

INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE MAPPING REPORT

Wellness Challenges, Digital Well-being and Sustainable Practices in
European Youth Work



Participants of the Daily Wellness Challenge Movement training course, Latvia, 21-30 October 2025.

Daily Wellness Challenge Movement

Erasmus+ KA153-YOU - Mobility of Youth Workers

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SCOPE NOTE

This publication is a practitioner-led comparative mapping report. It is not a clinical guideline, a diagnostic instrument or a representative survey of the four national youth-work sectors.

Foreword

Across Europe, youth workers are being asked to respond to increasingly complex realities: anxiety and loneliness, digital pressure, war and displacement, inequality, discrimination, unstable housing, climate concerns and persistent demand to “do more with less”. In this environment, the well-being of youth workers is not a private side issue. It is part of the quality, safety and sustainability of youth work itself.

The professional and voluntary workforce behind youth work often occupies a demanding position between young people, families, institutions and specialist services. Youth workers create belonging, translate systems, notice early signs of difficulty and remain present when formal services are difficult to access. Yet the same workers may operate with short-term funding, blurred roles, fragmented support and constant digital availability. These conditions influence not only workers’ health, but also continuity, safeguarding and the quality of relationships with young people.

This report brings together national perspectives from Estonia, Germany, Latvia and Norway. It was prepared by practitioners working with children, young people, migrants, refugees, outdoor groups and community organisations. Their contributions were compared with recent European and national evidence and organised into a shared analytical framework.

The report does not present a single model of wellness or a universal list of techniques. Instead, it examines how cultural habits, service systems, digital environments, organisational conditions and inclusion barriers shape well-being in practice. It also asks a practical question: what can youth workers, organisations, municipalities and funders change now, and what requires longer-term structural action?

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

High-quality youth work depends on the well-being of the people who deliver it - and on systems that make sustainable practice possible.

Acknowledgements

The project consortium gratefully acknowledges every participant who prepared national mapping contributions, presented national realities during the training course and took part in comparative discussion, reflection and the co-creation of project resources. The report is a collective result of those contributions, even where the final publication required substantial editorial synthesis and verification.

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Special recognition goes to the local NGO UNTU project team for coordination, administration, communication, participant support, documentation, logistics and the many practical tasks behind the learning programme. We are equally grateful to the training and facilitation team: Jekaterina Orlova, Polina Bulycheva and Konstantins Raugevics as core trainers, together with the co-training and facilitation contributions of Heorhii Nosevych and Andrejs Orlovs.

We thank the hosts of the training venue and all service providers, contractors and local collaborators who supported accommodation, meals, transport, technical needs and a safe working environment. The setting offered an unusually strong connection between community life, nature, reflection and practical learning, and became an important part of the project experience.

Finally, we thank the youth workers, volunteers, partner representatives and editors who continued working after the mobility to review sources, balance the four national chapters, improve the accessibility of the materials and transform project learning into resources that can be used by organisations beyond the original consortium.

Executive highlights

A one-page overview of the evidence, comparison and actions

Five findings

1. Youth worker well-being is a condition for safe and effective youth work, not an optional benefit.
2. Digital environments offer connection and participation, but also intensify attention pressure, blurred boundaries and unequal exposure to harm.
3. Low-threshold practices - movement, breathing, creative expression, peer reflection and nature contact - are most useful when they are voluntary, inclusive and connected to deeper learning or support.
4. The four countries share common pressures, but their responses are shaped by distinct systems: digital public services in Estonia, formal rest boundaries and club infrastructure in Germany, adaptable community practice in Latvia, and friluftsliv in Norway.
5. Individual self-care cannot compensate for unstable funding, excessive workload, unclear roles or inadequate specialist services.

The report at a glance

Dimension	Coverage
Countries	Estonia, Germany, Latvia and Norway
Evidence base	National participant mappings, workshop synthesis, public policy documents, official statistics and selected peer-reviewed research
Main themes	Youth well-being; digital well-being; youth worker occupational well-being; inclusion; nature and movement; organisational sustainability
Primary users	Youth workers, youth organisations, trainers, municipalities, funders and policy actors
Practical outputs	Cross-country matrix, stakeholder recommendations, WELL framework, organisational self-assessment and monitoring indicators
Official participant count	18, including participants and trainers/facilitators as recorded in the approved project structure
Digital dissemination	65,735+ cumulative public video views across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube; views are platform-reported and are not unique individuals

Executive summary

This International Comparative Mapping Report examines wellness challenges, digital well-being and sustainable practices in youth work across Estonia, Germany, Latvia and Norway. It was developed within the Erasmus+ KA153-YOU project Daily Wellness Challenge Movement, but it is designed to function independently as a practical and analytical resource.

The report combines participant-led national mapping, facilitated comparison during the international training course, consortium practice knowledge and desk research. It is therefore neither a representative population study nor a purely academic systematic review. Its strength lies in connecting European and national evidence with the realities observed by youth workers.

Across the four countries, the same broad pattern appears. Young people face interacting pressures rather than a single “mental-health cause”: educational stress, family and housing insecurity, discrimination, social isolation, exposure to conflict, digital saturation and uneven access to support. Youth workers often become trusted first-contact adults because their relationships are voluntary, accessible and less formal than clinical or school-based services. This proximity creates opportunities for prevention and belonging, but also exposes workers to emotional load, role ambiguity and boundary pressure.

Digitalisation is a central cross-cutting theme. The WHO HBSC international study reported an increase in problematic social media use in its adolescent sample from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022 [1]. At the same time, digital spaces can provide connection, identity exploration, creativity and access to support. The implication for youth work is not a simple “online versus offline” choice. Youth workers need digital literacy that includes platform design, privacy, safeguarding, attention, sleep, critical media use and healthy communication boundaries.

The comparative analysis shows complementary national strengths. Estonia contributes experience from a highly digital public environment and a pragmatic emphasis on prevention and experiential learning. Germany demonstrates the value of legal and cultural boundaries around rest, together with a dense network of associations and sports clubs. Latvia shows the importance of flexible, low-cost and peer-led approaches in a context of reform and constrained specialist capacity. Norway illustrates how nature and movement can become everyday pedagogical and inclusion tools, while also revealing barriers created by cost, equipment, climate and tacit cultural knowledge.

The report’s main recommendation is to move from individualised self-care to a three-level well-being ecosystem: personal skills, organisational systems and supportive policy conditions. Youth organisations should establish workload and messaging boundaries, supervision or structured peer reflection, clear referral pathways, inclusive activity design and realistic monitoring. Funders and municipalities should support continuity, accessibility and cross-sector cooperation rather than financing only short-term activities and visible outputs.

