators could benefit and learn by attending similar available seminars and training courses to improve their skills. Further, participants explained that due to overworked and overloaded staff, more human resources would help support the staff's needs. According to the participants, currently, for each youth worker and educator, there are approximately 30-40 youngsters per group, hence, they are not able to tend to each young person individually.

ROMANIA

The group had similar points of views regarding how they themselves would combat and identify violence, as well as how the youth center in which they are currently employed would react to prevent violence from occurring. Most of the participants mentioned the development of educational programs and training in hopes of developing skills and knowledge on young people's behaviors and attitudes. This would be achievable with the required collaborative effort of parents, schools, youth workers, media, and community. In addition, other responses had noted providing psychological support as well as social services to directly face the challenges that young people face, both physical and emotional difficulties.
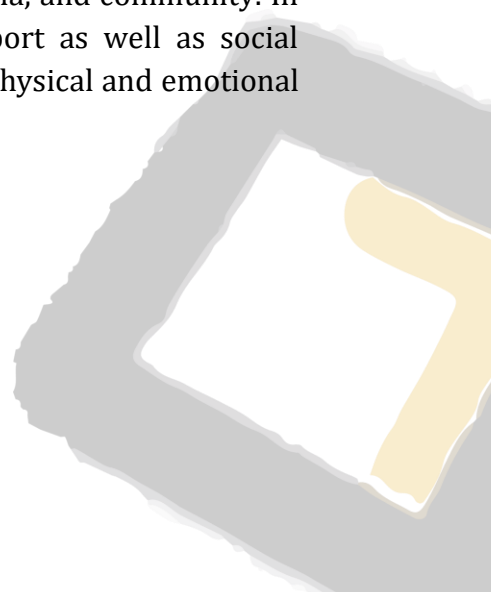
QUESTION 9: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THERE IS ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM THE MUNICIPALITY/STATE/GOVERNMENT FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION, WELL-BEING? HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT HELP?

BULGARIA

The participants had the aforementioned response that related to the current question, and it was once more emphasized the country's inability to help and the governments as well as authorities' ineffective efforts to assist, especially due to the country's unstable and unpredictable changes in leadership.

LATVIA

Participants mentioned that according to their experience, the government is inadequate in supporting measures to prevent violence from occurring. Though there are organizations that aim to conduct lectures and workshops on violence, standing alone is insufficient. In addition, they agreed upon the lack of curriculum on violence and well-being as well as the poor conditions and poor violence prevention within orphanages due to the lack of funding, professionals, and training on recognizing abuse.

Likewise to the previous response, the group emphasized the significance of resolving teachers signs of burnout and including workshops and seminars on learning how to recognize violence prevention as well as sexual and reproductive health education.

SPAIN

The group heavily emphasized and disagreed with how the municipality and government is currently handling and managing cases of young people facing violence, the "recycling" of the current staff employed and working in administration, older staff's inability to relate to the gravity of the cases. In addition, it was suggested to recruit newer generation staff with background and experience as well as training. Furthermore, it was suggested to limit the bureaucratic work by simplifying the procedure necessary to resolve and handle cases. It was repeatedly suggested to conduct educational training to youth and social workers to create a professional network and qualified staff, while ensuring access to education and psychological support for young people to combat issues that many immigrants' youngsters face and promote social inclusion.

Increased human resources was once more suggested and advised to due to the severe lack of qualified staff and due to overloaded capacity of the current staff.

ROMANIA

Participants were quite adamant regarding the lack of support and ineffective services that the state and authorities have to offer to young victims of abuse. The main theme of discussion revolved around providing additional support to NGOs and programs that raise

awareness and provide research on this topic. In addition to the responses, a couple of the participants had mentioned punishing the "aggressors" in scope to discourage others from committing similar acts and to reduce.

QUESTION 10: WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK VIOLENCE HAS ON WELLBEING? *FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW, DOES VIOLENCE TOWARDS THEM OR PEOPLE AROUND THEM AFFECT THE MAJORITY OF THEIR WELL-BEING? DO YOU HAVE ANY EXAMPLES?*

BULGARIA

The participants described how violence provokes a person to withdraw genuine responses and expressed the effect of violence in young people causing them to shut off, a reaction which was quite emphasized. In addition, they explained how violence disrupts young people from developing personally, developing trust with others and makes them develop a sense of hopelessness.

LATVIA

There was universal agreement among the youth workers that violence has a severe effect on one's well-being. Interviewees pointed out that violence can damage one's psychological and emotional health, leading to depression, anxiety, self-harm, and prolonged hospital stay. Sexual violence was perceived as even more harmful to one's well-being.

Violence, in their opinion, has a multi-faceted effect - having been a victim of abuse can influence one's parenting skills, how they form relationships and what partners they choose, as well as increase the risk that the person will be violent towards their own child, too. Exposure to violence, according to the youth workers, can even negatively impact one's social skills, career prospects, and financial situation. As one youth worker argued, violence can affect everyone, even bystanders who are not direct victims of abuse. Nobody stays unaffected.

SPAIN

The group mentioned that violence, both physical and verbal, negatively impacts the youth's development and day-to-day life. It can impact their relationship at home with their parents, their self-image and self-esteem, psychological isolation, their performance at school and to a certain extent, cause young people to inflict self-harm. Additionally, the group believed that in few cases where young people became victims of violence, they tend to become violent themselves as a reaction to their experience.
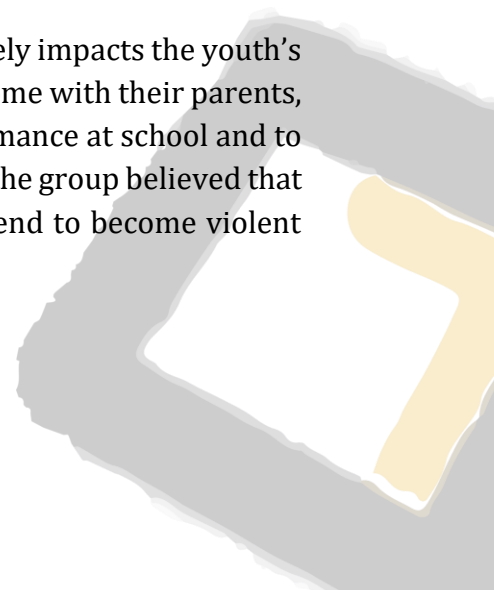
ROMANIA

The entire focus group gave a brief response yet strongly agreed with the statement that violence does indeed impact the well-being of young people, adding that violence influences both physically and mentally young people. Though, it was also mentioned when young people experience violence, not only does it result in the victim becoming and developing violent behaviors, but it also carries on to adulthood as well as from generation to generation.

QUESTION 11: IF YOU WERE A POLICY MAKER, PROPOSE 1 CHANGE THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN WELL-BEING, AND 1 THAT WOULD COMBAT VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH. *WHAT CHANGE WOULD THEY LIKE TO SEE, WHAT IS MOST NECESSARY FOR THEM?*

BULGARIA

Participants created the following list:

1.   Educating parents.
2.   Fast and adequate reactions from authorities in cases of violence.
3.   Forbidding smoking in front of schools.
4.   Giving a voice to victims.
5.   Citizenship education to be mandatory and expanded in schools.
6.   Making reporting violence easier and more accessible. Making these procedures lighter from a bureaucratic point of view.

LATVIA

One participant suggested more prevention programs in elementary schools, like the STOP 4-7. Others also pointed out that violence prevention programs can only be successful if teachers receive higher salaries and are not overworked. Having additional time and money would enable them to prevent violence before it even occurs. Similarly, the rest of the participants added that violence prevention is such a broad topic that it cannot be covered fully with the few teaching hours that have been devoted to it according to the curriculum. In addition, another participant argued that all parents, regardless of their socio-economic status, would benefit from a child's emotional development workshops. As they explained, violence prevention must start from home and if parents are well-trained in conflict resolution and emotion management, it's more likely that their child would not become violent. Interviewees claimed that very often parents notice that their children have problems at school when it's already too late and finding a solution would be almost

impossible. Attending special parents' workshops could be a way to prevent that and improve a youngster's future well-being.

Another possible solution was offered and involved the implementation of mentoring programs that are common in Scandinavian countries. Mentors would help youngsters learn important social skills, offer psychological support, and essentially act as a positive role model for them. In addition to mentoring programs, youth workers also believed that extra funding would help as well. As they explained, most professionals working with children and youngsters are severely overworked and on the verge of a burnout. Improving their financial situation and raising the prestige of the profession in general would enable them to recognize and prevent violence among youngsters. Moreover, educational campaigns on TV and social media together with collaboration with influencers would also help combat violence. The only requirement, as one interviewee pointed out, was to ensure that these campaigns are not a one-time-only activities - in her opinion, it is vital that they are organized frequently, so that the message is not easily forgotten once the campaign ends.

SPAIN

Initial suggestion from the group was targeted towards the stability of staff rather than the "recycling" method that the government and municipality implement. Meanwhile conducting conflict resolution and training for prevention of violence for both youth workers and educators. Moreover, they suggested that parents, educators, and youth workers could collaborate and be trained in the scope of becoming a role model for their youth group.

Another additional suggestion was to build a sense of community, to bring its members together to collaborate and create sports and musical activities, bonding the community and therefore building a healthy network based on common activities and goals. Moreover, taking into consideration that the government would cover financial costs for young people to part take in youth exchange programs, could change their perspective and mindsets while strengthening their well-being and eliminating any prejudice opinions and views that derive from the area, they reside in.

ROMANIA

Except for one participant who was not sure of how to respond, the group focused on the goal and the dream of having eradicated bullying and violence within schools. There is a significant need for educational training and projects for both authorities, state and youth workers, and young people. The topics of the educational training and activities would be oriented towards expanding their knowledge on young peoples' emotions and management of their emotions through communication. In addition, the empowerment of adults and youth, education on empathy, activities identifying and preventing bullying and psychoeducation on violence and its effect on well-being, in hopes of teaching young people self-care, self-love and respect for both themselves and for their peers. It was noted that the

group had prioritized the shift of mentality of young people towards violence and the utilization of the tools that would educate them on how to communicate their issues and express themselves, rather than result in violence.

# FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In line with the study's overall objectives, the main purpose of the focus groups with young people was to identify the elements that contribute to their wellbeing, as well as to examine the reasons why young people experience and perpetuate violence at such high rates from their perspective.

According to the study design, written consent was provided by all participants prior to the discussion, upon thorough information on the project and its goals.

With due consideration to the fact that some of the questions could cause discomfort to participants, facilitators were strongly encouraged to underline the importance of receiving honest answers by the participants and establish a set of ground rules regarding judgment and respect towards one another. Also, facilitators were advised to remind participants that they have the right to refrain from answering some parts of the posed questions. It was further guaranteed that confidentiality would be maintained both among participants and with regard to the recordings, notes and transcripts of collected data.

While the same research design was employed in all countries, there are discernible discrepancies in the number and size of focus groups, the age range of participants and the way that the discussion was developed.

In Bulgaria, there was one focus group consisting of 8 participants in total, 5 female and 3 male individuals, aged 16-17 years old. In Latvia, there were two focus groups, one with 6 participants aged 16 to 19; one with 4 participants, aged 14 to 16; total - 10 participants. In Spain, a different approach was adopted to collect data from the much larger group of 22 individuals, aged 13-18 years old; some general discussions were carried out in full participation, while for the purpose of other exercises the participants were divided into smaller groups. Finally, four focus groups were carried out in four different Romanian cities, gathering a total of 28 participants.
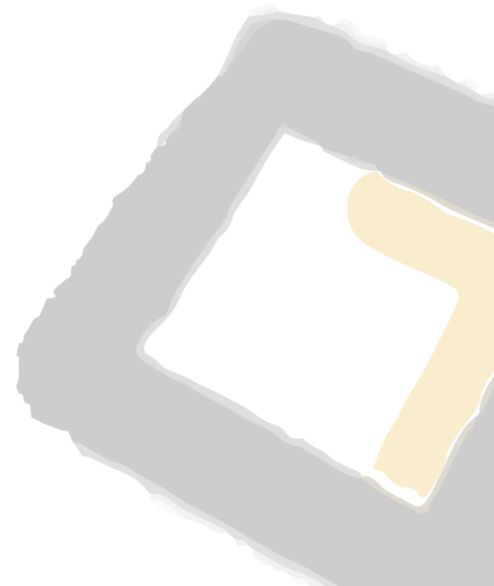
QUESTION 1: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WELL-BEING? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY? *WHAT WORDS OR EMOTIONS COME TO MIND, WHAT IS THE FIRST REACTION OR THOUGHT?*

BULGARIA

The participants pointed out that there is a division among the meaning of well-being for themselves and for society (consisting of parents, peers and media representation). From the latter's perspective, well-being is connected to wealth, success in work and having the 'perfect' family. However, the majority of participants see well-being as more closely linked to good mental health, having opportunities for fun activities, having access to friends and the Internet, having good health and being happy. A few objections to this were raised, claiming that money is important to buy things that can make someone happy, like clothes or tickets to concerts.

> *'Of course, money is important, but it doesn't make you happy, it just helps'*

LATVIA

Contrary to the Bulgarian group, no distinction on the concept of well-being from different perspectives was mentioned. According to the Latvian discussants, well-being entails feeling good and comfortable with oneself; doing the things that one loves; and being in a good company and having people one feels comfortable with.

SPAIN

With the exception of a few participants who described well-being as simply 'being ok', the feelings of safety and self-satisfaction, along with the status of being healthy, emerged as key concepts describing well-being. There was consensus among participants on the need to improve the general well-being of young people in the country.

ROMANIA

In describing well-being, Romanian respondents placed emphasis on the following: feeling happy and loved; communication, understanding, peace and respect within the family environment; socializing and spending quality time with friends; feeling of safety; optimism, enthusiasm, state of peace and lack of anxiety; recreation and fun (leisure activities, traveling); success as self-satisfaction (achieving goals and ambitions, personal development, self-fulfillment); financial success (money, power, good material condition); being healthy.

