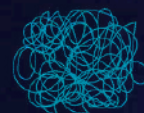


WELLBEING

in Youth Work

Needs and challenges
Inspiring practices
Ideas for advocacy actions



be well

What's about

This report presents the conclusions drawn from mapping activities - online questionnaires, local focus groups and expert interviews - conducted by Centrul de Voluntaria Cluj Napoca from Romania, Mission: Reconnect from Czechia and Piepildīto sapņu istaba from Latvia.

These associations have been collaborating within the project *Be Well – Increasing Quality in Youth Work by Fostering Wellbeing for Youth Workers, 2024-2-RO01-KA220-YOU-000284804* and exploring which practices contribute to youth workers' well-being and prevention of burnout, as well as what issues and obstacles the youth workers consider the most challenging.

This report introduces the findings from the first phase of the project. You can follow the project website for updates and other project results, including the practical toolkits for nurturing well-being of youth workers.

What's inside

The mapping report is divided into several sections. It begins with **an overview of how well-being of youth workers is addressed at the European level, highlighting relevant policies and projects**. It then introduces the key concepts that provide the foundation for the topics discussed throughout the report.

The **core section offers insights into the current situation in Czechia, Latvia, and Romania**. Here, you will find inspiring examples of good practices, as well as opportunities to reflect on how we can collectively place greater emphasis on the well-being of youth workers.

The report **concludes with a collection of resources for further reading**.

We hope you enjoy reading this report. And, most importantly, don't forget to take care of your own well-being.



Website

This project is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the EU, European Commission or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



be well

1. How is well-being tackled at the European level?

Current materials strongly focus on young people's mental health, but **much less on the mental health and well-being of youth workers themselves**. The **Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention** briefly mentions burnout, calling for basic conditions and protection for youth workers (e.g., insurance, minimum salaries, safety networks). However, when competencies are discussed, well-being is framed mainly as supporting young people's well-being, rather than addressing the needs of youth workers. Most available resources aim to strengthen youth workers primarily so they can better support young people, rather than recognising their own professional **challenges and well-being needs**.

Projects addressing well-being of youth workers:

Holistic Trainer

Trainer life and how to hack it.
The Erasmus+ Programme supported project on well-being and related issues.

Mental Health in Youth Work

Long-term project supported by the Finnish National Agency.

Your Well-being Hub

Video series, meditations and other resources by the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Well-being Lab

Swedish NGO offering accessible well-being tools, retreats, and research initiatives.

Mental Health Toolkit

Website with resources gathered by Ananda Gaorii through implementation of the Erasmus+ supported projects.

Positive Mental Health

Resources related to the mental health of youth workers developed as part of three different international strategic partnerships, co-funded by the European Union.

Papyrus

The EU project supporting refugees and migrants include activities to support youth workers' well-being.

Policies, recommendations and reports:

Green Paper

Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union.

Joint Action Mental Health and Well-being

launched in 2013, aims at building a framework for action in mental health policy at the European level and builds on previous work developed under the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being.

EU Youth Strategy

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives

of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda.

Mental health: member states to take action across multiple levels, sectors and ages

EC conclusions on mental health.

EC Communication: comprehensive approach to mental health (2023)

Definition and framing.

Wellbeing and mental health at school

Guidelines for school leaders, teachers and educators.

Youth mental health statistics

Generation Europe. Youth Work and Mental Well-Being.



2. Desk Research Synthesis: Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Burnout in Youth Work

This synthesis identifies the conceptual landscape, examines prevalent narratives, and proposes a strategic framework for the “Be Well” project to address youth workers’ well-being structurally and ethically.

2.1. Definitions and Academic Foundations

Well-being (WB)

Definition and Framework: A holistic and broad concept, defined as quality of life (welfare). It includes both subjective (emotions, satisfaction) and objective elements (health, income, safety).

Key Academic/Policy Insights: Distinguished as a broader concept encompassing physical, social, and financial domains.

Mental Health (MH)

Definition and Framework: Defined by the European Commission (2023) as a state of well-being where individuals realize their abilities, cope with life’s stresses, and contribute to the community.