The practical section introduces the WELL framework: Work conditions, Ethical practice, Low-threshold access, and Learning and links. It includes an intentionally blank self-assessment table that organisations can complete during team reflection or strategic planning. The blank fields are not missing content; they are the space in which a team records its own status, evidence and next steps. The publication is complemented by two thematic resources: a practical toolkit on well-being, communication and outdoor education, and a digital toolkit on content creation and social-media communication.

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How to read this report

The report is organised for different reading needs. Readers seeking a quick overview can use the Executive Highlights, Executive Summary and Comparative Findings. Practitioners can move directly to the “Implications for Youth Work” boxes and the WELL framework. Policy and funding stakeholders may prioritise the European Context, the cross-country matrix and the recommendations.

Reader	Recommended route
Youth workers	Executive Highlights → relevant country chapter → Implications for Youth Work → WELL self-assessment
Youth organisations and trainers	Methodology → Youth Worker Well-being → Comparative Findings → Practical Framework
Municipalities and public services	European Context → country evidence → Recommendations for municipalities and services
Funders and National Agencies	Executive Summary → Organisational Sustainability → Comparative Findings → Recommendations
Researchers and future projects	Methodology and limitations → country chapters → References → National Mapping Template

Evidence labels used in the report

- Evidence-based: supported by official statistics, peer-reviewed research or major international reports.
- Policy-based: derived from national or European strategies, laws or institutional guidance.
- Practice-based: grounded in the experience of participating youth workers and organisations.
- Project observation: a conclusion emerging from the project’s comparative sessions, not presented as a population-wide finding.

PART I

Purpose and Method

What the report examines, how the evidence was assembled and how its limits should be understood.



1. Introduction

1.1 About the training course

The Daily Wellness Challenge Movement was an Erasmus+ training course held in Latvia from 21 to 30 October 2025. It brought together youth workers from Germany, Norway, Latvia and Estonia to explore practical and accessible ways to prevent burnout, support mental health and build a culture of well-being in youth work.

The learning programme combined somatic practices, movement, outdoor education, deep reflection, digital storytelling and peer exchange. Participants compared national realities and discussed how wellness methods could be adapted for different ages, abilities, cultures and organisational settings. The training created a shared space in which practical experience could be tested against questions of inclusion, ethics and sustainability.

Before the mobility, country teams prepared national mapping inputs. During the training, they presented these contributions and examined similarities, differences and transferable practices. The present report develops that material into a structured comparative analysis supported by additional desk research.

The official project participant count was 18, including participants and trainers/facilitators as recorded in the approved application. Additional training and facilitation support was provided during selected sessions without changing the official participant count. Separately, the dedicated Daily Wellness Challenge social media accounts generated at least 65,735 cumulative public video views across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube during the project dissemination period; this figure reflects platform-reported views rather than unique individuals reached.

1.2 Purpose and central question

The purpose of this report is to understand how youth and youth-worker well-being are shaped by national systems, cultural practices, digital environments and organisational conditions in four European contexts. It asks one central question: what conditions enable youth work to support young people without exhausting the people who deliver it?

1.3 Objectives

1. Describe major wellness and well-being challenges relevant to young people and youth workers in the four partner countries.
2. Identify cultural, organisational and policy resources that can support preventive and sustainable youth work.
3. Compare shared challenges and meaningful national differences without treating the four cases as representative of all Europe.
4. Capture practice-based insights from youth workers and distinguish them from population evidence and policy claims.
5. Offer practical implications and recommendations for youth workers, organisations, municipalities, funders and future projects.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Use this report as a conversation starter rather than a diagnostic instrument.
- Compare the findings with local data and the experiences of young people in your own community.
- Prioritise changes to working conditions and organisational systems alongside individual wellness activities.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

The report uses a collaborative, practice-based comparative mapping design. It brings together qualitative participant knowledge and selected secondary evidence rather than claiming the statistical representativeness of a national survey. The approach is appropriate for a youth-work project because it values practitioner expertise while requiring clear boundaries around what that expertise can and cannot establish.

Evidence stream	How it was used
National participant mappings	Country teams prepared contextual descriptions before the mobility, drawing on local knowledge, organisational experience and selected sources.
Training-course presentations and facilitated dialogue	Country findings were presented, questioned and compared in a structured peer-learning setting.
Consortium practice evidence	Partner organisations contributed examples from camps, inclusion work, digital communication, outdoor education and community activities.
Desk research	European, national and peer-reviewed sources were used to verify, update and contextualise claims.
Editorial synthesis	All country chapters were reconstructed around a common set of headings to improve comparability and remove unsupported generalisations.

Table 1. Research evidence streams.

2.2 Comparative framework

Each country chapter follows the same analytical sequence: national context; evidence signals; priority challenges; existing strengths and practices; key messages; and implications for youth work. This standardisation does not imply that countries are identical or that equal amounts of source material were available. It provides a transparent structure for comparing different forms of knowledge.

2.3 Ethical considerations

- The report contains no personal medical records and does not attribute sensitive experiences to individual participants.
- Practitioner observations are presented as practice evidence, not as diagnoses or national prevalence estimates.
- Wellness activities are discussed as preventive and educational methods, not as substitutes for clinical assessment or treatment.
- Inclusion, voluntary participation, privacy and referral responsibilities are treated as core quality criteria.
- Potentially stigmatising or culturally essentialising statements from early drafts were removed or reframed.

2.4 Limitations

The mapping covers four countries and a small project consortium. It did not use a shared quantitative questionnaire, a systematic-review protocol or interviews with public authorities. National source availability and the length of participant contributions varied. Latvia's chapter required more editorial reconstruction from project discussions and public sources than the other country chapters. These limits mean that the report should be read as an informed comparative resource, not as a definitive ranking of national systems.

The report also uses sources published in different years and based on different age groups or indicators. Cross-country comparisons are therefore thematic rather than numerical. Where a precise statistic is used, the source population and year are stated or readily identifiable in the cited reference.

INTERPRETIVE CAUTION

A limitation is not a defect when it is made explicit. Clear limits protect readers from overgeneralisation and make the report more useful for future research.

PART II

European Context

The shared conditions affecting young people, youth workers and organisations across national borders.

Reading progress

50%



3. Youth well-being in a changing Europe

3.1 Well-being is multidimensional

Well-being in youth work should not be reduced to the absence of mental illness. It includes emotional safety, physical health, belonging, meaningful participation, supportive relationships, autonomy, access to rights and the ability to imagine a future. European policy increasingly recognises that mental health is shaped by social and economic conditions, not only by individual coping [2,3].

Young people move through overlapping systems: family, school, work, housing, digital platforms, health services and community life. Difficulties in one area can reinforce difficulties in another. Precarious employment can delay independent living; discrimination can reduce participation; housing insecurity can disrupt education; and poor access to services can place greater pressure on informal support networks.