Joy, fun, friendship, and love – these four words are a symbol of wellbeing

QUESTION 2: INITIAL ASSESSMENT: PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF WELLBEING (TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, SAFETY, RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNITY, AND PURPOSE) AND YOUR DESIRED LEVEL OF WELL-BEING:

IN CRISIS - JUST SURVIVING - DOING OKAY - DOING GOOD - DOING GREAT

BULGARIA

Participants responded with a certain amount of reluctance to this question, remaining to the neutral/positive side of the 5-point scale provided ('doing okay', 'doing good', 'doing great').

LATVIA

While they had a generally well-defined understanding of well-being, all the youngsters reported either an average or below the average level of well-being, contrary to the Bulgarian respondents. They admitted a frequent fluctuation of their overall mood due to minor everyday problems (e.g being scolded by a teacher, an argument with a friend), without going into too much detail.

Some referred to educational parameters as the reason for their poor well being. Being a student in secondary education was mentioned as a major source of stress, especially the final year exams. The participants felt that they were expected to always perform well and have good grades, a pressure coming from both teachers and parents who demanded high results and were upset when their grade average dropped.

"We all try to be a better version of ourselves since childhood, but now you can't perform better. It's out of your control. You can't climb any higher. It's not possible anymore to do even better."

Family, in particular, was mentioned both as offering a supporting environment but also as a source of anxiety.

> I have four older siblings and they all have achieved something in life. It's a huge pressure. They're not saying or doing anything. They've simply achieved enough in life that there's no risk that they'll fail. And I don't know whether I'll be able to do the same.

SPAIN

Participants found it hard to engage initially, asking clarifications about the meaning of 'in crisis' and showing reluctance to define their current situation. The ones that did engage, mostly identified with the statements 'doing okay' and 'doing good'.

One participant stated that it was 'almost impossible' to be 'doing great', which the majority of the participants agreed with. When asked why, one of them said 'because there is always something, if it's not family problems it will be school or friendship problems'.

ROMANIA

The vast majority of participants (20 out of 28) responded as feeling either 'good' or 'great' to describe their current well-being. Fewer participants stated an average wellbeing, while three participants felt that they were going through a period of survival or crisis.

QUESTION 3: DESCRIBE WHAT WELL-BEING AT YOUR DESIRED LEVEL WOULD LOOK LIKE: *TRY TO EXPLAIN AND DESCRIBE HOW THEY WOULD LIKE TO FEEL (TRY TO AVOID UTOPIC MENTIONS). WHAT WOULD THEY LIKE TO BE DOING, WHAT ARE THEIR AMBITIONS.*

BULGARIA

The initial response of participants was almost unanimous, seemingly aspiring to reach 'doing great' as their desired level of well-being. Two stated that they would be okay with 'doing good' too.

In trying to conceptualize these two states of being, participants described 'doing good' as feeling content, not feeling pressured, making progress in life without feeling burdened. This category was perceived as necessary, one that needs to be fulfilled.

On the other hand, 'doing great' was described as an extra step forward to a better well-being. This status was generally described as having more time to leisure from various perspectives: to sleep, to have fun with friends, to party, to travel.

LATVIA

Some youngsters said that they feel the best when they are together with their loved ones and there is no anxiety or stress about what they might say or do. Family and friends were often mentioned when they described their ideal level of well-being. Being physically active, listening to music, and engaging in hobbies was a frequently mentioned answer, too.

"Family and friends - that's what means the most to me".

Of note, educational parameters contributing to a higher level of well-being appeared to differ according to the age of participants. Older discussants (between the ages of 16 and 19) added that feeling secure about one's future was also important, as they were approaching that time of their life where they would have to start thinking about whether or not they will enroll in a university and if so, what they would study. Younger respondents, aged 14-16 years old, focused on doing well in school and getting good grades rather than doing well in specific final exams. Both age groups agreed that engaging in recreational activities was crucial for achieving a better well-being.

SPAIN

Participants initially imagined fantasy worlds/realities (mostly related to having big amounts of money), so they were kindly reminded that they had to refrain from describing utopian worlds and focus on what their desired level of well-being would look like adapted to their current lives and realities. The most repeated answers had to do with having more resources (time and money) to improve their school grades and more local activities related to their personal interests (urban dance, skate parks, drawing, etc.).

ROMANIA

Overall, participants from Romania draw parallels among their general understanding of the concept of well-being with the description of their desired state of well-being: having fun and engaging in recreational activities (sports, reading, art, traveling, spending time with animals, practicing religion); feeling supported, understood and loved by friends and family; feeling happy, good; self-fulfillment, self-confidence; lack of anxiety and pressure; professional success (finding a job that is fulfilling personally and financially).

A noticeable difference is that many interviewees described fulfillment in all aspects of their lives rather than one-dimensional development in a certain domain (e.g. career, family).
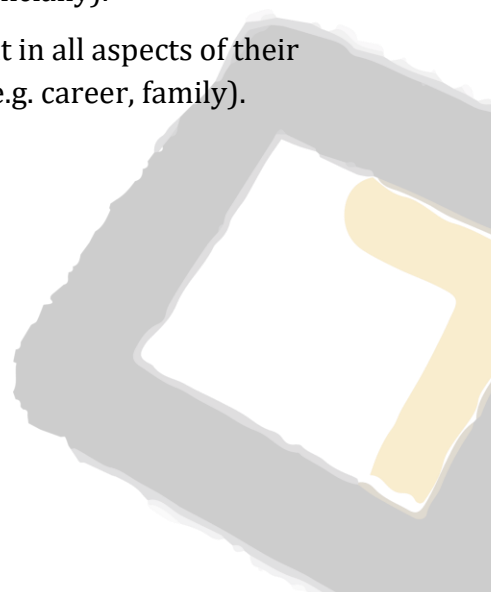
QUESTION 4: WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU REACH THE LEVEL OF WELL-BEING THAT YOU WANT? *PEOPLE MIGHT INCLUDE: SIBLINGS, PARENTS, FOSTER PARENTS, STAFF, SOCIAL WORKER, COACH, NEIGHBOR, TEACHER, FAITH LEADER, BOSS, ETC. YOU MAY ASK AS WELL HOW WOULD THOSE PEOPLE BE ABLE TO HELP.*

BULGARIA

Participants identified teachers and parents as the key persons competent to assist in a higher level of well-being.

Teachers could help by being more supportive and nurturing, spending more time on ensuring an understanding of the taught material by students. Participants shared their concerns regarding the fact that the school's main focus is on tests, grades and state exams rather than on the students' understanding and learning process.

Parents could help by being more patient, more supportive and listening to the youngsters' needs.

Participants weren't sure how social workers or youth workers could help more, aside from making more activities, where youth can participate and they can enjoy themselves.

LATVIA

In consistency with their previous responses, the Latvian interviewees explained that their family and friends were most helpful to make them feel better. Some claimed that they would never reach out to a teacher, but instead, would talk to their parents or friends, if they have some problems.

At the same time, respondents felt that they rely on friends too much and needed to learn how to deal with their problems by themselves. In such situations, going out for a walk with a dog and spending time by yourself was sufficient to improve one's well-being.

Some youngsters admitted that they see a therapist and explained that talking to a mental health professional was beneficial as they could discuss their issues without worrying that they are being judged.

SPAIN

Spanish respondents agreed, in great part, with those from the Bulgarian focus groups, identifying parents and teachers as the most important persons to assist in lifting their well-being.

Regarding parents, building a better relationship with their offspring or having more money to afford extra-curricular activities were described as ways of providing help. Participants also shared their desire for their teachers to pay closer attention to their interests.

ROMANIA

Parents emerged as the main group that Romanian youngsters resort to for assistance, along with other family members such as siblings or grandparents. Outside the family environment, friends and teachers are seemingly another important source of support. The role of experts, business relations, confessing and financial means were also mentioned. Some participants reported that they prefer to pursue their desired level of well-being on their own, without seeking help.

QUESTION 5: ARE YOU CURRENTLY AIMING TO ACHIEVE YOUR DESIRED LEVEL OF WELL-BEING? *ARE YOU TAKING ANY STEPS TOWARDS THAT, ARE YOU PLANNING TO TAKE STEPS FOR THAT.*

BULGARIA

Most participants admitted that they feel currently too overwhelmed to think about this a lot. One mentioned making time in her day for her well-being by getting up early before school and doing yoga. Another participant mentioned that playing computer games in the evening was fun and an escape from other problems.

When asked if they think they will start spending more effort on their well-being, participants agreed and said they can start thinking of better activities for themselves.

LATVIA

While all youngsters took steps to achieve their desired level of well-being, it was clear from their answers that they conceptualized the process in a different fashion. Listening to music, talking to friends, or playing sports was something they did simply because they enjoyed it, not because they had made the conscious decision to improve their well-being.

SPAIN

Unlike other countries, most of the Spanish participants felt that, due to their young age, it was not up to them to attain the desired level of well-being, but their families and schools. They said that they felt they were doing 'everything they could' by attending school and engaging in a variety of after-school activities.

ROMANIA

The overwhelming majority of the focus groups discussants in Romania revealed their ongoing efforts to enhance their well-being status. This is pursued through a wide range of activities, including personal development, nuance of knowledge, communication and interaction with persons of choice, participation in activities of preference, and enhancement
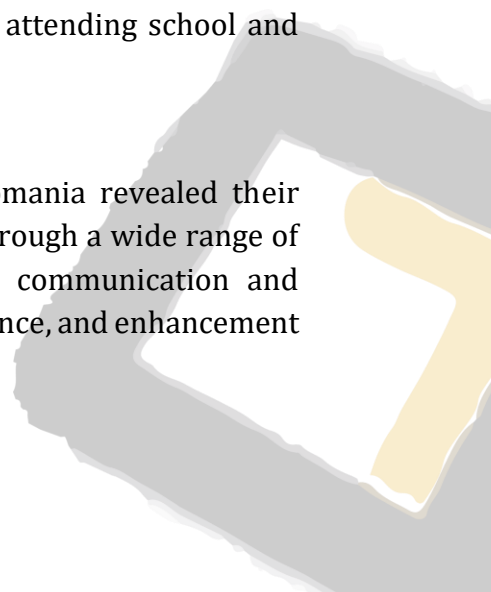
of financial situation. The few who denied sharing such an aim explained that they felt as having reached their desired level of well-being.

QUESTION 6: WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT NEED TO HELP REACH A DESIRED LEVEL OF WELL-BEING? *RESOURCES MIGHT INCLUDE THINGS SUCH AS MONEY, PEOPLE, TIME, OR ACCESS TO CERTAIN PLACES. YOU WILL LIKELY THINK OF OTHER RESOURCES THAT YOU HAVE OR YOU NEED IN YOUR LIFE TO MAKE THE CHANGE YOU WANT IN YOUR AND YOUR PEERS' WELL-BEING.*

BULGARIA

There was consensus on the need for more personal time for leisure, besides juggling between school, homework, extracurricular activities and responsibilities at home. Most participants also admitted to spending a lot of time on social media without really enjoying it but out of habit or to keep up with others, in terms of trends, jokes, etc.

LATVIA

The importance of family and friends was emphasized in all focus group discussions. Other resources included everyday activities, such as talking to a friend, petting a cat or a dog, more time to do homework, going for a walk in a forest, and listening to music all alone in one's bedroom. Time and money was also often quoted as a crucial resource.

Several older youngsters explained that they did not have enough time to do all the homework and rest, while others claimed that money would give them more freedom and a sense of security that they currently were lacking. Time and money were not mentioned among 12-14 year old youngsters; for them, having access to a library and participation in activities at the youth center were particularly important as it provided a distraction from everyday troubles, took away their anger, and lifted up their mood.

Some older interviewees, however, admitted that they did not feel like they "deserved" any additional resources for improving their well-being. They explained that their friends' and family's well-being was far more important to them, so the youngsters focused on that instead. Others claimed that there was not anything they do currently to achieve major changes to their well-being. They believed that only with time their well-being would improve.

SPAIN

Most participants pointed to money as the basic means to gain access to all the things that contribute to a better well-being, i.e. doing after-school activities, visiting places of

preference, affording better accommodation or spending more time with parents with less working hours. Few participants also mentioned changing their living setting to areas with better transportation and livelihood.

ROMANIA

In spite of the fact that, similarly to the findings from Spain, many Romanian participants agreed on the importance of money to achieve a higher level of well-being, an interesting discrepancy was noticed in the way that financial resources contribute to this goal. While some youngsters adopted a consumer's perspective by tethering money to the purchase of goods, others envisaged easier access to high quality education and eventually achieve a better professional career.

Besides money, time also emerged as a key resource to a better well-being, allocated to oneself, family, pets and friends, as well as opportunities to travel. Certain participants insisted on the importance of mental health, encouragement, peer acceptance, strong and healthy family relations.

QUESTION 7: WHAT CHALLENGES MIGHT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO HAVE THE LEVEL OF WELL-BEING YOU WANT? *THINK ABOUT THINGS LIKE HOW EASY IT IS TO TRUST PEOPLE, MAKE NEW FRIENDS, ASK FOR HELP, FIND RESOURCES OR PEOPLE THAT WILL HELP YOU, INCLUDING FINANCIAL SITUATION, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.*

BULGARIA

The discussants' answers revolved around a general sentiment of feeling overwhelmed by having too much to deal with on a daily basis. Tiredness and reluctance to engage were attributed to the complicated nature of issues arising in their lives.

There was consensus on the difficulty in relying on authority figures, as persons on whom youngsters should be able to depend on inspire fear through reprimands instead of offering help.

Participants didn't complain about finding it difficult to make friends but they mentioned a common feeling of loneliness and struggle in connecting on a deeper level.