Key Academic/Policy Insights: Youth work’s role is to foster supportive environments and mental health literacy. EU policy promotes MH as essential for an inclusive society

Burn-out (BO)

Definition and Framework: Classified by WHO (ICD-11) as a syndrome resulting from chronic, unmanaged workplace stress.

Key Academic/Policy Insights: Characterized by energy depletion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy. It is a key psycho-emotional disorder affecting helping professions like youth workers.

2.2. Critique of Concepts: The Problem with Individualisation

General Critique:

Vagueness and Overuse: WB is a “fuzzy concept” lacking consistent definition and reliable measurement. **Policy-Practice Gap:** EU strategies are ambitious, but implementation is uneven due to varied national funding and expertise.

Implications for Youth Work: Projects must clearly define terms and balance personal resilience training with advocacy for systemic change (working conditions, recognition).

Well-being

Key Critiques & Ethical Risks:

Responsibilisation: Policies often emphasize self-care and resilience, placing the burden on the individual to “be well” while ignoring systemic issues. Well-being models (like WHO’s or EU frameworks) are rooted in Western perspectives. They may overlook cultural, collective, or community-based understandings of well-being, which are important in minority and migrant youth contexts.

Implications for Youth Work:

Projects must define clearly what well-being means in their framework and balance personal resilience training with advocacy for systemic change (working conditions, recognition of youth work). Training requires clear boundaries and referral systems. Include cultural sensitivity and diverse youth perspectives when designing curricula.

Mental Health

Key Critiques & Ethical Risks:

Critics argue that European and global strategies tend to medicalize normal youth struggles (stress, sadness, identity crisis), risking over-diagnosis or over-reliance on clinical labels. Youth workers may not be mental health professionals - blurred lines between support role vs. clinical responsibility can cause ethical dilemmas. Despite EU strategies, mental health remains stigmatized in many communities. Talking about it openly may expose youth workers or young people to labeling, discrimination, or professional risk.

Implications for Youth Work:

Youth work must avoid becoming a “cheap substitute for therapy”. Need for boundaries and referral systems: youth workers require training to know when to support, and when to guide toward professionals.

Burnout

Key Critiques & Ethical Risks:

Discourse relies on self-care tips instead of addressing structural causes. This risks normalizing overwork. Burnout theories often ignore power, precarity, and policy failures that produce stress (short project funding cycles, undervaluation of youth workers, lack of recognition as professionals).

Implications for Youth Work:

Burnout must be discussed in terms of labour rights, advocacy, and organisational sustainability, not framed as a personal failure.



2.3. Connection with Neoliberalism and Managerialism

This section critiques how economic logic distorts the discourse on care.

Neoliberalism

Mechanisms of Distortion:

Individualisation of Responsibility:

Structural precarity is depoliticised; **stress** is framed as an individual management issue.

Commodification:

Well-being becomes a **marketable product** (apps, workshops), detached from addressing underlying inequalities.

Instrumentalism:

Well-being is justified because it increases productivity ("healthy workers are more productive"), undermining its **value as a human right**.

Implications:

Danger of reproducing neoliberal narratives if the project only teaches coping skills without addressing structural precarity of the sector.

Managerialism

Mechanisms of Distortion:

Audit Culture:

Focus on measurable outcomes (KPIs), reducing rich concepts like wellbeing to survey scores.

Short-Termism:

Project funding logic (1-3 years) creates discontinuity in support, replacing long-term solutions with **short-term "patches"**.

Tick-Box Approach:

Strategies risk becoming more **proof of action** (e.g., appointing a "wellbeing officer") without real structural change.

Implications:

Youth workers face role conflict (caring relational practice vs pressure for standardised outputs), leading to increased burnout risk.

2.4. How "Be Well" Project Can Respond (A Critical Approach)

The project should adopt a Critical Pedagogical Framework that challenges the neoliberal and managerial narratives:

Reframing:

Reframe Wellbeing as Collective and Political. Emphasize safe organisational cultures, fair working conditions, and collective advocacy.

Balanced Strategy:

Balance personal resilience training (embodied learning, emotional competencies) with structural strategies (supervision, fair workloads, recognition of labour rights).

Advocacy:

Use project findings to **lobby for systemic recognition of youth work** and improved working conditions.