3.2 The post-pandemic and polycrisis context

The pandemic intensified social isolation, educational disruption and uncertainty, but it did not create every current challenge. Many pressures pre-date 2020 and have continued through cost-of-living strain, war and displacement, climate anxiety and rapid technological change. Eurofound's analysis of young people in the post-pandemic period emphasises that employment figures alone do not capture well-being, independence or the quality of work and housing [4].

3.3 Inequality and access

Average national indicators can conceal unequal experiences. Young people facing poverty, disability, migration, racism, rural isolation, family conflict or minority stress may encounter both greater need and greater barriers to support. Youth work is valuable partly because it can reduce thresholds: participation may be free, relationships may be informal, and activities can be adapted. However, inclusion requires resources, not goodwill alone.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

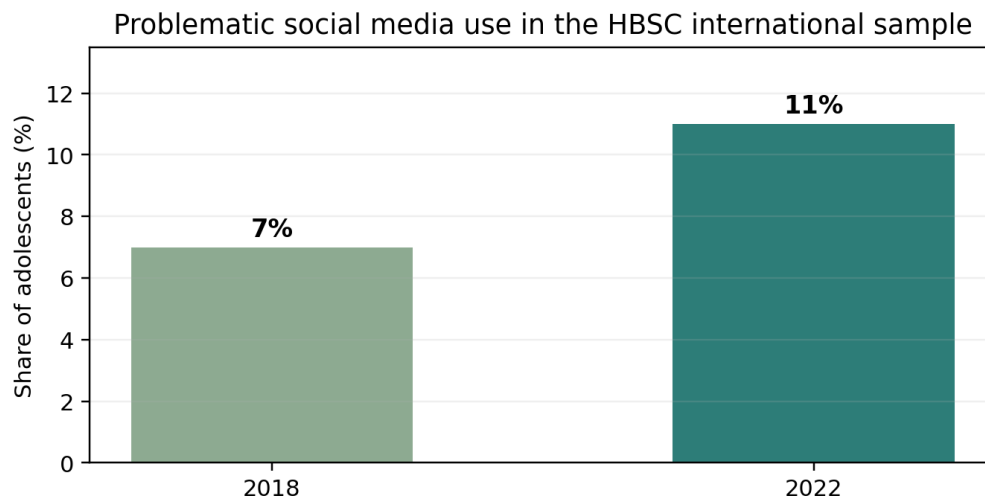
- Ask which groups are absent from an activity, not only who attends.
- Treat transport, interpretation, equipment and accessibility as programme costs.
- Connect individual well-being discussions to rights, living conditions and social participation.
- Avoid assuming that national averages describe every community.

4. Digital well-being and attention

4.1 A double-edged environment

Digital platforms are central to young people's communication, learning, identity and participation. They can reduce isolation, enable creative expression and connect young people to communities that may not exist locally. They can also amplify social comparison, harassment, misinformation, sleep disruption and compulsive patterns of use. The relevant question is not whether digital life is "good" or "bad", but under what conditions it supports or undermines well-being.

The WHO HBSC international report found that signs of problematic social media use in the participating adolescent sample increased from 7% in 2018 to 11% in 2022 [1]. The same report emphasises that intensive use and problematic use are not identical and that digital experiences have positive as well as negative dimensions. This distinction matters for youth work: moral panic is not a substitute for digital education.



Source: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2024 (2021/2022 HBSC survey).

Figure 1. Problematic social media use in the HBSC international sample. The indicator reflects addiction-like symptoms, not all frequent use.

4.2 Platform design and youth-work responsibility

Many platforms are designed to maximise attention through notifications, endless feeds, personalised recommendations and social feedback. Youth workers do not control these systems, but they can help young people understand them. Critical digital literacy should therefore include attention, emotional responses, privacy, commercial incentives, algorithmic curation and the difference between connection and compulsion.

4.3 Digital communication and worker boundaries

Digital availability affects workers as well as young people. Messaging apps make support immediate, but can create an expectation that youth workers are always reachable. This is especially risky in small organisations where emergency communication, social media, administration and personal contact are handled by the same people. Clear communication hours and escalation procedures protect both staff and participants.

4.4 Ethical communication of wellness content

- Use modest, accurate claims. A short exercise may support regulation or reflection; it does not “cure” anxiety, trauma or depression.
- Present participation as an invitation, not a test of discipline or positivity.
- Provide accessible alternatives and avoid filming participants by default.
- Link short-form content to longer learning, community participation and support services.
- Review content for privacy, misinformation, triggering material and unintended pressure before publication.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Include digital well-being in media-literacy programmes.
- Discuss how platform features influence behaviour instead of blaming individual users.
- Set explicit staff messaging hours and an emergency-contact protocol.
- Use digital wellness campaigns as an entry point to relationships and reflection, not as a complete intervention.

5. Youth worker well-being and organisational sustainability

5.1 Why the workforce matters

Youth workers often notice changes in participation, behaviour or mood before formal services become involved. Their influence depends on trust, continuity and the ability to create voluntary spaces where young people are taken seriously. When workers are exhausted, isolated or uncertain about their role, the quality and safety of these relationships can deteriorate.

5.2 Occupational pressures

Pressure	How it appears	Required response
Emotional load	Repeated exposure to distress, discrimination, crisis narratives and family instability.	Supervision, case reflection, debriefing and access to specialist consultation.
Role ambiguity	Pressure to be educator, counsellor, social worker, administrator and crisis responder at once.	Clear role descriptions, referral thresholds and escalation pathways.
Precarious funding	Short contracts, project dependence, unpaid preparation and uncertainty between grants.	Core or multiannual funding, realistic budgets and continuity planning.
Digital availability	Expectation of rapid replies through messaging platforms and social media.	Communication hours, on-call rules and right-to-disconnect arrangements.
Inclusion labour	Additional adaptation for language, disability, trauma, transport and financial barriers.	Dedicated inclusion budgets, interpretation, accessible design and sufficient staffing.
Administrative intensity	Reporting and visibility requirements can displace relational work.	Proportionate reporting, shared systems and funded coordination time.

5.3 From self-care to organisational care

Personal regulation skills are useful, but they cannot compensate for chronic understaffing or unstable work. Sustainable practice requires three interacting levels: personal skills, organisational systems and supportive policy conditions. WHO guidance on mental health at work similarly emphasises organisational interventions rather than relying only on individual resilience [5].