LATVIA

Lack of motivation, lack of time, and poor financial situation were the most common answers during the Latvian discussions.
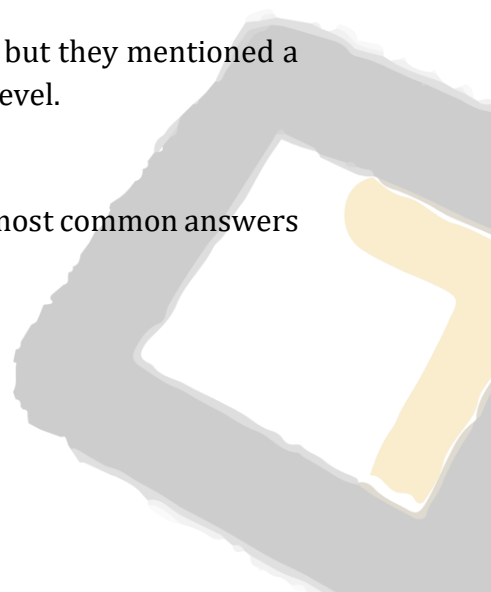
> With money, you won't have to live underneath a bridge, it'll allow you to have a pretty okay life and then you'll always be able to tell yourself that you're feeling fine.

For some youngsters, challenges were attributed to the behavior of certain persons in their lives, whose anger and negative sentiments towards them serves as an obstacle to the achievement of the desired level of well-being. Conversely, emotional support from their loved ones, while reportedly non-existent, would significantly improve their well-being.

SPAIN

In consistency with the overall theme emerging from Spanish focus group discussions, money was identified as the most important obstacle to one's well-being. Financial stability was thus highlighted as key to lead a better life.

ROMANIA

The Romanian discussants developed a broad spectrum of challenges with regards to their well-being. Financial difficulties, as well as deterioration of physical or mental health of the respondent or their parents were repeatedly mentioned during the discussions. Participants also discussed the constraints emerging due to sentiments of fear of failure in school performance, which could lead to disappointment of family; of inability to trust and rely on people; of loss and grief of loved ones; and other deeply rooted negative feelings such as anger.

QUESTION 8: WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD VIOLENCE? *TRY TO DEFINE IT, BRING EXAMPLES, ANY FORM OR TYPE OF VIOLENCE*

BULGARIA

In a general definition of violence, participants described the act of harming people and causing physical or mental damage to others.

The discussion was focused on domestic violence and school bullying, with some accounts on fights, attacks and road rage, as well as a general anger.
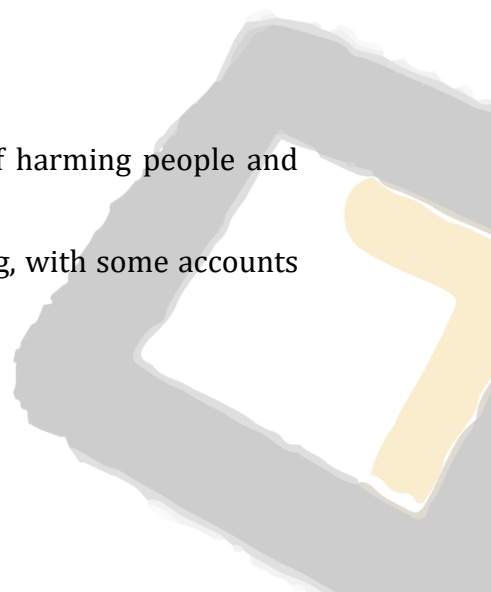
Participants also attached violence to a general sentiment of anger, sparked by trivial reasons, together with unrest and an 'each for their own' attitude, especially regarding adults.

LATVIA

The Latvian participants did not reach a consensus in the definition of violence. Some defined violence as overstepping one's boundaries and causing discomfort. For others, violence involved physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Several interviewees argued that emotional abuse and bullying were the most horrific forms of violence. One interviewee pointed out that for her, violence also entails a cycle of reciprocity - the abused people become abusers, too. Nevertheless, all youngsters regardless of their age were able to name at least two forms of violence (such as sexual, physical and emotional violence).

Adding a personal note, most discussants described themselves as very emotional and sensitive who are easily hurt by words.

I'm the kind of person who - I can tolerate physical pain but as soon as I am emotionally abused - I feel that a lot, even tiny things, so in that sense, I am a very sensitive person.

SPAIN

The spontaneous definition of violence provided by one interviewee was 'to harm someone in any way'.

Working in groups, participants identified four different types of violence: physical, psychological, verbal, sexual.

ROMANIA

Attempting a definition of violence, some participants described it as aggression against another person, injustice and evil. One participant linked the word violence with the red color.

In an overview of the responses, the types of violence have been clustered below, accompanied by examples provided by the participants:
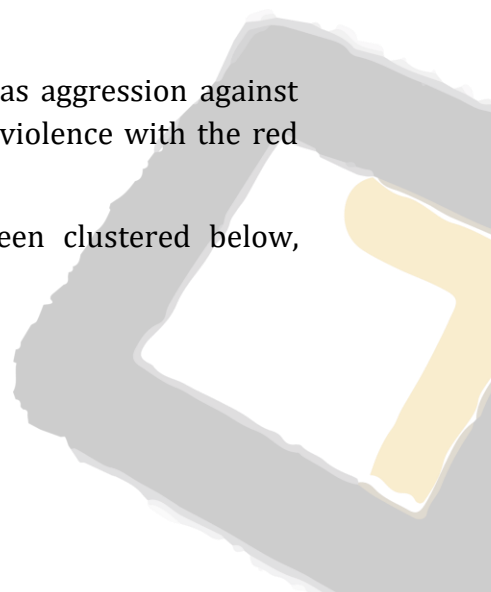
- Physical violence: beating (slaps, bruises, punches), pinching and pushing, brutality, aggression
- Verbal violence: swearing, scolding, insulting, using nicknames
- Psychological/mental violence: discomfort pr fear, sense of superiority over someone, harassment through online channels (e.g. social media), spreading rumors, threatening
- Sexual violence: harassment and abuse

Bullying was mentioned by the majority of participants as a distinct form of violence, entailing elements of all other types (teasing, pinching and pushing, use of nicknames, spreading rumors, ignoring or exclusion from peer groups).

QUESTION 9: HAVE YOU EVER WITNESSED VIOLENCE/ABUSE? *WHAT TYPE, AS AN OBSERVER OR WITNESS, HAVE YOU EVER FELT VIOLENT/AGGRESSIVE AND WERE UNABLE TO CONTROL IT?*

BULGARIA

All participants revealed that they have witnessed or have been aware of some form of violence. Bullying was discussed by many as a daily reality in the school environment.

On the other hand, most respondents recounted stories of domestic violence without reference to personal experiences. Similarly, there were narrations of violent incidents in public spaces involving persons who had consumed alcohol or other substances, without any personal links drawn.

LATVIA

All youngsters admitted that they had observed violence.

> I don't think I know a single person nowadays who hasn't experienced violence. Everyone has been mocked or been angry about something.

She explained later on that violence is incredibly prevalent - it is so common that most people do not even notice it. Other interviewees expressed a similar observation, namely, that violence is normalized to a point that it is almost invisible.'

Emotional abuse and bullying were the most common forms of violence that youngsters had witnessed. Some had tried to get involved and help the victim, while admitting that they suspected their friends would not do the same, if they had been bullied.

According to the interviewees, emotional abuse can take many different forms - some students are bullied because of their sexual orientation, others get teased when they dye their hair, and so on. Some interviewees argued that unwanted advice and criticism is also a form of abuse.

Two participants admitted that they had been violent themselves to a friend. However, they were unwilling to explain in full detail the situation, only mentioning that while they were aware of their wrongdoing and had apologized, regaining trust of that person was not successful.

SPAIN

In line with the previous country findings, all participants in the Spanish focus groups reported to have witnessed violence in some form, mostly from the role of the observer, in school environments or among friends.

When requested about situations which could stimulate a violent or aggressive behavior on their part towards others, most discussants refrained from answering; the few who responded mentioned situations of anger towards siblings or feeling disrespected at school.

ROMANIA

Unlike the previous findings, not all participants in Romania held that they had witnessed some form of violence. Among those who did, several admitted a lack of reaction or interference due to fear or inability to comprehend the events that were transpiring.

Some participants revealed having engaged in acts of violence either as survivors or as offenders.

QUESTION 10: WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES PEOPLE MORE VIOLENT? *ELEMENTS SUCH AS: INEQUALITY, PREJUDICE, FANATICISM, EXTREMISM, TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS ETC. THINK OF STORIES OF PEOPLE THAT CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS AND PROGRESSIVELY BECAME MORE VIOLENT.*

BULGARIA

Responses were mostly focused on sentiments of hopelessness and the need to feel powerful. Some participants argued that there is room for change through self-growth.

People get very disappointed in the world around them and they lose hope, and then they become more violent.

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I think some people are more violent than others, but it's something you see when you grow up and you can learn, like you can learn to be kind and caring.

I think people are violent for many reasons, but many times it's because they feel powerless and then they use force to feel stronger.

LATVIA

Most participants believed that the environment where a person grew up plays a crucial role. In effect, violent people have been themselves abused (either physically or emotionally) and therefore have been "programmed" to be aggressive, too. They do not know how to behave differently because they had unloving and unsupportive parents who taught them violence is acceptable. Others argued that fear, anger, dissatisfaction, and other negative emotions lead to violence. The desire to feel included might make someone violent as well.

Female interviewees pointed out that boys are much more violent in general because they do not know how to deal with their emotions. They claimed that everyone needs to express their feelings in some way and since boys do not know how to do that, they are more likely to become abusive.

SPAIN

In line with the Latvian respondents, discussants in Spain argued that young persons who have been victims of teasing or bullying at school are likely to turn to violence.

Overall, however, the idea that violence is a personality trait, beyond choice or self-control, prevailed in the discussion.

ROMANIA

In a brainstorming of roots of violence, Romanian participants identified the following: toxic relationships (absence of one parent, family quarrels); addictions (alcohol and drug consumption, gambling); low educational level; poor financial condition; inequality,misogyny, injustice, repression or victimization; ttoxic way of thinking, negative feelings (humiliation, frustration, anger or even adrenaline), insecurity and lack of self-esteem.

People are probably violent because they have been abused by other people. I consider that the atmosphere and the people around influence the development of others in society.

Unfortunately, some people choose to be violent when they feel judged, wronged, discriminated against or when they want to achieve something and fail.

In a different direction than the rest of the respondents, one participant claimed violence to be necessary for survival in a hostile environment, such as the school environment.

I can say that I have become more aggressive over the years, but I think this is how it should be. The school is like a jungle, you are prey or predator, there is no way.

QUESTION 11: WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED THE MOST IN A SITUATION OF VIOLENCE? *BEFORE (LEADING UP TO IT), DURING, AFTERWARDS. IN TERMS OF PEOPLE, ATTITUDES, RESOURCES, INSTITUTIONS, ETC*

BULGARIA

A wide range of responses included reaction of one's environment to violence, either through intervention or through providing support without direct involvement; reliance on effective intervention of police authorities; awareness of available institutional support; self-empowerment through self-defense classes or other martial arts training.

LATVIA

Youngsters pointed out that while bystanders should always get involved and help the victim, they also argued that it was only possible during acts of emotional violence. One female interviewee claimed that while, in theory, helping the victim and not simply ignoring violence would be beneficial to the victim and make them feel supported, getting involved in a fight could be dangerous for a female witness.

Youngsters also claimed that teenagers and children need to be prepared for potential acts of violence and how to react in such situations.

> I wish someone had warned me beforehand, when I was smaller. (…) If someone had talked to me earlier, helped me, showed me what to do, maybe it would not have ended the way it did. (…) If someone had told me what to do when somebody calls you names, spits in your face, kicks you… but little children are not told about this, it's not a fun topic, and nobody likes to talk about it. And that's why it happens so frequently because nobody knows how to stop violence. No one talks about it.

Public awareness on the issue of violence, the definition and the level of harm that a behavior may cause is argued to be cardinal in making the societal attitude towards abuse stricter.

SPAIN

Participants' responses were focused on the mediation of loved ones (family or friends) and one's self-control in ceasing a violent act.

ROMANIA

The Romanian respondents were the only ones who appear to have taken into consideration the temporal aspect to identify supporting mechanisms against acts of violence. Through this lens, responses could be clustered as follows:

- Before (prevention): public awareness based on educational shows, non-violent games etc.; promoting better communication and feelings of trust; addressing entrenched social attitudes of indifference, discrimination, criticism
- During: mediation through discussion with both parts of the conflict, with emphasis on assisting the offender to face the causes and understand the consequences of their behavior; communication of the incident to someone from the family environment or an adult in general, the police authorities, trusted figures such as teachers and professionals with an expertise on the field of violence, such as psychologists, either for support or intervention. One interviewee suggested that confrontation of the offender might help in calming them down and ceasing the act of violence.
- After: stringent procedures for the punishment of the offender to prevent future incidents

Of note, one respondent insisted that violence is a human trait and, thus, it is not possible to eliminate the phenomenon, but rather to mitigate its extent.

QUESTION 12: WHAT TOOLS, RESOURCES OR TRAINING WOULD YOU NEED IN ORDER TO COMBAT/IDENTIFY VIOLENCE OR TO PREVENT IT?

BULGARIA

While in the beginning, participants mentioned more martial arts training, then they turned more to more supportive systems - of friends and family, of government and local authorities.

The need for more awareness on how to prevent violence and identify spaces providing support in cases of abuse was highlighted during the discussion.

LATVIA

Participants did not list specific policies or institutions that could prevent violence. Instead, they argued that everyone - children, parents, and teachers - need to be educated more about the concept of violence. They explained that many people, including abusers, do not even know what violence is, or they think that violence can only be physical, but not emotional, for example, so they do not even realize that they have been abusive. The respondents argued that violence is so normalized in Latvian society that even well-meaning people turn to abuse because they do not have adequate conflict resolution skills or they do not know how to deal with their negative emotions. In their opinion, children need to be better educated on forms of violence, so that they would gradually understand that there are certain boundaries one cannot overstep.