Critical Literacy:

Train youth workers to **critically analyze discourse** and recognize when stress is systemic, not individual.

Focus on Care:

Integrate "Slow" and "Care-full" Practices that value process over product (reflection, art, relational care). Avoid pathologisation by promoting positive mental health and collective wellbeing.

2.5. How You as Youth Worker, Your Organisation Can Respond?

You can take a moment to reflect on your role, needs and interests. You can also encourage discussion within your organisation on well-being issues, as well as with decision-makers.



3. Inspiration from the Countries

Czechia

In Czechia, the situation is **fragmented**. There are organisations focused on well-being, such as “Don't let go of your soul” (*Nevypust' duši*), as well as networks that provide support to those working with young people, such as the Czech Council of Children and Youth (*Česká rada dětí a mládeže*). Nevertheless, a more coordinated and widely used approach has not yet been established. Youth workers that we interviewed mostly mentioned that they often do not know what other organisations do and also they are not aware that some materials even exist.

The first attempt to collect well-being practices was initiated by the Czech Council of Children and Youth at the end of 2025, when youth practitioners were encouraged to share examples of good practice from their work with the aim of creating a manual for youth workers.

Romania

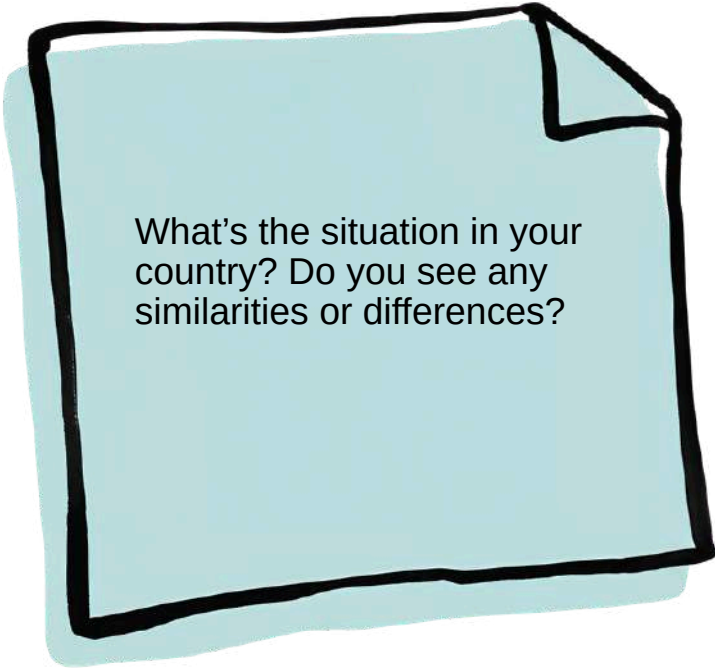
Based on all the national data, **the Romanian youth work sector recognizes the importance of wellbeing and burnout prevention**, but faces a serious gap in putting formal support systems and policies into practice within organizations and at the systemic level.

Latvia

In Latvia, everything that has been related to mental health has been rather a taboo for a long time. It is one of many elements of post-Soviet heritages that we are left with. Thankfully and also in a great deal thanks to the European Union, its opportunities and fundings we have been transforming into a European country and therefore also healing the occupation traumas and enriching ways of thinking. Most probably right after the health sector, the youth field has been the next area that speaks about the topic of mental health and its elements, such as mental well-being.

Similarly as in the rest of Europe, a great challenge, therefore also a push to look more into the mental well-being topic was the global pandemic. Now, six years later we are still talking about it and its long-term consequences. When referring to children and youth, one can find a term “lost generation” being in use. Those are young people who were not allowed to meet others, and their communication was limited to digital tools. Parents, teachers and youth workers - we all noticed the scale and the new angle of challenges that these youngsters are facing. A great deal of support was created - new programs, mechanisms, fundings came into the field to work with this new reality. Nevertheless, what was and **still is lacking, a support system for youth workers themselves**.

Educators working with Erasmus+ programs reported their observations that after 2020 the participants - youth workers that took part in training courses were having more and more issues regarding their own mental well-being. The practitioners of the field noticed higher staff turnover, more intensive burn-out and serious mental health challenges growing among their colleagues.