A sustainable youth-work well-being ecosystem

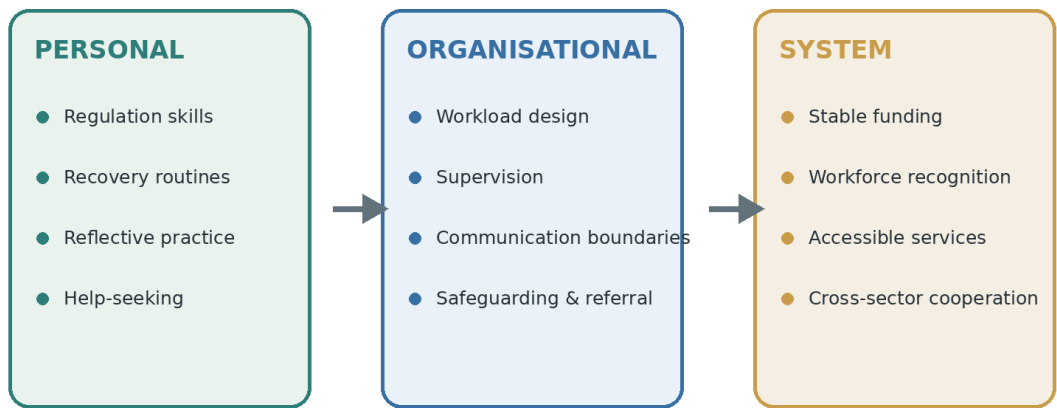


Figure 2. A sustainable youth-work well-being ecosystem.

Level	Examples of action
Personal	Recovery routines; reflective practice; peer support; boundaries; help-seeking.
Organisational	Workload review; supervision; role clarity; safeguarding; referral maps; paid preparation and recovery.
System and policy	Stable funding; workforce recognition; accessible specialist services; cross-sector agreements; realistic grant requirements.

Table 2. Three levels of intervention.

KEY DISTINCTION

A breathing exercise cannot compensate for chronic understaffing. Personal practices are helpful only when the organisation also addresses workload, role clarity and support.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Include staff and volunteer well-being in quality assurance and risk management.
- Provide structured supervision or peer reflection before crises accumulate.
- Budget for coordination, adaptation and recovery time.
- Define what youth workers can offer and when they must refer onward.

PART III**Country Perspectives**

Four national contexts viewed through the same analytical framework.

Reading progress

70%



6. Estonia

Digital pragmatism, prevention and the challenge of digital fatigue

6.1 National context

Estonia's wellness context is shaped by a highly digital public environment, relatively strong everyday access to online services and a pragmatic culture of prevention. The participant mapping described growing openness around mental health, active promotion of healthy lifestyles and increasing attention to employee well-being. These strengths coexist with concerns about anxiety, sleep, access to specialist support and the assumption that digital access automatically produces social inclusion.

The Estonian Human Development Report 2023 placed mental health and well-being at the centre of social development and emphasised the interaction between individual, relational and environmental factors [6]. National HBSC monitoring provides an important evidence base on adolescent health complaints, sleep, physical activity and mental well-being [7].

6.2 Priority challenges

- Digital fatigue where education, services, communication and leisure occur through the same devices.
- Anxiety, sleep difficulties and recurrent subjective health complaints among parts of the adolescent population.
- Uneven access to timely specialist support outside major centres.
- Risk that efficient digital systems are treated as sufficient even when trust, language or skills remain barriers.
- Pressure on youth workers to combine digital competence, safeguarding and relational support.

6.3 Existing strengths and promising practice

Estonian youth work can draw on strong digital competence, structured camps and experiential education. Kambuka Kids contributes camp-based learning in which children develop social skills, confidence, creativity and responsibility through shared tasks. In a digital society, intentionally offline moments can be educational when they are voluntary, purposeful and connected to reflection rather than used as punishment.

Evidence signal	Interpretation for youth work
National reporting treats mental health as a social-development issue, not only a medical issue.	Youth work can contribute through belonging, participation and prevention while maintaining referral links.
Digital public services are deeply integrated into daily life.	Digital competence should include attention management, privacy and healthy boundaries.
HBSC monitoring identifies sleep, health complaints and well-being as significant adolescent issues.	Local observation should be compared with established national monitoring rather than relying on impressions alone.
Specialist services are less accessible in some areas.	Rural organisations need strong local networks and safe remote-support options.
Camps and experiential programmes are established youth-development settings.	Offline cooperation, movement and shared responsibility can be used to rebuild social confidence.

Table 3. Estonia: evidence signals and youth-work interpretation.

KEY MESSAGES

- Digitalisation improves access but does not remove loneliness, fatigue or exclusion.
- Youth workers increasingly act as digital mediators, not only activity facilitators.
- Offline experiences are most valuable when they develop relationships and reflection.
- Prevention requires both digital literacy and accessible human support.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Integrate healthy digital habits into non-formal learning.
- Create purposeful offline periods without shaming frequent technology users.
- Use camps and group tasks to strengthen communication, cooperation and confidence.
- Map regional referral options and clarify what remote support can safely provide.

7. Germany

Structural protection, community infrastructure and secondary trauma

7.1 National context

Germany combines broad social protection, regulated employment conditions and extensive community infrastructure with persistent mental-health and access challenges. The participant mapping highlighted cultural concepts such as *Feierabend*, *Sonntagsruhe* and *Ruhezeit*, which give social legitimacy to rest and separation between work and private life. It also described the role of *Vereine* - local associations and clubs - in affordable sport, culture and volunteering.

The COPSYP study documented a substantial pandemic-era deterioration in health-related quality of life and mental health among children and adolescents, with unequal effects linked to family and social resources [8]. Germany's 2023 Country Health Profile describes broad insurance coverage while also noting workforce and access pressures in parts of the health system [9].

7.2 Priority challenges

- Persistent psychological distress despite strong formal systems.
- Waiting times and regional variation in specialist support.
- Emotional load and secondary trauma among workers supporting refugees, displaced families and young people in crisis.
- Administrative complexity and project-based insecurity in the NGO sector.
- The gap between culturally recognised rest boundaries and the realities of small voluntary organisations.

7.3 Existing strengths and promising practice

Germany offers useful organisational ideas rather than a single wellness method. Rest boundaries can be translated into staff communication rules, protected recovery time and predictable schedules. Clubs and associations can also provide low-cost routes into movement, belonging and volunteering. *Rubikus e. V.* contributes experience in supporting migrants and displaced young people through community, cultural and health-related activities.

Evidence signal	Interpretation for youth work
COPSY research found major pandemic-era impacts on children's and adolescents' quality of life and mental health.	Recovery is uneven; youth work should pay attention to family resources, isolation and pre-existing disadvantage.
Statutory insurance provides broad coverage, but access can still vary.	Youth workers need realistic local referral knowledge rather than assuming immediate specialist availability.
Working-time rules and cultural concepts make rest boundaries socially recognisable.	Organisations can translate these concepts into explicit messaging, on-call and recovery policies.
The Verein tradition supports affordable sport, culture and volunteering.	Clubs are important partners for belonging, movement and inclusion.
Refugee and migrant support involves repeated exposure to complex histories and systems.	Supervision and secondary-trauma awareness should be standard, not exceptional.