Others argued that violence begins very early - during kindergarten - so the only way it can be prevented is by educating parents. Youngsters claimed that violence is something that people learn from adults around them who teach children that violence is an acceptable response in conflicts. For violence to be avoided, prevention efforts need to start with parents and teachers - adults need to stop being abusive to stop the cycle of abuse. However, if violence continues to be normalized and people do not learn how to process their emotions in a healthy way, abuse will continue to be a part of modern day society.

SPAIN

Participants were asked to get into groups again and make a list of tools, resources or training to combat/prevent violence. The most repeated answers to prevent violence in their age group were education on self-control provided as part of the school curriculum and programmes on anti-bullying.

In terms of violence amongst adults, harsher laws were deemed to be conducive to the prevention of violence. In this light, legalization of guns was also envisaged as detrimental to that end.

ROMANIA

As a key resource for the prevention or handling of violence, participants reported the opportunity to seek help from competent authorities and ensure access to professional support from a therapist.

Other responses include: behavioral traits, such as patience and understanding, focus and emotional intelligence; the importance of formal and non-formal education in raising awareness and providing training on how to identify the different types of violence and address violent persons; opportunities for discussion with peers who have encountered a similar situation; aid from the competent authorities; direct and effective communication

with the offender; profound understanding of how persons can learn to cohabit and tolerate different views.

QUESTION 13: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THERE IS ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM THE MUNICIPALITY/STATE/GOVERNMENT FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION, WELL-BEING? HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT HELP?

LATVIA

There was universal agreement among all interviewees that there was not adequate support of any kind for violence prevention, or well-being improvement. Even though all youngsters remembered at least one lecture on violence that was given by a guest lecturer, they argued that the content was poor quality and absolutely useless. The lectures were usually very theoretical, simply explaining what are the different forms of violence with lists of crisis phone line numbers the youngsters could use. There were no practical exercises, discussions, workshops, or any interaction with the audience. Interviewees argued that successful violence prevention training should be frequent - at least once year, it should talk about the more uncomfortable topics (such as sexual violence), and it should not be used as replacement for a different class. Arguably, this approach creates the impression for the students that the topic is not that important so it's safe to ignore the lecturer, while prioritizing the lecture and improving the content of it would be more beneficial.

Moreover, when asked about support from teachers, all interviewees admitted that they get no help from teachers when they experience abuse. Very few would be willing to turn to a teacher because previous experience had taught them that teachers usually dismiss their experience or simply tell them that the youngsters "need to fight back" the perpetrator. As a result, the lack of support from teachers makes youngsters feel less secure and safe in a school environment.

At the same time, many participants praised the various NGOs and youth organizations that work with violence and try to improve the well-being of youngsters.

SPAIN

Participants were unsure about what support was being provided from their municipality/state, but believed that whichever there was, it wasn't enough.

ROMANIA

There is broad consensus on the lack of adequate institutional support in combating acts of violence. The need for frequent, practical training was emphasized, along with the desire for a more active involvement of state authorities in situations of violence and the social life of youngsters in general. On the other hand, it was argued that ensuring law enforcement

through imposing fines or other forms of financial punishment may serve as a deterrent to future acts of violence. The pivotal role of education and professionals offering support under school auspices (such as school counselors) was also mentioned.

QUESTION 14: WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK VIOLENCE HAS ON WELLBEING? *FROM A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW, IS VIOLENCE TOWARDS THEM OR PEOPLE AROUND THEM AFFECT THE MAJORITY OF THEIR WELL-BEING?*

BULGARIA

Violence was tethered with sentiments of feeling threatened or unsafe while practicing certain activities or being in specific places. In cases where presence to such places is mandatory (e.g., school), prevalent sentiments of fear may hinder concentration on relevant activities.

Participants agreed that violence is a very strong deterrent of well-being.

LATVIA

Similar to Bulgarian respondents, interviewees in Latvia agreed that violence has a profoundly negative influence on one's well-being; there was, however, some disagreement on the specific impact of violence on the victim. Some participants believed that victims of abuse tend to blame themselves for what happened and start worrying that violence will happen again. Others, speaking from their own personal experience, argued that victims become more reserved, quiet, and shy with increased anxiety that lasts long-term.

Even situations where violence was observed and experienced personally, can have a dire impact on one's well-being. Witnessing violence leads to pent up anger about the injustice observed and a sense of powerlessness.

SPAIN

Consistent with previous findings, the Spanish respondents attested to the idea that persons who are exposed to regular violence are likely to have a deep impact on their well-being.

ROMANIA

In agreement with all the other respondents, Romanian participants delved into the detrimental impact of violence on one's well-being, by placing emphasis on the emotional distress, fear, inability to trust others and decrease of self-confidence that victims of violence frequently experience. Some respondents highlighted that trauma following an act of violence may scar a person indefinitely, affecting their ability to feel joy or happiness, develop personal relationships or dispense with negative and worrying thoughts.

One interviewee, however, deviated by refusing to admit an inevitable correlation among violence and a low level of well-being.

QUESTION 15: IF YOU WERE A POLICY MAKER, PROPOSE 1 CHANGE THAT WOULD STRENGTHEN WELL-BEING, AND 1 THAT WOULD COMBAT VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH. *WHAT CHANGE WOULD THEY LIKE TO SEE, WHAT IS MOST NECESSARY FOR THEM?*

BULGARIA

Strengthening one's well-being: Less school pressure by reducing the number of state exams, which push for test-taking skills rather than profound learning; creation of more free opportunities for relaxing and fun activities.

Combating violence among youth: Configuration of a space that institutional actors can launch prevention campaigns and offer support to victims. It should be somewhere in the city center and very visible and accessible, like a first point of contact.

LATVIA

Strengthening one's well-being: free access to a psychologist and explanation of why sessions are beneficial to everyone.

Combating violence among youth: regular lectures that teach identifying and dealing with emotions would prevent possible outbursts of violence among those children who are prone to violence.

SPAIN

Strengthening one's well-being: To dedicate more money to after school activities especially in poorer neighborhoods where kids might not have much to do in the afternoons and weekends, and might not feel safe at home.

Combating violence among youth:

- Create a law that forces teachers to do something if they witness violence (this was repeated twice) – some of the participants said that they teachers were sometimes passive when they witnessed bullying or suspected that a student was suffering violence, and that this was very disheartening as a young person.
- To incarcerate parents that hit/abuse their children and not let them see them again – one of the participants was very outspoken about this, and believed that it doesn't matter if they're the parents, if they're violent they must go to prison.

ROMANIA

Strengthening one's well-being: creation of parks and other recreational spaces; shift in the approach of the educational system, away from multiple exams and towards other ways of developing one's skills; increase involvement in activities that bring happiness and reinforce one's self-esteem; guarantees of a decent living, e.g. through timely provision of one's salary

Combating violence among youth: austerity in the creation and enforcement of the legislative framework against offenders; organisation of meetings with people who have experienced violence, as well as with local and state actors as a demonstration of support.
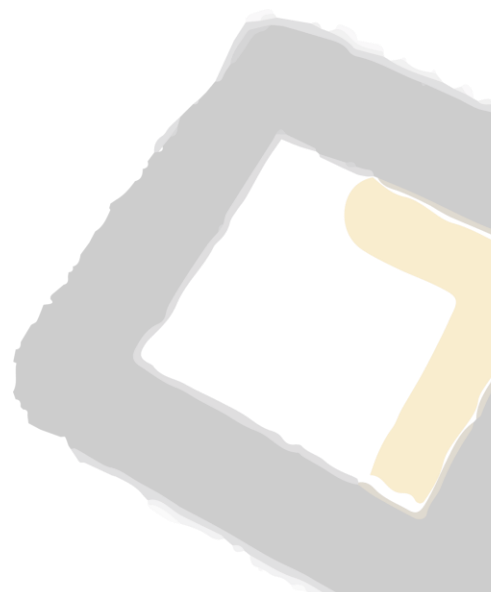
INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNGSTERS ON PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE AND WELL-BEING

(Interview questions in ANNEX)

This section of the research paper analyzes the interviews of youngsters and youth workers. The purpose of this approach is to gain even more insight into the perception of violence and well-being. The interview answers of the youngsters are consolidated, and the consensus is described along with direct quotes. The interviews of youth workers are direct excerpts.

BULGARIA

In the case of Bulgaria, 6 youngsters were asked to answer 16 questions regarding their perceptions on violence and well-being. The youngest participant was 13 years old and the oldest 18. 3 of them from the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia. 3 from other cities in Bulgaria. Interestingly enough, one of the participants decided to answer the interview in the format of a story of their experiences with violence. The participant answered all questions and parts of their story were used in the description of the answers below.

Youngsters perceive violence as everything that is putting an individual in harm's way for the benefit of the other. Also, everything that keeps an individual in control of someone else. Actions that come from one person and make another feel afraid or hurt. It can be physical or psychological, but it always causes harm from one side to another, even if one side consists of more than one person. Violence comes in many shapes and sizes. Participant number 3 notes that "reducing it to simply the physical act of assault undermines both its consequences and initial provocations."

When asked which types of violence are most common to them, almost all of them noted physical and verbal is most common with examples from school bullying and domestic violence. This is also apparent in the following question where they are asked where they see cases of violence. The most common places were their schools – among schoolmates - and at home such as violent family disputes and aggression. In addition, when asked on which types of violence they are most likely to be exposed to in their communities, they note once again school and homes and in some occasions in public spaces and public transportation. Specifically, they mention that psychological/verbal violence is prominent in schools where it manifests as slurs or making fun of their appearance and belittling.

Moreover, youngsters were asked how people around them react when witnessing acts of violence. As in if they are any reactions or if anyone intervenes or reports the incidents. All of them said that no one reacts in an intervening manner. They either laugh it off, or act as if

they do not see it as well as just observing it without acting. The participants also said that they haven't intervened in most cases with only 2 participants stating that they attempted a few times to stop acts of violence physically but were not successful. Participants also claimed that they were afraid to intervene. The youngsters also answered that they do not know ways of reporting such incidents other than the police and perhaps the teacher when they take place in school environments.

Moving to well-being, the consensus from the interview is that youngsters are aware of the concept of well-being and are mindful of it but not confidently. They describe it as not having to worry about things and being at peace with oneself. Others describe it as having a good home and good friends. Participant 5 said "It's feeling good about yourself, finding the things that make you feel happy. People have different things about this but for me, it's calm, pets, reading books, finding time for walks. I also feel good when I've done all the tasks that I am supposed to".

When asked if well-being is important to take care of and if they take steps into actualizing it, the youngsters all unanimously agree that it is important. However, it seems that they find some difficulties when trying to implement it such as participant 4 "I'm trying but I don't think I'm doing anything right."

Perhaps more insight can be drawn from the factors that prevent and hinder the well-being of youngsters. When asked, they noted that education is taking a lot of their time and applies a lot of pressure to them to excel, have extracurricular activities and have academic success which can be quite time consuming.

Nonetheless, when asked what the one thing is, they do that might make the situation around them better or an action for themselves, most of them said that they try to make people happy by smiling or being there for them, avoid conflicts, and be supportive to their friends. Participant 2 said "I try to smile at people, make them feel well. That makes me feel good too. I help when I can, like my mother with chores. I have volunteered sometimes and cleaned up to help the environment". Participant 1 which focused mostly on themselves and said "I cut myself slack in hard times. Done is better than perfect. Sometimes I allow myself additional food, but I try not to, so I don't develop unhealthy coping mechanisms."

Lastly, when asked about the one thing they can do ideally to make things better for the community, a common theme in the answers was to educate and raise awareness about violence and about empathy. This way people would be more sensitive and open to listening instead of leading to conflict. Other answers included people in their community becoming more tolerant and less bigoted. Participant 6 summed it up well by saying:

> Well, there are things that we can do to be better to the environment and to each other. People need to be cleaner and not throw their garbage in nature, and we need to protect trees because they are the lungs of our planet. And people need to take care of each other, not hurt each other, so that the world can be calm and nice to live in.

ROMANIA

In the case of Romania, 6 interviews were conducted with participants from rural areas of Romania (similar to the questionnaire demographic statistics collected). The youngest participant was 13 years old and the oldest 16 years old.

When asked about their perception of violence, the common answers were physical and mental/verbal mostly and some references to sexual violence. They follow up by stating that these are also the most common types of violence that affect their local environment, specifically on the streets and in schools. Consequently, these were exclusively mentioned when they were asked what type of violence they were most likely to see in their community such as school and family.

4 out of 6 youngsters stated that they had intervened when confronted with acts of violence, claiming that they felt "nice" that they intervened as stated by participant 1 "I did! I once saw a boy hitting a girl and I went there to help her. I feel so good knowing that I helped her" and Participant 2 "Yes I have intervened in acts of violence, most of the time to stop one of my classmates from getting hurt" . Despite most of the youngsters intervening in acts of violence, most of them also stated that bystanders do not do anything to intervene and in most cases try not to pay attention to it. What is more, all youngsters said that they are fully aware of ways to report violence.

On the topic of well-being, all participants said that they are aware of it and link it with the ability of keeping their life affairs in order and having friends and family. They describe it as a very positive feeling synonymous to happiness and relaxation. Peace within the context of absence of violence. They all proceed by noting that it is very important for them, and they take steps in achieving their well-being.

When asked what are the factors that impede their well-being, the youngsters mentioned poverty and social setting as the largest issues. This could be issues with their peers or people that have a large influence on other people. Poverty affects the level of education as well as considering well-being as a lower priority, compared to food and utilities.