What's the situation in your country? Do you see any similarities or differences?



3.1. Czechia

Key findings

1. The topics of wellbeing, mental health, and burnout prevention strongly resonate among youth workers, and in most cases, they consider them important and relevant. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable difference in perception among youth workers representing different generations, **which might reflect broader societal trends. For Generation Z, well-being is more relevant**, and they also perceive it as necessary in their professional lives.
2. When reflecting on wellbeing, mental health, and burnout prevention, it is evident that youth workers see **these three areas as interconnected**.
3. The respondents noted that **insufficient attention is paid to their wellbeing and burnout prevention, even though they are expected to support young people, often in challenging situations**. A commonly shared opinion was that there is no adequate support system for youth workers. The youth work sector is fragmented and, compared for example to social services, lacks clear guidelines and practices such as supervision.
4. **The size of the organisation does not make a difference in addressing wellbeing and burnout prevention**. Organisations' approaches largely depend on the individuals within them. Even if organisations have policies and strategies in place to support the wellbeing of young people or to help them manage challenging situations, they often lack written strategies for the wellbeing and burnout prevention of youth workers.
5. The main reasons mentioned for the lack of a more systematic approach to youth workers' wellbeing and burnout prevention **include**:
 - **Limited time** that can be dedicated to self-care and prevention;
 - **Administrative overload**, especially in connection with securing finances and managing grants;
 - **And the specific nature of the work itself**. In particular, respondents noted that working at the international level brings significant stress and makes achieving well-being difficult.

Another recurring comment was **frustration with the constant need to justify the importance of their work to donors, the public, and other stakeholders**.
6. Regarding access to **resources, materials, and practices**, most respondents agreed that these **are available**. Still, they are distributed across various platforms, making it challenging to stay up to date with them all. Respondents expressed **a need for more practical materials that can be readily integrated into daily practice**: tools that help build habits that support wellbeing and prevent burnout.
7. Among positive examples of materials and support, respondents frequently mentioned the work of the Czech Council of Children and Youth, particularly its recent initiative to collect practices promoting well-being in non-formal education settings. In the context of international youth work, they referred to the long-term project "Mental Health in Youth Work" coordinated by National Agencies of the Erasmus + Programme.
8. Regarding **concrete topics identified as important for improving well-being and preventing burnout**, the following areas were most frequently mentioned:
 - **Communication**: non-violent communication, the ability to address communication issues in the workplace, conflict management, and boundary-setting, as elements that can improve workplace relationships and team dynamics.
 - **Sharing and support**: creating opportunities for regular exchange (e.g. sharing circles, monthly meetings, retreats) and access to tools that facilitate support when facing difficult situations. Respondents noted that institutional and donor support is often insufficient in real-life situations that youth workers must handle on their own.
 - **Quality of workplace relationships**: the overall atmosphere, quality of management, level of support, and interpersonal relationships within teams were all identified as key factors influencing well-being.
 - **Administration, bureaucracy, and financial management**: the importance of not being overwhelmed by administrative tasks and tasks related to ensuring financial resources.
 - **Recognition, support within the community**: the recognition, the feeling that the work has been recognised and it is considered to be important.



Let's Get Inspired: Good Practices

Practice within the organisations

SHARING CIRCLES

One of the practices identified as contributing to well-being within organisations is sharing circles in various forms and frequencies. This practice enables youth workers to reflect, share, and raise issues they are dealing with.

Tool to help youth workers navigate challenging situations

CRISIS CARD

A step-by-step guide for handling crisis situations created by the Czech Council of Children and Youth. The card can be used by youth workers in challenging situations when organising youth activities. It contains key contacts, steps for dealing with crisis situations.

First help when a person is in crises ...

Do not forget yourself... Self-care...