Table 4. Germany: evidence signals and youth-work interpretation.

KEY MESSAGES

- Strong welfare infrastructure does not remove emotional distress or NGO precarity.
- Rest is more sustainable when it is protected by organisational rules, not left to personal discipline.
- Community associations can provide belonging and accessible participation.
- Workers supporting displacement and trauma need supervision and role clarity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Adopt a written right-to-disconnect policy for staff and volunteers.
- Build referral partnerships with local services and community associations.
- Include secondary-trauma reflection in supervision and training.
- Use club infrastructure to expand low-cost participation without assuming every club is automatically inclusive.

8. Latvia

Reform, community flexibility and low-threshold wellness practice

8.1 National context

Latvia is strengthening public attention to mental health and prevention while working with comparatively constrained specialist capacity and significant regional differences. The Public Health Guidelines 2021-2027 identify mental health, health literacy, physical activity and prevention as national priorities [10]. The State of Health in the EU country profile describes workforce and access challenges that affect the wider health system [11].

Within the project, the Latvian contribution focused strongly on accessible wellness methods, experiential learning and digital communication. NGO UNTU brought experience in yoga, movement, sound practices, creative activity and the Daily Wellness Challenge format. These methods are attractive because they can be adapted to short sessions and community settings; their credibility depends on modest claims, inclusion and clear referral boundaries.

8.2 Priority challenges

- Uneven availability of mental-health specialists, particularly outside major urban centres.
- Continuing stigma and uncertainty about where to seek support.
- Cyberbullying, social pressure and the interaction between online life and school well-being.

- High workload in small organisations and reliance on project-based resources.
- Risk that low-cost community activities are expected to compensate for insufficient professional services.

8.3 Existing strengths and promising practice

Latvia's strength in this comparison is adaptability. Small daily challenges, movement, breathing, creative reflection and peer-led sessions can be delivered without specialist equipment and can reach people who would not attend a formal mental-health programme. The approach is especially useful when activities are framed as optional experiments, connected to reflection and adapted for disability, language and cultural comfort.

Evidence signal	Interpretation for youth work
National public-health policy emphasises prevention, health literacy and improved access.	Youth organisations can align activities with national prevention goals and local health promotion.
Country health profiles describe resource constraints and access gaps.	Community support is valuable, but must not conceal the need for investment in professional services.
Adolescent well-being is affected by school, family and digital environments.	Activities should combine emotional literacy, anti-bullying work and safe digital participation.
Regional service availability is uneven.	Mobile, hybrid and peer-supported formats can reduce distance barriers when safeguarding is maintained.
The Daily Wellness Challenge uses small, repeatable actions.	Micro-practices can lower the threshold to participation if claims remain proportionate and follow-up reflection is offered.

Table 5. Latvia: evidence signals and youth-work interpretation.

KEY MESSAGES

- Low-threshold does not mean low-quality: ethical framing, accessibility and facilitation still matter.
- Peer and community methods are important bridges, not replacements for specialist care.
- Small daily practices may be easier to sustain than occasional intensive events.
- Digital outreach can widen access but must avoid oversimplifying mental health.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Use short wellness practices as invitations to awareness and discussion.
- Provide no-cost and low-mobility alternatives in every activity.
- Create local referral maps and explain them to staff and volunteers.
- Evaluate whether repeated micro-practices are actually used and helpful over time.

9. Norway

Friluftsliv, active living and inclusion through nature

9.1 National context

In Norway, wellness is strongly connected to everyday routines, movement and contact with nature. The participant mapping described outdoor time across childhood, school and family life, and presented friluftsliv as both a cultural value and a practical resource. National youth surveys and

public-health reporting show that many young people report good life satisfaction, while also documenting substantial differences by gender, family resources, loneliness and health status [12,13]. Nature contact can support restoration, physical activity and social connection. Research has linked nature experience with reduced rumination and has found an association between regular time in nature and self-reported health and well-being [14,15]. These findings do not make nature a treatment or guarantee the same effect for everyone. The quality, safety, social context and accessibility of the experience matter.

9.2 Priority challenges

- The cultural ideal of outdoor competence may exclude people who lack equipment, confidence or tacit knowledge.
- Weather, transport and cost create practical barriers, especially in rural or mountainous settings.
- Migrants and refugees may need gradual orientation to clothing, safety, seasonal conditions and local norms.
- Outdoor activities can become performance-oriented or physically demanding rather than restorative.
- Youth workers carry significant safety, planning and inclusion responsibilities in outdoor settings.

9.3 Existing strengths and promising practice

International Volda uses outdoor and community activities as tools for integration, language practice, confidence and belonging. Equipment-lending schemes, local clubs and gradual skills training can lower entry barriers. Inclusive friluftsliv does not require every participant to hike far or tolerate cold exposure. It can include short walks, gardening, accessible viewpoints, cooking outdoors, sensory exercises and non-physical group roles.

Evidence signal	Interpretation for youth work
National surveys show high well-being for many young people but clear inequalities and vulnerable groups.	Universal activities should be combined with targeted support and early identification.
Outdoor activity is embedded in education, family routines and community culture.	Nature can be a social and pedagogical setting, not merely a sport environment.
Research supports associations between nature contact and multiple well-being outcomes.	Use nature-based methods with proportionate claims and simple evaluation.
Equipment, weather, transport and cultural knowledge create barriers.	Access support and gradual skill-building are essential.
Outdoor leadership involves risk assessment and duty of care.	Staff competence, route choice, alternatives and emergency planning are part of well-being practice.

Table 6. Norway: evidence signals and youth-work interpretation.

KEY MESSAGES

- Nature is a powerful resource when access is actively designed.
- Friluftsliv can support inclusion, but it can also reproduce cultural and financial barriers.
- Outdoor well-being is broader than demanding sport or exposure to harsh conditions.
- Safety competence and equipment access are essential organisational responsibilities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Offer gradual, low-risk and accessible forms of outdoor participation.
- Budget for transport, clothing and equipment lending.
- Explain local outdoor norms without presenting them as the only “healthy” lifestyle.
- Create meaningful non-physical roles and alternatives for participants who do not want or cannot complete the main activity.

PART IV

Comparative Findings

What is shared, what is distinct and what can be transferred across contexts.

Reading progress

85%



10. Cross-country findings

10.1 Shared strengths

- Growing recognition that mental health and well-being are relevant to youth-work quality.
- Established traditions of sport, movement, creative participation, community activity or nature contact.
- Youth organisations able to work flexibly across the boundaries of formal services.
- Increasing use of digital tools for outreach and learning.
- Strong practitioner motivation and willingness to exchange methods internationally.