Nonetheless, all youngsters said that the one thing they actually do to make matters better is to be kind, to take time for themselves and hopefully to make the people around them feel better such as participant 4: "The thing I do to make things around me or for me better is for myself to be better with the world around me".

Lastly, if able to change one thing ideally that would make things better in their community, mentions of education and communication were made as well as the importance of reprimanding offenders so that they do not repeat acts of violence whilst still stressing the importance of educating why these acts are not good. Participant 3 also added: „If I could make a change to make things better, I would create some rules, where people feel free but also protected from people who can intentionally harm others in or out of school"

SPAIN

In the case of Spain, 6 interviews were conducted with participants from smaller cities of Spain. The youngest participant was 14 years old and the oldest 18 years old.

When asked what they perceive as violence, the participants stated that it is anything that causes harm or makes someone else feel bad, and they specify by mentioning psychological and physical abuse but not any other types. This follows their answers regarding what is the most common types of violence that affect their local community, where they replied mostly physical, psychological and verbal.

Youngsters stated that most incidents of violence happen in high school, on streets and where teenager's hangout with all of them being psychological and physical violence. Additionally, most of the youngsters claim that in most cases they do not intervene. However, Participant 4 highlights the issue of community support "It depends on the people. In the village, if the person is important or not, a known and unknown guy, they will defend the known guy. Close groups, they support each other."

Surprisingly, even though most people in their environment do not intervene when faced with acts of violence, all the youngsters of this study state that they have intervened in either giving advice to friends that live away from them, by learning how to resolve conflict and take the position of the mediator. Participant 5 states " In high school there has been bullying, I have stood up for others. If it happens to me, I just pass because it feeds the mind of the bullies". Finally, the youngsters when not intervening, they rely on their parents/family and teachers. This connects with the previous answers on where they see acts of violence most often, therefore, reporting it to the figures closest to that environment.

Proceeding with their description and awareness of well-being, youngsters relate it with being comfortable and happy and being at ease with themselves. As Participant 2 stated "Being happy and surrounded by people that support you" and as Participant 1 said "Feeling that you are not excluded, that they want to be with you. Feel included, be at ease without

stress.". Moreover, all the youngsters find that caring for their well-being is very important to them and they take steps in achieving their level of well-being. Either by finding supportive friends or by being honest with people around them and to themselves. Finding a safe space where they are not judged and do not need to hide. Also, participant 5 states "I want to achieve my goals and feel self-realized. And enjoy what I do."

Moving on, the youngsters claim that factors that negatively affect their well-being in their communities are mostly social settings and in some cases bigotry. They claim that not feeling accepted for their identity hinders their well-being. Participant 4 also states "*minority groups get a lot of insults; they have no welfare. Society in general*." When asked what they could actually do to make things better for people around them and for themselves, their answers were quite diverse. Participant 1 stated "*I want to create a YouTube channel to help people with diabetes, nutrition, tips.*" and Participant 5 "*Try to be myself, inspire others, help them where I can and be a member of my society*.". Other participants say that they show respect and help people that are alone.

Lastly, when asked if they could ideally change one thing in their community that would make things better, the participants focused on creating settings that people can be vocal and open-minded and that will not judge others based on economic status and appearances. Participant 2 states: "Educate children more on different issues: about being different from each other, education on how not to hurt others so that they realize this."

LATVIA

In the case of Latvia, 5 youngsters were interviewed from towns in Latvia. The youngest participant being 14 years old and the oldest 18 years old.

When asked about their perception of violence, where do they see it most often, and which types of violence is most prevalent, the youngsters agreed that hurting people - both physically and emotionally, as well as rape and sexual abuse count as violence. One participant, however, admitted that her understanding of violence revolved around physical abuse and that it had not occurred to her that teasing, mocking, bullying, and so on could be considered as violence.
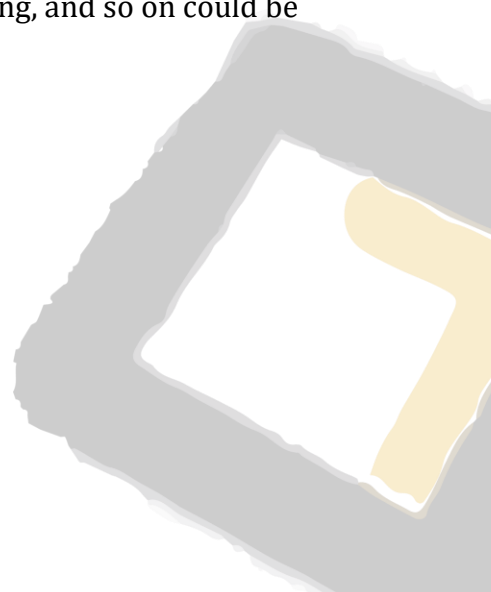
I talked to my sister about the interview and I was shocked when she said that violence can also be emotional. I had always thought that the word violence is only used to describe physical violence.

Other participants, on other hand, pointed out that violence is an incredibly broad concept that can also involve pain, insecurity, poor self-esteem, as well as abuse. Interestingly, sexual violence was mentioned by only one participant who listed it as one of the first examples of violence, in contrast to other participants.

Following, all participants had observed violence at some point in their lives, usually in school. The most typical type of abuse was bullying except for one male participant who also had experienced physical violence when he got into a fight. Another female participant had also been a victim of domestic abuse from her mother. As participants pointed out, emotional abuse was common among both girls and boys.

When asked if people intervene when witnessing acts of violence or being aware of it, the youngsters said that in Latvia, violent acts were usually ignored - both by adults and youngsters. For instance, one participant described a moment when she had been harassed while riding a bus. Everyone around her paid no attention and did not intervene, which left the girl feeling defenseless. Similarly, bullying is often ignored in Latvian schools, too, or other people might even join in and laugh together with the abuser. According to youngsters, teachers do not intervene either - their lack of involvement was rated negatively by all participants who expressed that it should be the teachers' responsibility to help the victim.

Nevertheless, most youngsters had intervened in acts of violence. Sometimes they did it because their friend was being mocked, in other situations they did simply because they felt that it was the right thing to do. Nonetheless, the youngsters admitted that it had not been an easy decision: "I want to help, but in that moment you're afraid that the bully who is abusing the other, will do the same to you, too". At the same time, the youngsters stressed on the importance of intervention. As one girl argued, it was everyone's responsibility not to ignore moments of injustice and violence and instead, help the victim.

Moving on to well-being, the youngsters had slightly different perspectives on the definition of well-being. For some, well-being meant a lack of stress and anxiety, feeling happy and safe, for others well-being entailed an opportunity to develop in a healthy environment with people who respect you. All participants agreed that caring for one's well-being was crucial. As they explained, ignoring self-care would lead to poor self-esteem and a person might feel excluded from everyday life. Others argued that a potential consequence could be a lack of

will to live and suicidal thoughts. Or lack of care for one's well-being could lead to decreased motivation to do anything.

The youngsters claimed to have made an effort to improve their level of well-being. Activities included going out for a walk in the forest, watching movies with some popcorn, playing the piano, or meeting up with loved ones.

Lastly, the youngsters when asked what prevents or hinders their well-being, the most common factor mentioned was time Many youngsters were preparing for their finals, so they all pointed out that more time for revision, homework, and rest would decrease their stress level. Some were studying abroad and missed their parents and siblings. Other youngsters had ill relatives that they had to take care of, so that played a determining role in their well-being. But despite these obstacles, all participants rated their well-being as above the average, in contrast to focus group discussion participants who were far more pessimistic about their level of well-being.
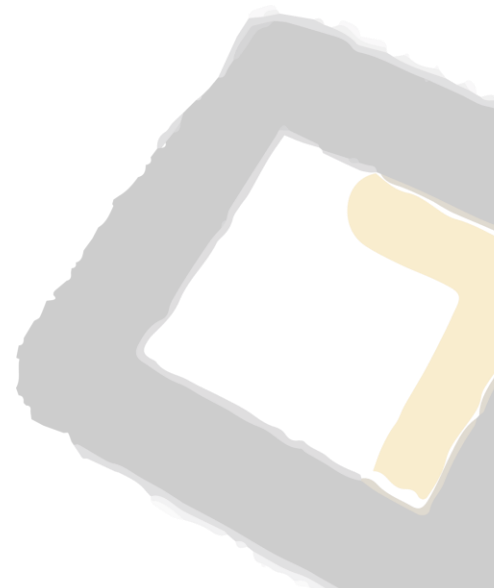
INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH WORKERS ON PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE AND WELL-BEING

Two youth workers were interviewed in each partner country and answered 15 questions. They will be denoted by YW1 and YW2 for all countries.

BULGARIA

1. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH?

YW 1: I have been working professionally in the field of youth for two years now. But I was a volunteer in PULSE Foundation for like 10 years and more.

YW2: 13 years, out of which peer-to-peer youth work was around 6-7 years.

2. IN WHAT TYPE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK IN?

YW 1: PULSE Foundation is registered under the Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities as an organization carrying out socially useful activities aimed at the development and affirmation of spiritual values in civil society, support of social integration and personal realization, as well as the protection of human rights. PULSE Foundation works for a world free of violence by providing help and support to people who have experienced violence and increasing society's sensitivity to the problem in order to eliminate forms of violence in human relations.

YW 2: I have worked in a volunteer youth club for prevention of violence; in a crisis center for victims of violence; in a temporary home for children without parental care, and now I work for the 24/7 national children's emergency phone line.

3. WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU WORK MOST WITH?

YW 1: Depends on the Program. Sometimes I work with children in kindergarten but most of the time I work with teenagers between 13 – 17 years old

YW 2: 12 – 18 years old

4. WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC DO (MOST OF) YOUR YOUNGSTERS BELONG TO?

YW 1: Western Bulgaria – Pernik Region (Pernik, Breznik, Radomir) but we have some volunteers from Sofia as well.

YW 2: Most of them are from small towns and villages, less so from big cities and the capital.

5. ARE YOUNGSTERS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FACING VIOLENCE? IF THEY ARE, WHAT TYPE OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: I can say that the youngsters in my community are facing violence – more specific school bullying (physical, emotional, sexual, psychological,), cyberbullying and domestic violence.

YW 2: Mostly bullying; they call for their own issues of those of their friends – either that their friends are also being bullied or that their friends may be victims of domestic violence.

6. DO YOUNGSTERS CONFIDE IN YOU, OR REPORT ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM?

YW 1: More often cases of violence reach us through other adults they trust - parents, teachers, or other adults or through institutions. PULSE Foundation actively works towards teaching our volunteers how to recognise violence and how to become those trusted persons for their peers (how to provide adequate support to their peers). Also, in our trainings we inform young people to whom they can turn to and what are the phones of trust.

YW 2: Especially when I was a part of the youth club for prevention of violence, people knew about that, and they would contact me because they think I can help. From my experience, everyone has experienced some sort of violence so many times that makes them desensitized to violence, especially to smaller acts of violence. It's underrated, the psychological violence from parents to their children, which shows in taking away freedoms, having extremely big expectations, or severe punishments.

7. ARE YOUNGSTERS AROUND YOU IN FEAR OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: They often don't understand that they are in a situation of violence and do not always understand that they are victims of violence. They feel fear, but do not know how to express it.

YW 2: Yes, usually, because of the nature of my work.

8. AS A YOUTH WORKER, HAVE YOU EVER CONDUCTED A VIOLENCE RELATED WORKSHOP OR SEMINAR?

YW 1: Yes, most of the seminar I had ever led relate to human rights, different forms of violence and how to recognize it and how to protect yourself or the other from it.

YW 2: Yes, many. For prevention of violence, we usually approached it through self-reflection; defining violence through discussions and emotions; connections between

emotion and violent actions. I worked with a methodology from PULSE Foundation for working with preschoolers on sexual violence prevention – it's called My personal body and it was related to wanted & unwanted touch with an accent on how emotions in our body and knowing them, can indicate our boundaries. Another topic I find as interesting is about Shame and Fear from accusations of wrong-doing when reporting crimes – this is something that especially girls live through when they are young and vulnerable; they get accused of being at fault for sexual violence they experience.

9. DO YOU BELIEVE IT IS NECESSARY OR NOT?

YW 1: Yes, especially when we are talking about to teach the youngsters how to recognize it and to protect themselves.

YW 2: The problem is that they are many times one-off activities. In the youth club, we met every week for 2 hours; after a series of trainings in the roma-majority neighborhood, we got a big group of Roma volunteers in the club. They joined in the 9th grade and stayed until the end of high school. They had really big changes in their grades, behavior, engagements, and most of all – none of the girls were married before finishing high school, even though their peers were and their parents attempted for them too. We managed to talk to the parents and show them the promise in the girls staying in education. I think all of this had such a great impact because it was a continuous effort; they had support and they had a designated trusted adult to listen and provide advice. If this was 4 workshops spread out throughout the school year, I don't think it would have had a similar effect.

We tried doing something with a better follow-up by having a 2-hour violence prevention seminar in classes in school and then a full-day training with volunteers from all classes, but it turned out to be extremely complicated because we didn't have much funding. I think the good alternative is meaningful follow-up but when you don't have an approved, well-funded project, it's difficult.

10. IF THERE WAS A METHODOLOGY THAT SHOWS YOUTH WORKERS HOW TO EDUCATE YOUNGSTERS ON THE TOPIC OF VIOLENCE, WOULD YOU USE IT?

YW 1: Yes, I am using this kind of methodology at this moment.

YW 2: I have combined different methodologies in my work, so definitely yes.