PRVNÍ PSYCHICKÁ POMOC Použij, když je někdo v krizi nebo silně rozrušený. **6P**

Krok	Co dělat
Přiblíž se	Představ se, přístup klidně z boku
Podepř	Zajisti psychické i fyzické bezpečí
Připomínej realitu	Pomoz se zorientovat: jméno, místo, co se stalo
Podpoř	Normalizuj emoce: „To je normální“
Pečuj	Zajisti základní potřeby (voda, klid, deka)
Předej	Někomu z oddílu/organizace, zavolej odborníka, krizovou linku nebo rodiče

NEZAPOMEŇ NA SEBE

- Máš právo cítit únavu i nejistotu
- Emoce po zvládnutí krize jsou normální

Co může pomoci?

- Dej si čas – zastav se, nadechni se
- Prober situaci s blízkým člověkem
- Je v pořádku se obrátit na krizovou linku, případně jinou odbornou pomoc
- Dopřej si krátkou pauzu (procházka, čaj, hudba)

Kompas pro krizové situace

Když situace přesáhne běžné hranice
Rychlá opora – stručně a jasně

Na dalších stranách najdeš:

- co dělat v prvních krocích
- zásady 6P první psychické pomoci
- tipy na sebezpečí
- důležité kontakty

A tool enabling the sharing of resources and practices among different actors

FACEBOOK GROUP

The Czech Council of Children and Youth is running a Facebook group that provides access to resources and materials and enables sharing among different actors (individuals, organisations).

Let's Get Inspired: Good Practices

Transferring practices across the sectors

TRANSFERRING PRACTICES ACROSS SECTOR

When reflecting on the decision-making level, one good practice in the Czech context is to transfer good practices across sectors, in this case from formal education to non-formal education. In the field of formal education, the issue of well-being was addressed within the project 'Partnership for Education'. Currently, the Czech Council of Children and Youth is mapping good practices in non-formal education.

In addition to mapping practices, this project provides materials related to well-being. Although the main focus is on formal education, many of these materials and resources can also be used in non-formal education.

Organisation "Don't let go of your soul"

DON'T LET GO OF YOUR SOUL

One of the organisations recognised for its work in the field of well-being and mental health is "Don't let go of your soul" (Nevypust' Duši). The organisation work on awareness raising of the issue of mental health, especially with the focus on the mental health of young people, but also adults working in different sectors (school, sport, non-formal) as well as parents. The organisation produces materials for non-formal education on self-care, forming self-help groups, managing stress, recognising burnout, and related topics. The materials address key issues in an informative and engaging manner.

"There are many materials and practices. It is really hard to keep track of what's new and even more. It is hard to make it part of the routine."

A participant's feedback from a local event in Czechia



Inspiration from the field

During the project, we conducted several interviews with stakeholders in the youth field, examining various aspects of youth work related to well-being, mental health, and burnout.

LUCIE
BÍBOVÁ

CZECH COUNCIL
OF CHILDREN
AND YOUTH

The Czech Council of Children and Youth was established in July 1998 by eight children's and youth organisations. Today, it comprises around 100 member organisations with approximately 200 000 individual members.

There is a growing need to address well-being and mental health of youth workers, as young people increasingly require support due to declining mental health. Consequently, youth workers are facing new challenges, including the need to assist these young people.

What we did:

We created a Facebook group to support mental health in non-formal education and the Crisis Card: a step-by-step guide for handling crisis situations.

What we do:

We are developing various materials as well as organising webinars tackling the issue of well-being.

What we lack:

We lack feedback on the materials and tools we produce.

We found out:

One of the best support systems identified was within the Czech scouting movement, which serves as inspiration for our practices.

What we consider:

We would like to establish an email-based crisis support service for individuals involved in youth activities. Within the organisation itself, there is no formal well-being system in place, except for planning internal team weekends to align visions. **We would like to introduce supervision practices similar to those used in social services.**

CZECH
NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION AND
RESEARCH

The Czech National Agency for International Education and Research is managing various international programs including the Erasmus+ Programme.

The Czech National Agency (NA) **considers the topics of well-being, mental health, and burnout prevention to be current and highly relevant.** These themes frequently appear in supported project applications.

The Czech NA is part of the **SNAC Mental Health network** (Strategic National Agency Cooperation).

Generally, the topic of mental health aligns with the Erasmus+ programme priority on inclusion.

Currently, **there are no dedicated materials addressing burnout prevention or youth workers' well-being.** The creation of such materials could be considered in the future if demand arises or if included within projects or grant activities. The topic has been featured in the Czech NA's magazine 'Mozaika' and in the podcast.