10.2 Shared challenges

- Digital overload, sleep disruption, cyberbullying and online social pressure.
- Unequal or delayed access to specialist mental-health support.
- Emotional and administrative overload among youth workers.
- Funding instability and dependence on short-term projects.
- Participation barriers linked to cost, geography, language, migration, disability and confidence.
- Limited evaluation of whether wellness activities create sustained change.

10.3 Meaningful national differences

The national differences are not simply different activity lists. They reflect different social systems and cultural assumptions. Estonia's digital environment makes intentional offline experience and media literacy especially relevant. Germany provides stronger cultural and legal language for rest boundaries, but NGOs may still struggle to implement them. Latvia demonstrates adaptable low-threshold practice in a context where community resources are important. Norway's outdoor culture provides a strong preventive resource but requires active work on access and cultural translation.

Dimension	Estonia	Germany	Latvia	Norway
Dominant strength	Digital public capacity and experiential learning	Formal protection, rest boundaries and club infrastructure	Flexible low-threshold community practice	Nature-based learning and active-living culture
Primary tension	Digital integration vs. fatigue and unequal human support	Strong systems vs. persistent distress and NGO workload	Reform ambition vs. specialist and regional gaps	Outdoor ideal vs. unequal access
Youth-worker role	Digital mediator and experiential facilitator	Boundary-holder, inclusion practitioner and connector	Peer educator, community bridge and wellness facilitator	Outdoor guide, cultural translator and inclusion facilitator
Transferable practice	Purposeful offline experience and critical media literacy	Right to disconnect, supervision and club partnerships	Small daily challenges and adaptable peer formats	Inclusive friluftsliv and equipment support
Main caution	Technology is not automatically inclusive	Infrastructure does not remove emotional load	Low-cost tools must not replace services	Nature should not be romanticised or compulsory

Table 7. Cross-country comparison.

11. Good-practice exchange and transferability

11.1 Transferability is adaptation, not copying

A practice is transferable when its purpose can be reproduced under different conditions, not when every detail is copied. The same method may have different meanings in different contexts. A device-free period can feel restorative in one group and controlling in another. An outdoor activity can create belonging for one participant and anxiety for another. Transfer therefore requires attention to culture, accessibility, staffing and risk.

Practice	Strong example	Conditions for transfer	Questions before adaptation
Purposeful offline periods	Estonia	Voluntary participation, alternatives, clear purpose and safe device arrangements.	Is the activity restorative or punitive? How will participants with caring responsibilities remain reachable?
Right-to-disconnect policy	Germany	Leadership commitment, emergency protocol and realistic staffing.	Who is on call? What counts as urgent? Are volunteers included?
Daily micro-challenges	Latvia	Simple language, modest claims, accessibility and reflection.	Can everyone participate? Is there a no-cost, low-mobility option?
Inclusive outdoor sessions	Norway	Equipment, trained leaders, transport, weather plans and cultural orientation.	Who might feel unsafe or excluded? What alternatives and non-physical roles exist?
Peer reflection circles	All partners	Confidentiality, skilled facilitation and limits around disclosure.	How will safeguarding concerns be handled? Is participation genuinely voluntary?
Digital storytelling	Project-wide	Consent, privacy, media literacy and quality review.	Does the content empower people or turn vulnerability into publicity?

Table 8. Good-practice transferability matrix.

11.2 Criteria for selecting a promising practice

1. Relevance to a clearly identified need.
2. Feasibility within normal youth-work resources.
3. Accessibility for diverse participants.
4. Safety, safeguarding and ethical clarity.
5. Potential for adaptation rather than rigid replication.
6. Connection to reflection and learning outcomes.
7. Proportionate evidence and a realistic evaluation plan.

EVIDENCE LANGUAGE

Many youth-work practices are promising because they are acceptable, engaging and grounded in experience. "Promising" is not the same as "proven". Reports should state the difference honestly.

12. Emerging European trends

12.1 Well-being is becoming a quality issue

Well-being is increasingly discussed not as a separate thematic workshop but as part of safe, inclusive and effective programme design. This shift changes the questions organisations ask: not only “Which wellness activity should we deliver?” but also “Are our staff roles sustainable? Can diverse participants access the activity? What happens when someone needs more support?”

12.2 Digital well-being is moving beyond screen-time debates

The focus is broadening from the number of hours online to the quality of digital experiences, platform design, privacy, cyberbullying, sleep, commercial influence and the interaction between online and offline life. This approach is more useful for youth work because it supports critical thinking rather than simplistic prohibition.

12.3 Prevention is becoming more relational and community-based

Low-threshold youth work contributes through relationships, belonging, meaningful activity and early support. Its preventive value is strongest when organisations know their limits and have referral links. Prevention should expand support options, not shift professional responsibilities onto unpaid volunteers.

12.4 Workforce sustainability is entering the policy conversation

The quality of youth work depends on continuity, competence and the ability to retain workers and volunteers. Short-term funding, unpaid labour and emotional overload undermine these conditions. Future policy should measure not only the number of activities delivered, but also the sustainability of the workforce that delivers them.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH WORK

- Build well-being into programme quality standards and funding criteria.
- Train youth workers in digital ethics, boundaries and referral, not only content production.
- Evaluate belonging, access and staff impact alongside participation numbers.
- Use cross-sector partnerships to strengthen prevention without medicalising youth work.

PART V

From Evidence to Action

Recommendations, an organisational framework and tools that can be used after the project.



13. Recommendations

13.1 Recommendations by stakeholder group

Stakeholder	Priority actions
Youth workers	Use wellness tools as invitations, not prescriptions. Maintain role boundaries, know referral options, use peer consultation and ask young people what supports their well-being.
Youth organisations	Adopt workload and communication policies; provide supervision; fund inclusion; review digital content; monitor staff impact and participant safety.
Municipalities and public services	Create understandable referral pathways, include youth organisations in prevention planning, make community infrastructure affordable and support shared training.
National and European funders	Provide multiannual and core funding; allow supervision and accessibility costs; assess workforce sustainability; finance evaluation and knowledge translation.
Training providers	Teach evidence language, ethical digital communication, trauma awareness, accessible facilitation and organisational change - not only individual self-care methods.
Future Erasmus+ projects	Define deliverables realistically, document participant evidence, plan dissemination and local action as iterative processes, and preserve time for final synthesis and quality review.

Table 9. Recommendations by stakeholder group.

13.2 Ten priority actions

1. Include youth-worker well-being in organisational risk management and quality planning.
2. Create explicit working-hour, messaging and on-call boundaries.
3. Provide regular supervision or structured peer reflection.
4. Maintain a current safeguarding and referral map.
5. Budget for accessibility, interpretation, transport and equipment.
6. Use digital wellness content with modest claims and clear privacy standards.
7. Offer low-threshold movement, creative, reflective and nature-based options without making participation compulsory.
8. Monitor participant usefulness, belonging and access as well as attendance.
9. Monitor workload, recovery and boundary breaches among staff and volunteers.
10. Support cross-border and local exchange of adaptable practice with transparent evidence language.