Some concepts like art therapy, the concept of resilience, Waldorf pedagogy (learning through nature, art training, learning in cycles; an accent on the child as a complex individual that needs their mind, body and aesthetics developed all together). I also use methodologies by some organizations that I have been following for a long time and I know they test them a lot.
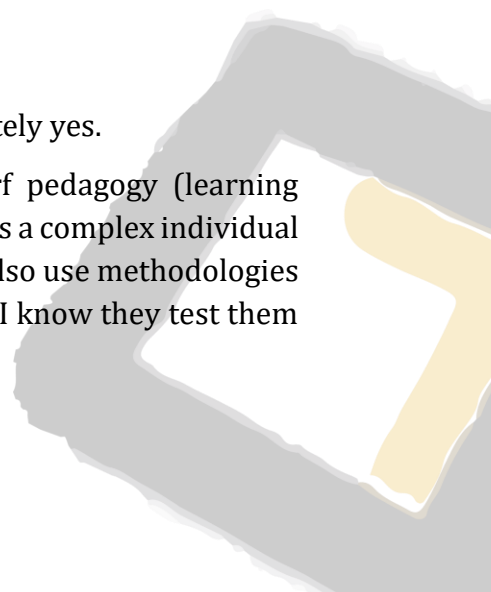
11. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE WELL-BEING FOR YOUNGSTERS?

YW 1: All young people deserve to grow up safely and thrive.

YW 2: For me, well-being is finding the internal island, the internal stability, which means that whatever is happening on the outside, you can overcome it.

For the youngsters, I think it is mostly external safety and calm. The ones that are well, have a trusted adult – be that a parent, a teacher, a family member or even someone external, but an adult who listens to them, who they can share with and not get judged, laughed at or ridiculed. If they don't have a trusted adult, many children go down a bad path.

12. ARE THERE ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU WORK FOR THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNGSTERS? *CREATIVE TASKS, THERAPY SESSIONS, PSYCHODRAMA, VOLUNTEERING ETC.*

YW 1: Our mission is to work to protect and affirm children's rights and to increase the well-being of children. We reaffirm our belief in the right of all children to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, as enshrined in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We work directly with children and teenagers who are at risk or are victioms of any form of violence. Our CENTER FOR SOCIAL REHABILITATION AND INTEGRATION "TATYANA ARSOVA" offers comprehensive services aimed at helping and supporting youngsters at risk, victims of violence, trafficking, and other risk groups. The programs provide comprehensive services of psychological, social, legal and health care and support, overcoming the consequences of the experienced violence and mobilizing resources to overcome the situation of addiction, building attitudes and skills for equal communication.

YW 2: Yes, volunteering, art therapy etc.

13. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES? *FROM LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER NGO, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ETC?*

YW 1: The majority of services and programmes are not state or municipal -delegated. We rely very much on the support of the municipality(different projects) and other non-governmental organizations with which we work in a network.

YW 2: When we were in the youth club, it really depended school to school – some school never let us in, some were seeking us out. We had a project, funded by the OAK Foundation, which piloted 5 rooms of trust in 5 schools, administered by volunteers of the club. Some of the headmasters liked it so much, that they really contributed to the rooms and supported us in making them better.
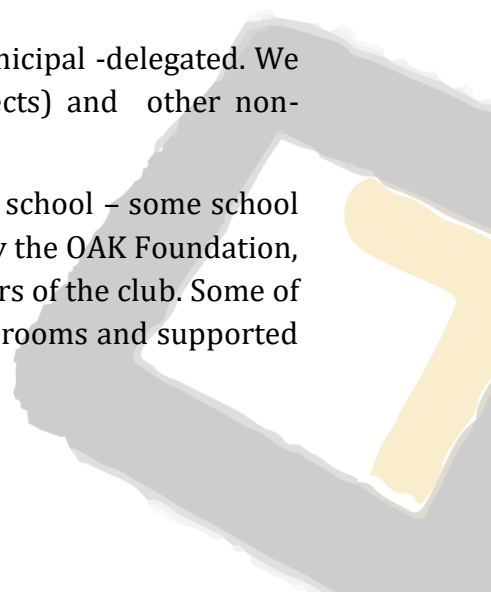
From the municipality – no, usually no support.

Other NGOs have been our biggest supporters. We know each other, the people that work in this sphere, and since many times we are alone against public opinions, we have supported each other with organizations like the National Youth Forum, National Network of Children, the Alliance for protection against domestic violence.

14. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE ACTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR AMONG YOUNGSTERS, WHAT IS YOUR REACTION? WERE YOU ABLE TO PROBABLY RESOLVE THE CONFLICT THAT LED TO THIS?

YW 1: People's reactions can change over time. I usually start to think what I could possibly do to help if I do not have control over the situation. First, I would need to see the situation from a distance, not getting involved or trying to make justice at that moment. Sometimes we need to be neutral in situations like this not to add more reasons to fight. I will stay calm and then I will try to separate them. It is best to find support - another person who can stand with one of the youngsters and calm him while I am doing the same with the other one. I will give the youngsters a chance to tell me in their own way what happened(Community violence makes teens feel that they can't trust people, and that there's always some type of secret agenda and it is difficult to them to open up). If both youngsters become calm I will talk again with them together so that we can see where is the problem.

YW 2: It depends on the kind of violence, the frequency of violence and how ready the child is to take action.

Firstly, I usually focus on creating a relationship with the youngster, so that they feel more secure, especially when it comes to domestic violence. In my line of work, I have to listen first and show that I am there for there, so that they can call back. There is usually a gap between listening and the child being ready to share with others as well, for their case to be out in the open, because there is a crisis in the thought "If it was possible for someone to hear me out, why has it never happened before?".

Next, I usually tell them what steps could be taken to support them and how procedures follow. I try to find a trusted adult in their life (through asking them) but when they don't have one, I have to be that.

For the most serious cases, I connect them to the Directorate for Child Protection.

15. ARE YOUNGSTERS THAT ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A LESSER SENSE OF WELLBEING? HOW DOES THAT SHOWCASE?

 YW 1: Violence against children has lifelong impacts on health and well-being of children, families, communities, and nations.
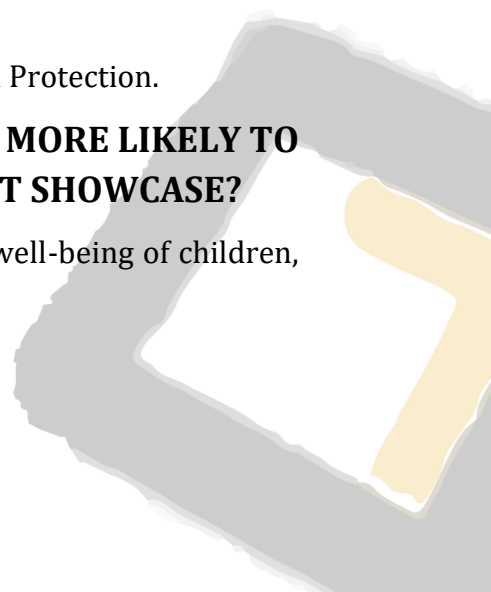
Violence against children can Impair brain and nervous system development which leads to attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder, or other behavioural disorders; Result in negative coping and health risk behaviours; Early involvement with alcohol, drugs and tobacco; Low intelligence and educational achievement; Low commitment to school and school failure; Involvement in crime; Exposure to violence in the family; suicidal thoughts; various health problems and eating disorders, etc.

YW 2: Yes, especially the ones that have faced long-term violence or heavier forms of violence. In those cases, you see that there isn't even a concept of "I" or a concept of their own self as a worthwhile person. You can always tell, for example in the temporary home for children without parental care, which kids were abused all their lives, and which were for a short period of time, because with prolonged violence they lose their sense of self.

In cases of bullying, many times this is the continued violence – as victims of violence often times become victims of other violence more easily. However, the school bullies are often times also victims of violence at home – they feel helpless against their parents for example, and they take it out on weaker kids.

There are also those that have been victims of domestic violence for a long time – they start to rebel. They grow up forcefully and in a fake way – they become more adaptable and they have a "nose" for violence, but they also always remain the little scared children that just need to be hugged and understood. So how could they be a "trusted adult" if they never had one and they became an adult before they were ready?

ROMANIA

Two youth workers were interviewed and answered 15 questions. They will be denoted by YW1 and YW2.

1. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH?

YW 1: I have been working with young people since 2010. I worked more with them during 2014-2016 within the project Network of non-formal education centers for rural areas in Dambovita

YW 2: 25 years

2. IN WHAT TYPE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK?

YW 1: I work with young people in the public library in a commune over 3000 inhabitants

YW 2: Public Library

3. WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU WORK MOST WITH?

YW 1: I work more with the 10-14 and 14-16 age groups.

YW 2: 8-14

4. WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC DO (MOST OF) YOUR YOUNGSTERS BELONG TO?

YW 1: The population of Raciu commune amounts to 3,464 inhabitants. The majority of the inhabitants are Romanians (98.44%). For 0.84% of the population, ethnicity is unknown. From a confessional point of view, the majority of the inhabitants are Orthodox (97.11%), with a minority of seventh-day Adventists (1.79%).

YW 2: 12-16 years

5. ARE YOUNGSTERS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FACING VIOLENCE? IF THEY ARE, WHAT TYPE OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Yes, young people in my community are facing violence! The types of violence identified in the community are bullying, verbal violence, physical violence, domestic violence, financial violence, cyberbullying.

YW 2: Yes, verbal and less physical violence

6. DO YOUNGSTERS CONFIDE IN YOU OR REPORT ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM?

YW 1: In time, I built a special relationship with the young people I come in contact with on a daily basis. They trust me and share with me the experiences they have, they tell me how their colleagues behave with them or how various adults behave, if they are offended or cursed ... I usually hear a lot of stories that shouldn't happen.

YW 2: Yes, young people trust and discuss issues at group meetings in the Library or in private

7. ARE YOUNGSTERS AROUND YOU IN FEAR OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Yes, the young people around me are afraid of violence. Some are victims because they are more sensitive, more emotional, do not have the strength or education to ask for help when they need it. Many of them become attackers without realizing that they are doing something wrong to those around them because they are not educated. If they see in the family environment that the mother receives a slap or is cursed, they have the impression that these behaviors are normal and must be replicated.

YW 2: Young people are afraid of violence.

8. AS A YOUTH WORKER, HAVE YOU EVER CONDUCTED A VIOLENCE RELATED WORKSHOP OR SEMINAR? IF YES - WHAT WAS IT ABOUT AND WHAT KIND OF WORKSHOP? IF NO - WHY NOT AND WOULD YOU LIKE TO?

YW 1: Yes, we organized workshops on violence, we had guests and police officers who spoke to the children about violence. We have organized annual workshops dedicated to bullying and cyberbullying.

YW 2: We organized several workshops related to violence and two of them were concrete cases that two teenagers from the group went through, a case of attempted sexual violence and a case of cyberbullying; in the respective workshops through a role play we tried to explain as concretely as possible where the respective teenagers went wrong but also the people who caused the act of violence

9. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT A VIOLENCE/WELL-BEING SEMINAR OR WORKSHOP IS NECESSARY OR NOT?

YW 1: Yes, I think it is necessary. I, as a librarian, but also the young people from the commune, we need more information about violence!

YW 2: In order to prevent the critical situations that adolescents can go through, these workshops are necessary.

10. IF THERE WAS A METHODOLOGY THAT SHOWS YOUTH WORKERS HOW TO EDUCATE YOUNGSTERS ON THE TOPIC OF VIOLENCE, WOULD YOU USE IT?

YW 1: Yes, I think all librarians need such a methodology. We get in touch with various categories of public that could be guided / helped through meetings / workshops on violence. I would use the methodology in working with young people.

YW 2: Yes, of course I would use this methodology

11. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE WELL-BEING FOR YOUNGSTERS?

YW 1: I believe that young people can reach a level of well-being if they have social interaction in their lives, if they develop harmoniously, if they are educated to lead a healthy life, if they are helped to discover themselves, to know their own strengths and weaknesses.

YW 2: I would describe this state of well-being through the feeling of security that children have, the certainty that in difficult cases they will know how to behave and the certainty that whenever they have a problem they can discuss and solve it at the library.

12. ARE THERE ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU WORK FOR THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNGSTERS? *CREATIVE TASKS, THERAPY SESSIONS, PSYCHODRAMA, VOLUNTEERING ETC.*

YW 1: Quite a lot. Latvian NA they have trainers that focus on these topics. Trainers use dance therapy and body learning. Community level, psychotherapists are available. There are enough resources.

Young people are shamed to ask for support, they don't know the difference between psychotherapists, youth workers, psychiatrists, etc.

YW 2: Yes, there are activities that contribute to the well-being of young people, therapy sessions, workshops, workshops through excursions, volunteer actions.

13. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES? *FROM LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER NGO, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ETC?*

YW 1: Yes, in our community there is support for organizing such activities. The library, the church, the school and the local public administration are partners that are involved and that you can rely on in organizing such workshops

YW 2: There is support from the authorities and economic operators

14. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE ACTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR AMONG YOUNGSTERS, WHAT IS YOUR REACTION? *WERE YOU ABLE TO PROBABLY RESOLVE THE CONFLICT THAT LED TO THIS?*

YW 1: I take action every time I witness a case of violence, regardless of its type. I try to smooth things over, to try to get them to communicate so they don't get to other more serious things. When there were more serious cases, I turned to professionals to solve the problem.

YW 2: When there were acts of violence together with the volunteer psychologist, we tried and we managed to settle the conflicts and reduce them to a minimum

15. ARE YOUNGSTERS THAT ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A LESSER SENSE OF WELLBEING? HOW DOES THAT SHOWCASE?

YW 1: Yes, young people with a low level of well-being can be victims of violence. They are unhappy, they do not communicate, they do not socialize, they are ignored, abandoned, they are not received in groups, they are excluded. And usually they become aggressive, trying to defend themselves or draw attention to themselves.

YW 2: Yes, there are young people who due to the low material or social level in the family, feel more vulnerable, in which case we try to bring them into the welfare state through the sentinel that they can rely on us as a group whenever they need.

SPAIN

1. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH?