Czech NA organizes on yearly biases seminar '**Mindful Exchange**' with the aim to bring the topics of well-being closer to young people and to show how to work with this topic.



Inspiration From the Field

During the project several interviews with stakeholders in youth field were carried out where we examined various aspects of youth work related to well-being, mental health, and burnout.

**IREN
PAJEROVÁ**
**VOLUNTARY
ACADEMY**

Iren Pajerová represents the Voluntary Academy (Dobrovolnická akademie) which organises various events connecting representatives from the non-formal sector as well as from education and business, such as online breakfasts and networking activities.

There is a clear need to address well-being and burnout prevention in a more comprehensive way. The topic became particularly relevant during and after COVID-19 due to increased societal insecurity. Generational changes are evident. Generation Alpha has different needs and faces numerous choices.

The rapid rise of AI and digital technologies also impacts well-being. Overall, **many societal changes are intensifying the relevance of well-being and burnout prevention.**

Individuals, including parents, face increasing pressure. Institutions, such as schools, often fail to adapt to these changes or to address evolving needs.

Burnout prevention should be viewed as a competency for the future, with emphasis on developing skills to address the needs of various groups, especially young people, parents (mothers in particular), and older adults.

An interesting example is the practice of having **a children's coach or peer partner** in schools.

There is a strong **need for practical tools**, such as breathing and mindfulness techniques, and for improving emotional competence.

While information is widely available, **the challenge lies in applying it consistently in everyday practice.**

Respondents highlighted **the importance of guidance in taking the first steps and maintaining new habits**, for instance, the organisation "Nevypust' duši" provides fridge magnets with daily reminders for well-being practices.

The **"learn-try-improve" approach was emphasised**. Physical movement and activity should also be incorporated into well-being strategies.

A useful example is **the Všímavec app**, designed for children and adults (primarily in school settings but not exclusively). Note: Application with simple techniques for children.

"Burnout prevention should be viewed as a competency for the future..."

Iren Pajerová



Inspiration from Local Activities

Sharing the Youth Workers Perspectives

In the local event and questionnaires, a diverse group of youth workers participated, working with young people in different settings, from youth clubs to summer camps, from local to international activities. Some respondents were employees, while others were freelancers.

The most common issues shared by the participants:

Personal level

The issue of well-being is an important one, but at the same time, some youth workers feel that it is **an additional 'job'** and that they have no time to really 'give themselves space'. Especially when also having other roles (parents), jobs.

There are many materials and resources, but awareness of what's available is limited.

The main challenge is to establish a routine that incorporates new methods and techniques to support their well-being and prevent burnout.

Is it youth work, just a "job" or something more?

Youth workers discussed **the approach to the work and their perception of it**. Is it 'just' a job, or do you see it more as a 'mission'? This point was linked to the reflection on motivation and on making the decision that, at times, is the best: to leave the job.

Among **the factors negatively impacting the well-being** were the following:

- **A high level of stress** is caused, especially by the fact that the work often includes working with young people in traumatic situations.
- **High expectations** that respondents have towards themselves.
- **Low salaries, financial insecurity**, as most of the work depends on grants.
- **Administration overload.**
- **Lack of support** within the organisations.
- **Limitations regarding** professional growth.
- The fact that **society overall does not consider youth work important.**

In this context, several respondents mentioned attacks on civil society and non-profit organisations, which may be linked to the fact that the questionnaires were collected during the pre-election and post-election periods (September to November 2025).