14. The WELL framework

The WELL framework translates the report's findings into four organisational questions. It is designed for team meetings, programme planning, supervision and project review. It is not a certification standard and does not produce a pass/fail result.

The WELL framework

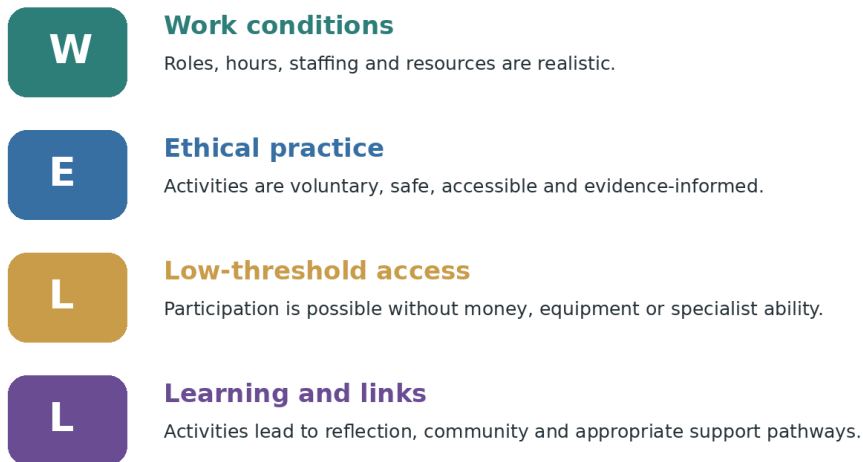


Figure 3. The WELL framework.

14.1 W - Work conditions

Are roles, working hours, staffing, funding and communication expectations realistic? Personal resilience is unlikely to be sustainable when structural conditions repeatedly create overload.

14.2 E - Ethical practice

Are wellness activities voluntary, proportionate, accessible and safe? Do staff distinguish prevention from treatment, protect privacy and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns?

14.3 L - Low-threshold access

Can people participate without specialist equipment, high fitness, money or advanced language skills? Are there alternatives for disability, sensory needs, cultural comfort and different levels of confidence?

14.4 L - Learning and links

Does the activity lead to reflection, new understanding, peer connection or a next step? Are participants informed about support options when a need exceeds the role of youth work?

15. Organisational self-assessment

15.1 How to use the tool

The following table is intentionally left blank in the rating and evidence columns. It is a practical worksheet for the organisation reading the report. A team can complete it together, mark whether each statement is not yet in place, partly in place or consistently in place, and record evidence or a next step. It is not intended for the project editors to pre-fill because the answers must describe the reader's own organisation.

- Complete the tool with staff and volunteers rather than by one manager alone.
- Use concrete evidence: policies, schedules, budgets, referral contacts, supervision records or participant feedback.
- Select no more than three priority improvements for the next review period.
- Repeat the assessment every six to twelve months and record what changed.
- Do not use the tool to request personal health disclosures from staff or volunteers.

Statement	Not yet	Partly	In place	Evidence / next step
We have explicit working-hour and messaging boundaries.				
Staff and volunteers can access supervision or structured peer reflection.				
Roles and referral thresholds are understood by the team.				
We have a current safeguarding and referral map.				
Wellness activities are voluntary and accessible.				
Digital content is reviewed for claims, consent and privacy.				
Inclusion costs are planned in budgets.				
Staff preparation and recovery time are recognised as work.				
We collect useful feedback without requesting unnecessary disclosure.				
We review both participant outcomes and staff impact.				

Table 10. Organisational self-assessment. Blank fields are designed to be completed by the user.

16. Monitoring and learning

Evaluation should match the scale and purpose of an activity. A short community session does not need a clinical outcome measure, but it should still collect enough information to understand usefulness, access and unintended effects. Monitoring should be proportionate and should not pressure participants to disclose sensitive information.

Level	Indicator examples
Participant	Sense of belonging; perceived usefulness; confidence using one practice; awareness of support options; reasons for opting out.
Activity	Participation and opt-out rates; accessibility adaptations; incidents; referral needs; qualitative feedback.
Staff and volunteers	Workload; recovery; confidence; supervision uptake; boundary breaches; perceived role clarity.
Organisation	Staff retention; funding continuity; referral partnerships; accessibility budget; policy implementation.
Dissemination	Reach; engagement quality; accessibility; misinformation corrections; movement from short-form content to deeper resources.
Longer-term learning	Whether practices are repeated; whether policies are used; what changed after six or twelve months; which groups remain underserved.

Table 11. Suggested monitoring indicators.

16.1 Minimal evaluation set

1. Who participated, and who was unable or unwilling to participate?
2. What did participants find useful, neutral or uncomfortable?
3. What adaptations were required?
4. Did the activity create safeguarding, referral or boundary issues?
5. What was the effect on staff workload?
6. What will be changed before the activity is repeated?

17. From Mapping to Action

17.1 What this report tells us

The comparison shows that sustainable youth work requires more than a toolbox of wellness exercises. Effective practice emerges when relationships, organisational conditions, cultural context and public systems support one another. The four countries offer different entry points, but they converge on the need for accessible prevention, clearer boundaries, stronger referral networks and investment in the workforce.

17.2 What remains unknown

- How youth-worker well-being changes over time across different employment and volunteering models.
- Which low-threshold practices produce sustained benefits, for whom and under what conditions.
- How rural, urban and migrant experiences alter access to wellness resources.
- How digital well-being interventions affect young people beyond immediate engagement metrics.
- Which organisational policies most effectively reduce burnout and staff turnover in small NGOs.

17.3 What organisations can implement now

- Protected reflection or supervision time.
- A written messaging and right-to-disconnect policy.
- A referral map reviewed at least annually.
- One accessible low-threshold practice integrated into an existing programme.
- An inclusion budget line for transport, equipment, interpretation or adaptation.
- A six-month WELL self-assessment and action review.

17.4 Looking ahead

Supporting young people requires supporting the people who work with them. Youth-worker well-being should no longer be treated only as an individual responsibility. It is an organisational and policy priority connected to staff continuity, safeguarding, inclusion and the quality of relationships.

Organisations do not need to wait for perfect evidence before improving communication boundaries, supervision, inclusion budgets, referral pathways and reflective practice. At the same time, they should avoid presenting every activity as proven or therapeutic. Credibility grows when projects explain what a method can reasonably offer, who may be excluded and what further support may be required.