YW 1: 14

YW 2: 12

2. IN WHAT TYPE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK?

YW 1: Madrid City Council, socio-educational programme Madrid Juventud. 16 districts, in each district one venue - some in a youth centre and others in other venues.

YW 2: NGO, Injuve as freelance worker in volunteer training courses.

3. WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU WORK MOST WITH?

YW 1: Especially between 14 and 18.

YW 2: 18 to 30 and mostly 16-17.

4. WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC DO (MOST OF) YOUR YOUNGSTERS BELONG TO?

YW1: Mostly high school students. Diversity, many nationalities, migratory history, born in Spain with parents from other countries. Maghreb, Eastern European countries, Latin Americans. Fewer people 100% Spanish. Unaccompanied minors from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa

YW 2: A bit of everything, a lot of people at risk of exclusion (uneducated, immigrants) and also highly educated. The two extremes. Almost more girls, fairly balanced 60% girls.

5. ARE YOUNGSTERS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FACING VIOLENCE? IF THEY ARE, WHAT TYPE OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Yes. Several had problems of violence at home, they had protocols, one had to go to a centre ☹ Quite a lot of discomfort among families.

A group with sexual diversity, trans people who have suffered violence in the street. Two of them self-harmed themselves. Once a couple in their mother's relationship. Cases of toxic relationships in several places.

YW 2: He is not affected by it on a day-to-day basis. You can sense in some of them that they want to be emancipated earlier because they ask for a job. They don't say it very clearly because they don't get along. It is more psychological than physical. There is psychological bullying, bad relationships with parents. The fact that they have dropped out of school is anecdotal because it is so common.

6. DO YOUNGSTERS CONFIDE IN YOU OR REPORT ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM?

YW 1: Everything. I designed leisure activities to give them space, to get to know each other and to gain confidence, each boy a referent or me or my partner. Climate of openness.

No judgement, let them feel in a safe space. Tolerance, times to hold sensitive information. Keep a cool head, be open as a professional to manage what comes to you. Don't judge. Listening. Hold a person back.

Depending on situation daily, every two weeks. It was easy to create a climate if they wanted to, they were there every afternoon. Some didn't go to activities because they had to study and I came to talk to them, to be available.

At the age of 20, accompaniment to other resources appropriate to their age. Institutionalized, not used to managing their own leisure time..

YW 2: Someone arrives quite lost, a friend or partner has taken them in, at which point they start to talk a bit. They are referred to the psychologist-counsellor service. Psychological and study counselling services have separate offices, with more discretion to express themselves.

7. ARE YOUNGSTERS AROUND YOU IN FEAR OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Several yes. Not all of them. They did not feel safe at home, at certain times in the street. They didn't verbalise it much. They came with that warning.YW 2: Young people are afraid of violence.

YW 2: I suppose so. Immigrants. There are things that you sense, they don't talk about it openly

8. AS A YOUTH WORKER, HAVE YOU EVER CONDUCTED A VIOLENCE RELATED WORKSHOP OR SEMINAR? IF YES -WHAT WAS IT ABOUT AND WHAT KIND OF WORKSHOP? IF NO - WHY NOT AND WOULD YOU LIKE TO?

YW 1: More with prevention, self-care, going out to drag queen shows. Something has happened to you that they have not normalised: abuse by their mother, he or she did not realise that it was not normal. More subtle, they realised.

We are youth workers, not psychologists. We have sometimes referred them to psychologists. As they are minors, with parental permission..

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YW 2: Some conflict in camps with young children, they lived together. Organising activities to reflect and cut violence, talk about values such as respect. I trivialised a lot, so that they could see what violence is. It was spontaneous, when a conflict arose. In pre-adolescence. In youth exchanges I have worked in workshops on violence and gender violence. With young people up to the age of 25.

9. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT A VIOLENCE/WELL-BEING SEMINAR OR WORKSHOP IS NECESSARY OR NOT?

YW 1: A lot. Specific seminars on that, but be careful because certain names can keep people away. I went to one on gender violence, which was very interesting, there were two friends of mine who could have used it, but they didn't go with that subject. What is difficult is to put a name to what is happening to you, it is easier to hook people with an alternative name. First you have to be aware of how you are and then deal with it. "Unwanted loneliness", about covid-youth population. In a parallel project, they were referred to young people. Knowing how to take care of ourselves, detecting when someone treats us badly and taking action.

YW 2: Yes, you have to give space. Be the first step so that the child who needs help knows where to go.

10. IF THERE WAS A METHODOLOGY THAT SHOWS YOUTH WORKERS HOW TO EDUCATE YOUNGSTERS ON THE TOPIC OF VIOLENCE, WOULD YOU USE IT?

YW 1: Of course. You say: "God, how am I going to manage this".

The team of psychologists at the city council gave us training to prepare us to deal with these situations..

YW 2: In general yes, for the job counsellor it is not so useful in the Youth House.

A fun activity, it is usually quite useful when you get someone who hasn't thought about it to actively participate and then critically think about it. It works the moment the kid gets involved. "I sit and listen to a speech", is not usually effective and does not interest them. Play something in which they don't even realize (unconsciously) and then there is a final reflection. More like roll-play. In camps with children, with teenagers it is more direct.

11. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE WELL-BEING FOR YOUNGSTERS?

YW 1: Like anyone else's, a safe space at home or wherever they live, that is dignified and healthy, clean, without Diogenes syndrome; with normal family conflicts, also the arguments in adolescence. Having a peer group, success, feeling part of something, motivation of what to do with their life. Healthy, with friends, with motivation for the future. In balance. Whether or not they fall in love is another story, when the basics are not covered.

YW 2: Psychological-mental balance, that they don't isolate themselves. With COVID there is overprotection, some are responsible, but they are isolating themselves and it affects them a lot. Work on socialization, that they have healthy friendships, that they occupy their leisure and free time on a physical level. Now they are overly reliant on technology. They are hooked on online leisure etc. with the excuse of COVID.

12. ARE THERE ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU WORK FOR THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNGSTERS? *CREATIVE TASKS, THERAPY SESSIONS, PSYCHODRAMA, VOLUNTEERING ETC.*

YW 1: Recreational activities that were proposed, I tried to make them come from them. According to their needs, they prepared them themselves. If they were overweight, they wanted to get into sporting shape to improve their self-esteem. Workshops on sexuality to get to know other profiles of people. Interested in the environment, they organized outings. In the community, they did things: they worked on feeling themselves, with a project to teach older people how to use new technologies, and they were very happy to collaborate with this. 5 afternoons a week: graffiti, singing at a festival, recording video clips, going to an animal shelter, they liked it a lot. All kinds of socializing and making them feel good. I taught three kids from India and Africa how to swim.

Because of the type of young people, it wasn't the same in all the centers. In a new venue, they created the group themselves. Neither the boys nor the instructor liked the sport.

The kids in Chinatown were very passive, the activities were very cool, but they were not motivated. They were more used to board games, and it was difficult for them to go out. Quite the opposite of the kids from Lavapies.

YW 2: Yes. Not so much now, they want to feel that they have their first income. Sometimes they arrive demotivated, the fact of revising the cv increases their self-esteem.

The Z16 programme has workshops, cultural activities, excursions... free of charge. That way they have access to socializing and making new friends.

In Casas de Juventud they do. Former volunteers of the international volunteers in Zaragoza, once a week, did a post about mental wellbeing, healthy habits, and challenges. It is still running between December 2020 and July 2021. The name of the project is Europe 4 Citizens number 3. It is the personal project of one of the volunteers

13. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES? *FROM LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER NGO, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ETC?*

YW 1: Museums, the city council was already there for that. We asked for material, sometimes they gave it to us and sometimes they didn't. It was more a question of will, with artists to do graffiti, we paid for the material but not the volunteer artists. Some little things were lame, it fell short. A lot of it is what you do and the contacts you have. As long as X number of guys go for stats, they don't care what you actually do or if you're sitting down etc.

We want to have "this quality" and we are going to do "this", in the end you involve your personal life in time and contacts.

Everything half for free, it's a very exceptional thing. Sometime... Being able to go to the cinema was a challenge. This is a bit crappy.

YW 2: In some cases, yes. Casa de la Mujer, when there is suspected gender-based violence, there are funds

14. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE ACTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR AMONG YOUNGSTERS, WHAT IS YOUR REACTION? *WERE YOU ABLE TO PROBABLY RESOLVE THE CONFLICT THAT LED TO THIS?*

YW 1 A guy blew kisses at one of the girls, with impunity. I went out and asked him to leave, like a cool-cop. Protect the kids. In some shops they feel very lonely.

YW 2: There are both extremes: they rebel, if there is "what you do to me more". I more than violence, I see them protect themselves; there are troublesome kids. Result of kids who have gone through that peak, they recommend that they appear there to redirect them.

The kid who isolates himself arrives depleted on a psychological level. It is more frequent. Very young-arrives or with a partner, or with parents or legal guardians and that person is not taking the reins in tutoring. The kid who feels he doesn't have the skills yet doesn't feel very prepared, he doesn't know if he's going to be capable. "Someone come with me." Sometimes there is overprotection. He's not ready to focus, but my job is to help him focus. All very subtle.

15. ARE YOUNGSTERS THAT ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A LESSER SENSE OF WELLBEING? HOW DOES THAT SHOWCASE?

YW 1: I suppose so. It's loneliness violence. They don't choose companies very well. They have normalized things because they have seen them and then they will reproduce them. They are in a loop.

Self-harm, you detect something, and they tell you: "I know this person doesn't do me any good but I can't leave them" (addiction and codependency). They feel so lonely that they think they are the only person who loves them. They admit that this is not good, but they don't leave. They don't know how to do it any other way, they don't have the tools to disengage. With drugs there are ups and downs.

YW 2: Yes, they are very insecure, indecisive. Very low self-esteem. You ask them questions and they have never arrived. Not many aspirations at a professional level either, whatever comes along. You notice that there is no violent context, I deserve it, I can dream about things. With violence, on the contrary, I don't deserve it. They see it as out of their reach.

LATVIA

Two youth workers were interviewed and answered 15 questions. They will be denoted by YW1 and YW2.

1. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH?

YW 1: 15 years

YW 2: 18 years, school rural region. 200-300 people.

2. IN WHAT TYPE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATION DO YOU WORK?

YW 1: I'm a trainer for the national agency and I also work for a NGO and the municipality in which I live in.

YW 2: I work at NGO IDEA, which focuses on rural regions with youngers 13-25. 13-18 mostly and in the public sector.

3. WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU WORK MOST WITH?
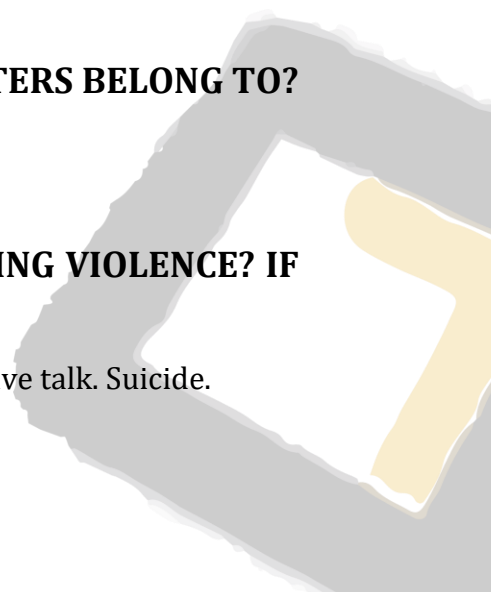
YW 1: 15-25

YW 2: 13-18. 13-16

4. WHAT DEMOGRAPHIC DO (MOST OF) YOUR YOUNGSTERS BELONG TO?

YW 1: In rural areas that have low income

YW 2: Locals, low-income families. Its split 50-50

5. ARE YOUNGSTERS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY FACING VIOLENCE? IF THEY ARE, WHAT TYPE OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Peer to peer violence, emotional violence, self-harm, self-negative talk. Suicide.

YW 2: They face violence from family. Mother father, physical and emotional. Youngsters to youngsters is mostly verbal, social media, gossiping, emotional. They don't talk about violence. They need to find a trusted person.

6. DO YOUNGSTERS CONFIDE IN YOU OR REPORT ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST THEM?

YW 1: Yes, they are personally. Anonymously, questionnaire harm. Cutting veins, eating medicine. Violence online. (All during Covid)

YW 2: They talk more about the emotional violence. They don't talk much about family. They talk mostly to mentors. They don't talk about physical violence. When they find someone to relate, they talk more about it.

7. ARE YOUNGSTERS AROUND YOU IN FEAR OF VIOLENCE?

YW 1: Mainly from peer violence. They don't want to go to school or leave their area. There's mostly mobbing and bullying.

YW 2: They are not, the villages are safe enough.

8. AS A YOUTH WORKER, HAVE YOU EVER CONDUCTED A VIOLENCE RELATED WORKSHOP OR SEMINAR? IF YES -WHAT WAS IT ABOUT AND WHAT KIND OF WORKSHOP? IF NO - WHY NOT AND WOULD YOU LIKE TO?

YW 1: No, I prefer to co-work with Marta Centers and people who are better in these topics. Maybe even provide the environment.

YW 2: I haven't done yet. With Marta Centers, when they worked about violence. I would like to work mostly about the self. Talk about how not be about victim. Talk about emotion. I trust other associations and love to collaborate with them.

9. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT A VIOLENCE/WELL-BEING SEMINAR OR WORKSHOP IS NECESSARY OR NOT?

YW 1: Completely necessary. Our research asked youngsters what kind of training they would want. Mental well-being was the most wanted.

YW 2: Once a month, not in schools or formal areas.

10. IF THERE WAS A METHODOLOGY THAT SHOWS YOUTH WORKERS HOW TO EDUCATE YOUNGSTERS ON THE TOPIC OF VIOLENCE, WOULD YOU USE IT?

YW 1: I would use it collaborative. I wouldn't use it alone.