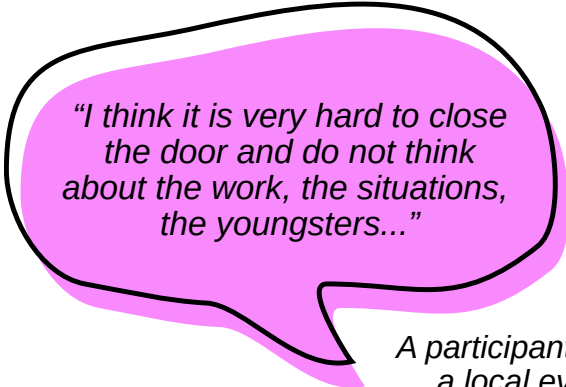
When it comes **to the valuable and beneficial tools positively impacting** well-being, the following ones were mentioned:

- **Mindfulness and relaxing techniques** (breathing exercises, meditation).
- Various forms of **supervision and intervision** serve as tools that create space for sharing and support.
- Tools that enable time management (e.g., the Pomodoro method).
- Personal activities such as **a diary**.
- Activities that support **self-discovery**, cooperation within the team, and the creation of a safe space within the organisation. They also enable **boundary-setting** and improve communication.

In the questions related to their personal practices, the respondents mentioned that they are trying to include in their daily routine sports, work on the quality of their personal relationships, and set boundaries between work and personal life.

They would **welcome diverse forms of support**, including a personal coach, a friend on the phone, the possibility of going on a retreat, or, especially, the chance of taking more extended holidays.

Regarding the working environment, the respondents would welcome access to supervision or therapy and to a personal space where they could ventilate or have healthy meals.



"I think it is very hard to close the door and do not think about the work, the situations, the youngsters..."

A participant's feedback from a local event in Czechia



Inspiration from Local Activities

Sharing the Youth Workers Perspectives

Organisational level

The participants worked in different roles and areas. Nevertheless, **they agreed that one of the key issues they face is excessive administrative work and a lack of 'real', 'practical help' from donors and institutions when dealing with issues.**

Also, they agreed that they **feel tired from the need to justify their jobs and the impact of their work to institutions and donors**, and that the administrative and project management parts of their jobs take energy and time they could use to work with their target groups.

Some of them pointed out that **society does not consider youth work important and views them as someone who takes 'money for doing nothing'.**

The participants also agreed that one of the key factors that affects their well-being in the workplace is the quality of **their relationships with colleagues**. This quality of the relationship includes the following elements: **communication, boundaries, leadership, teamwork, approach to new employees, and new members of the team.**

In addition to the quality of the relationships, they noted a **lack of physical spaces for breaks.**

Overall, **none of the workplaces has established guidelines or rules** for supporting well-being and preventing burnout. Some of them have a system of supervision as a support mechanism. Some offer three sick days per year, annual team-building activities, or the practice of sharing circles.

Also, there were comments related to the legal framework in the Czech Republic:
"Even if you can, e.g., take a sick day, you do not want to do so because you will receive less salary and cannot afford it."

Another element of the work the participants discussed was **the need to address challenging stories or situations involving young people**, or that occurred during activities and projects. They pointed out that it is necessary to step back from these situations, but this is difficult.

The most common obstacles to improving well-being identified by representatives of the organisations were limited time and financial resources. **Representatives of the organisations would welcome various forms of support, including workshops led by professionals, retreats, or professional supervision for their staff.**

Systematic (Decision making) level

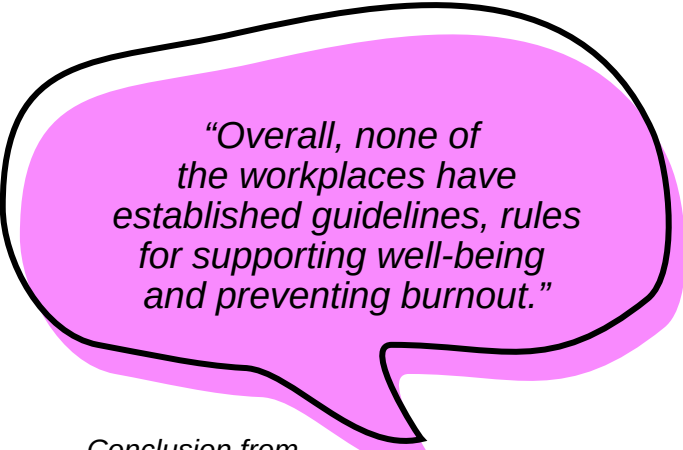
Overall, at this level, participants expressed feeling **there is no 'real representation' of the issues related to well-being, mental health, and burnout prevention.**

They pointed out that **the focus is on young people, not on the service providers.**

Nevertheless, they agreed that there are **some initiatives** that they are trying to bring the topics:

Facebook group of the Czech Council of Children and Youth, aimed at raising awareness of these topics and supporting the sharing of materials and tools.