Future initiatives can build on this mapping by using shared research questions, documenting local adaptations, collecting participant feedback and following organisational change over time. International cooperation is most valuable when it helps partners test ideas, question assumptions and translate promising practice into sustainable systems. The next step is not to search for one universal wellness method, but to build environments in which workers and young people can participate, recover, learn and seek support without shame.

FINAL MESSAGE

The future of wellness-oriented youth work lies in combining humane relationships, sustainable organisations and realistic public support.

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Numbered and aligned for consistent use in the report.

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APPENDICES

Reusable Tools

Templates and checklists that support future mapping, evaluation and publication.

Reading progress

100%



Appendix A. National mapping template

This template can be used in future projects to create more consistent national inputs before an international activity.

Section	Guiding questions
Context	How is well-being understood culturally and institutionally? Which recent changes matter?
Young people	What current evidence exists on mental, physical, social and digital well-being?
Youth workers	Which occupational pressures, resources and employment conditions matter?
Inclusion	Who faces barriers, and how do cost, geography, disability, migration, language and discrimination affect access?
Policies and services	Which national or local strategies, services and referral systems are relevant?
Practice	Which methods are used by real youth workers? What feedback or evidence supports them?
Digital environment	Which opportunities, risks and communication-boundary issues are visible?
Transferability	What could another country adopt, and what must be adapted?
Sources	List official statistics, policy documents, peer-reviewed research and clearly labelled practice observations.

Appendix B. Suggested workshop questions

1. Which well-being challenges are most visible in your daily work, and which may remain hidden?
2. What support do young people already use, formally and informally?
3. Which organisational conditions protect or undermine youth-worker well-being?
4. How does digital communication change relationships, access and boundaries?
5. Who may be excluded from common wellness activities?
6. Which practice from your context could be adapted elsewhere?
7. What evidence would you need before calling a practice effective?
8. Which recommendation can your organisation implement within six months?

Appendix C. Evidence quality checklist

1. Identify whether the claim is based on official statistics, peer-reviewed research, policy, organisational records or practitioner observation.
2. Prefer recent sources, while retaining older landmark research where it remains relevant.
3. Check that the source title, year, institution, country, age group and indicator match the claim.
4. Do not convert association into causation.
5. Do not present cultural tendencies as universal behaviour.
6. Do not use medical language for non-clinical activities.

7. Explain data gaps and limitations.
8. Use exact numbers only when the denominator, age group and survey year are clear.
9. Distinguish a promising practice from a proven intervention.
10. Confirm that recommendations are proportionate to the evidence.

Appendix D. Glossary

Term	Working definition in this report
Well-being	A multidimensional condition involving mental, physical, social, occupational and environmental aspects of life.
Wellness practice	An accessible preventive activity intended to support awareness, regulation, connection or healthy routines; not a clinical treatment.
Youth work	Voluntary, educational and participatory work that supports young people's personal, social and civic development.
Digital well-being	The quality and impact of digital participation, including attention, relationships, privacy, sleep, safety and agency.
Burnout	An occupational phenomenon associated with chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed; it should not be used casually as a diagnosis.
Low-threshold	Accessible without complex referral, high cost, specialist equipment or extensive prior knowledge.
Secondary trauma	Stress reactions that may arise through repeated indirect exposure to other people's traumatic experiences.
Supervision	Structured professional reflection that supports ethical decision-making, learning, boundaries and worker well-being.
Referral pathway	A clear process for connecting a young person to appropriate services when needs exceed the role or competence of youth work.
Promising practice	A practice with credible rationale, positive experience or preliminary evidence, but without sufficient evidence to be described as proven.

Appendix E. Visibility and publication checklist

The 2025 Latvian National Agency guidance states that EU-funded project materials should use the EU emblem with the appropriate funding statement and should follow the National Agency's visual-identity conditions. The emblem and agency logo should remain readable, have adequate clear space and not be distorted.

Check	Status in this edition
EU emblem and English funding statement	Included on the cover.
National Agency logo	Included on the cover using the supplied identity.
Project Number	Included on the cover and publication-information page.
Funding disclaimer	Included in the publication information.
Partner identification	Included in publication information and partnership section.
Readable contrast and clear space	Applied throughout the layout.
References and source acknowledgement	Numbered, aligned and linked where stable URLs are available.
Accessibility	Heading hierarchy, high contrast, table headers and descriptive captions applied; final PDF should also be checked with an accessibility tool if formally published.

DAILY WELLNESS CHALLENGE MOVEMENT PUBLICATION SERIES

Related Project Resources

The Mapping Report is designed to stand on its own, while two complementary toolkits translate the project's learning into practical action. Their intentionally different visual identities reflect their different functions and audiences.



PRACTICE TOOLKIT

Daily Wellness Challenge Movement Toolkit

A practical guide for youth workers on well-being, communication, group processes, reflection and outdoor education.

Best used by facilitators, trainers and youth organisations planning learning activities.



DIGITAL TOOLKIT

Freshly Baked Content: DWCM Digital Toolkit

A hands-on guide to idea development, filming, editing, social-media communication and scalable content production.

Best used by youth workers and NGOs developing videos, campaigns and an intentional digital presence.

Together, the three publications form a coherent resource set: the Mapping Report explains the evidence and policy implications; the practice toolkit supports facilitation; and the digital toolkit supports communication and dissemination.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

The Partnership Behind This Report

This report was developed through collaboration between four organisations with complementary experience in wellness education, inclusion, outdoor learning, community development and non-formal education.



**NGO UNTU
LATVIA**

Coordinating organisation working with youth and youth workers through international mobility, experiential learning, wellness education, creativity, environmental awareness and digital communication.



**International Volda
NORWAY**

Community-based organisation promoting intercultural dialogue, migrant and refugee inclusion, outdoor education and active participation.



**Rubikus e. V.
GERMANY**

Non-profit organisation working with young people, migrants and displaced communities through cultural, health-related, sports and community activities.



**Kambuka Kids MTÜ
ESTONIA**

Organisation specialising in children's camps, creative programmes and experiential learning in safe, engaging group environments.



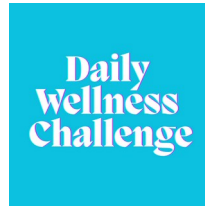
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Jaunatnes starptautisko
programmu aģentūra



**Supporting young people requires supporting
the people who work with them.**



Daily Wellness Challenge Movement | 2026

E-mail untudailywellnesschallenge@gmail.com

Website sites.google.com/view/dailywellnesschallenge/home

Instagram [@daily_wellness_challenge](https://www.instagram.com/daily_wellness_challenge)

TikTok [@daily_wellness_challenge](https://www.tiktok.com/@daily_wellness_challenge)

Facebook [Daily Wellness Challenge Movement](https://www.facebook.com/DailyWellnessChallengeMovement)