YW 2: I would like to try to understand if I can use it.
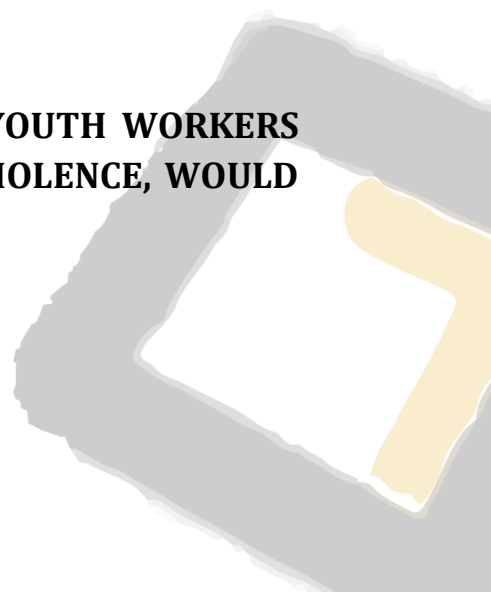
11. HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE WELL-BEING FOR YOUNGSTERS?

YW 1: Healthy relationship with themselves and safe.

YW 2: When they have somewhere to live, friends, they can move around and transport. When they have mobility. They need to travel places. Financial stability and background.

In villages where is youth centers/space even just to socialize.

12. ARE THERE ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU WORK FOR THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNGSTERS? *CREATIVE TASKS, THERAPY SESSIONS, PSYCHODRAMA, VOLUNTEERING ETC.*

YW 1: Quite a lot. Latvian NA they have trainers that focus on these topics. Trainers use dance therapy and body learning. Community level, psychotherapists are available. There are enough resources.

Young people are shamed to ask for support, they don't know the difference between psychotherapists, youth workers, psychiatrists, etc.

YW 2: Yes, creative tasks. They are great outcomes. Coaching sessions, game with cards. We have developed a game talking about their goals.

13. IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES? *FROM LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER NGO, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS ETC?*

YW 1: The youth centers have a certain budget. If they need more activities they ask the youth workers. Youth strategies for well-being. Local municipality helps the most. NEET program.

YW 2: Municipality, a fund for activities. Only three NGOs. I would like to see the NGOs be more independent. They don't care where you are coming from, they want the activities. We miss human resources and materials. They rely mostly in schools.

14. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE ACTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR AMONG YOUNGSTERS, WHAT IS YOUR REACTION? *WERE YOU ABLE TO PROBABLY RESOLVE THE CONFLICT THAT LED TO THIS?*

YW 1: I can, I can be a mediator. I use drama therapy and constellations for bullying in school. I explain to the young people, explain my point of view.

YW 2: In activity with youngsters from different villages came together. It was physical conflict. We tried not to scold, but to find individual approaches. We tried to break the conflict by asking them to help us with a task. We had reflection groups later and resolved it. I couldn't do much when it was emotional violence.

15. ARE YOUNGSTERS THAT ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A LESSER SENSE OF WELLBEING? HOW DOES THAT SHOWCASE?

YW 1: Yeah, for sure. Low self-esteem, poor self-image. Low self-confidence. Physically with bad nutrition. They are lacking water; it's connected to bulimia. They feel melancholic and apathetic. It shows in their faces. Academic performance. This was special during COVID. They decreased dramatically.

YW 2: Yes, especially when they are from families from low-income. They are becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol. They push themselves to dangerous acts. More often they get in conflicts. They are mirroring what they see in the families. They push through their struggles, and they become a better person.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

To summarize the findings of the interviews, all the youngsters say that they see physical, mental, emotional violence most often in their environment, such as schools, house, clubs. It is either by family members or schoolmates. This is also confirmed by the youth workers that were interviewed. Their additional feedback points to that a low-income socioeconomic status is often correlated with incidents of violence as well as lack of education of the guardians or parents. In addition, previous parts of the research as wells as the interviews point that youngsters want their teachers, their parents to be educated on resolving conflict and focusing on healthier relationships.

When it comes to reporting acts of violence answers from youngsters are mixed. Most youngsters claim that they do not report acts of violence and do not have access to means of reporting it. Youth workers on the other hand say that youngsters do confine in them or to other people they trust. It could be perhaps that youngsters do not "account" reporting a crime by sharing it with friends. Moreover, it seems that reporting acts of violence is more common in smaller rural towns and villages. Youth workers have more opportunities to build the relationship needed with youngsters when they are working closely with them in libraries and community/youth centers. This also could explain why most of the youngster's report violence to youth workers and not the teachers.

Regarding well-being, once more the answers of the youngsters are similar. They relate well-being with lack of stress, calmness, and happiness, feeling recognized and appreciated, feeling healthy and, the well-being of the people around them. All of the youth workers interviewed answered more or less the same things the youngsters answered. Youngsters and youth workers seem to have a common sense of well-being and violence which means that the youth workers are attentive to their youngsters and empathize with them.
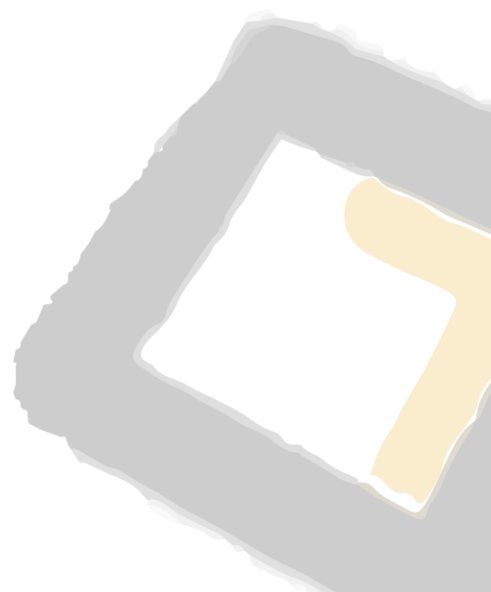
CONCLUSION

Tracing back to the literature that we presented in the first chapter of the research paper, we focused on studies that report statistics regarding the current situation. From our findings, in the case of **Bulgaria**, the study of UNICEF (2021) reported that 45.6 % of youngsters face emotional violence. Our findings are similar to those with 53.4% of those surveyed claiming they have been a victim of violence at some point in their lives. Some defined violence as isolation, being tormented by instructors and students, being made fun of because of their looks and physical traits, acts of discrimination such as homophobia, and many incidences of sexual violence.

In the questionnaire, we asked the youngsters to rate their emotional state and well-being at that moment. UNICEF's approach to this query reported that 81% of the youngsters were feeling mostly happy. Whilst we did not use the term happy, we used as a scale "In Crisis" and "Great" as the two ends of the spectrum. They report their well-being: 27% as 'normal,' 27% as 'good,' 25% as 'just surviving,' 10% as 'great,' and 11% as 'crisis'. This does contrast the findings from UNICEF considering that if we combine the "just surviving" and "in crisis" adds up to 36% - 36% of young people that would not classify as "mostly happy".

As factors of improving well-being, the previous studies showed that children are happiest when they are with friends (85%), with families (74%) and when they are playing active. A combined 44.8% of our participants chose "mental health" and "friendships" as the most important with least important being the "feeling of acceptance".

Another study reported that 12% of the respondents said that they are bystanders to physical violence at home and that maybe due to the lack of reporting mechanisms. In this research paper we expanded the area that youngsters witness violence. 74.8% of respondents report having witnessed people around them being victims of a violent act, including bullying within school and outside, harassment due to physical attributes, physical and domestic violence within intimate relationships. We also asked if they report the acts of violence witnessed and 52.4% of the participants report not using a violence reporting mechanism.

In the case of **Latvia**, the University of Latvia found in a study that 30% of students from the age of 15 years old, experience physical and emotional violence, especially in schools. In our study we found that 52% of the participants have faced violence. Its important to note that the question was broad; however, in a following question it is noted that the participants face violence mostly in school environments.

Furthermore, students that were asked in another study, note that cyberbullying is a form of violence that tends to be viewed as an individualistic issue. The truth is that it has the potential to affect many groups simultaneously. The study did not provide a figure on how

many youngsters are affected by cyberbullying or how much of a risk to their well-being it can be. In our study, the Latvian respondents answer that the predominant negative factor (19.2%) to their well-being is their online presence and by presence being their connection to social media and online video games.

In contrast, a research report by the Latvian Child Welfare cites that 25% of youngsters face issues such as social deprivation, economic strain and more. This can explain why in our research 26.3% of the youngsters from Latvia say that friendships and emotional security are the two most important factors that affect positively their well-being.

In addition, the youngsters in Latvia describe well-being as achieving inner satisfaction and a good self-image, whilst others had described well-being as an absolute state where well-being is perfected, and they achieved excellence with the absence of any bad situation.

For **Romania** there aren't many resources and literature that focus on the well-being of youngsters. Nevertheless, in our research we found that more than half of the participants said that they are they either in a state of feeling good or normal. In follow up questions they describe their well-being as a state of closeness with their immediate relatives and friends, happiness, including the absence of feeling 'bad', anxious, and other related negative emotional states that risk and disrupt well-being.

However, there is more research regarding violence. The literature showed that in some cases behaviors such as slapping, hitting, swearing etc. is not included in the definition of violence. This could be explained by the large difference in opinions that parents have against the ones that youngsters have regarding what is violence. Nonetheless, the youngsters in Romania in this study note the most common types of violence they face is verbal, psychological violence and were in fact approximately equally mentioned with physical violence. Participants expressed experiencing bullying of any type and subtype that exists, physical and verbal altercations amongst peers and parents and emotional and psychological violence.

Lastly, there were studies that focus on the relationship between internet presence and well-being that mention youngsters that spend more than 6 hours online per day suffer many issues. Such as: being more dissatisfied with their life, with their relationship with loved ones and feel overall less relaxed. The 6 hours includes the school days too. This results to less time spent in bettering their emotional state and trying to actively improve their well-being. In our research, the Romanian participants report that most of them spend less than 4 hours per week on improving their well-being.

In the case of **Spain** , the literature had some studies that focused on the young women that faced violence and in particular sexual type of violence. In their studies they found that only 6.5% had not experienced any sort of sexual violence. In our study 6 respondents reported sexist harassments in the streets, 2 experiences of violence in a relationship, and 2 respondents reported cases of rape and nonconsensual act. Whilst the results from our research are not similar to the study mentioned above, we note that this research paper focuses on generally on violence and not focused on sexual abuse related violence.

Moreover, in terms of well-being, the studies in Spain showed that most of the adolescents since COVID-19 have a higher tendency of showing signs of depression and anxiety. Especially those that had a significant life event during the pandemic. In our study more than 70% of the Spanish participants responded that their current state of well-being is between normal and feeling good, which contrasts the literature. However, in the focus groups and in the interviews with the youth workers, it is mentioned that many efforts were made to improve the well-being of the youngsters. During the pandemic many activities were introduced that perhaps might have improved their well-being at a stage when it was most needed, almost preventing their well-being from declining.

Lastly, the interviews of the youngsters and youth workers tell us that the biggest factors that can positively affect youngsters' well-being are extracurricular activities and access to psychologists. This was also shown in the quantitative part of the research. Having various educational and recreational activities that keep youngsters busy and active is beneficial and well received. In those spaces , lectures and seminars can take place that are for raising awareness of well-being, and learning about all forms of violence. Regarding preventing violence, the youngsters and youth workers believe in the power of educating teachers, youngsters, and communities (in smaller areas) in recognizing violence and offering help. A note for future projects and initiatives would be to find ways to include youngsters in municipal meetings when the agenda is regarding them. In most cases, the opinions and views of youngsters and youth workers are similar, with regards to what they would want to do to prevent violence. Nevertheless, the input that youngsters gave for this research, the reality they presented was more substantial and direct.
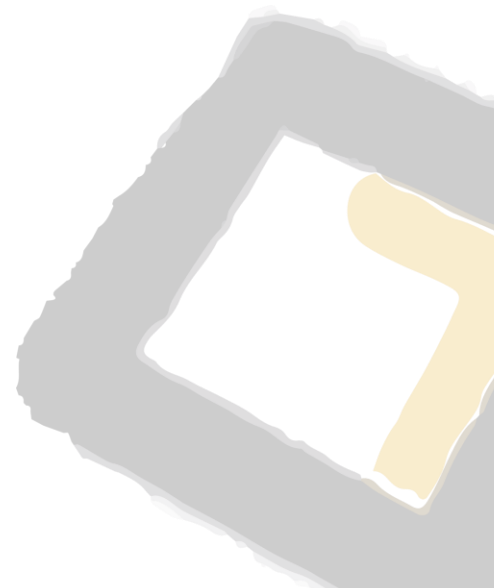
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ANNEX: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1. How old are you?
2. Which part of the country do you live in? *Capital? Rural village? City? Town?*
3. Are you mindful or aware of the sense of well-being? Have you ever heard of the term "well-being''? What are your associations with it?
4. How would you describe it for yourself?
5. Do you believe it is important to care for your well-being?
6. Do you take steps in achieving your sense of well-being?
7. Are there factors that prevent or hinder your well-being? *Poverty, education, social setting? Religious reasons, Financial support, Institution support?*
8. What is one thing that you actually do to make matters around you or for you better?
9. What do you perceive as violence?
10. What do you think are the most common type of violence that affects your local environment?
11. Where do you see it most often?
12. Which types of violence are you specifically most likely to see in your community (school, neighborhood, family, etc)?
13. How do people around you respond when facing violent acts? *Having any reactions? Intervene? Report?*
14. Have you ever intervened in acts of violence? Were there reasons you should not/could not intervene? Did something/someone stop you from intervening? Was it better that you intervened?
15. Are you aware of ways of reporting violence? Could you list a couple that you are aware of? What would be your first contact or person to tell?
16. What is one thing that ideally could happen to make things better overall for your community? Why? What would that change mean?