The week of well-being that mainly focuses on schools, but also touches youth centres, as it primarily focuses on young people.



"Overall, none of the workplaces have established guidelines, rules for supporting well-being and preventing burnout."

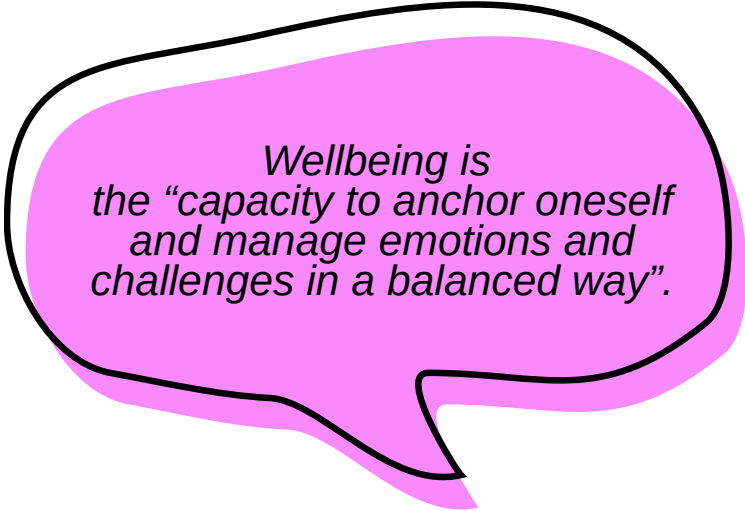
Conclusion from the desk research and questionnaires



3.2. Romania

Key Findings

1. **High need, low systemic support:** Youth workers express a critical need for support due to emotional pressure and high workload, which is acknowledged by 75-87% of organizational leaders. However, this recognition rarely translates into formal, written policy or dedicated resources.
2. **Financial instability** is considered one of the root cause. The top negative factor across all activities is the lack of decent salaries, lack of job stability, and project-based work. This confirms that the capacity to manage emotions and achieve well-being is fundamentally dependent on first meeting basic needs.
3. **The policy gap and systemic undervaluation:** The majority of organizations (75% for burnout, 62.5% for mental health) have no formal policies. This is compounded by the systemic issue that the youth sector is undervalued and operating without the necessary structural protection (e.g., renewed Occupational Standard).
4. **Balance and emotional capacity:** A major stressor identified is the imbalance between personal and professional life and the difficulty in setting boundaries. Consequently, the capacity to manage emotions is seen as one of the central skills needed for anchorage and balance.
5. **Job satisfaction vs. burnout:** A strong protective factor is the satisfaction derived from the meaningful work with youngsters. Burnout often occurs when this internal enthusiasm clashes with external systemic pressure, leading to an inability to enjoy the work.
6. **Mindset and destigmatization:** The resistance to implementation is not solely financial, but also a mindset problem at the decision-making level, where topics are dismissed. There is a critical need for awareness and destigmatization of mental health and burnout to normalize and institutionalize support.



Wellbeing is the “capacity to anchor oneself and manage emotions and challenges in a balanced way”.

Definition given by participants attending the local mapping event in Romania

Concrete Topics for Improving Wellbeing

The following areas were most frequently mentioned as crucial for training and organizational focus:

1. **Emotional competencies:**
The core focus should be on building the capacity to manage emotions and providing emotional education.
2. **Boundary setting and work-life balance:**
Developing concrete strategies to ensure balance between personal and professional life and prevent the constant feeling of overload.
3. **Organizational systems:**
The need for formalizing support: implementing supervision, creating dedicated support roles (Wellbeing Person), and establishing clear, written policies.
4. **Financial and stability advocacy:**
Addressing the structural issues of decent remuneration and stable contracts (long-term/permanent), as these are prerequisites for any other wellbeing intervention.
5. **Critical awareness:**
Training on how to critically analyze discourse and recognize when stress is systemic versus individual.



Inspiration: Examples of materials and approaches to well-being

Across all data, positive examples fall into three main categories:

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

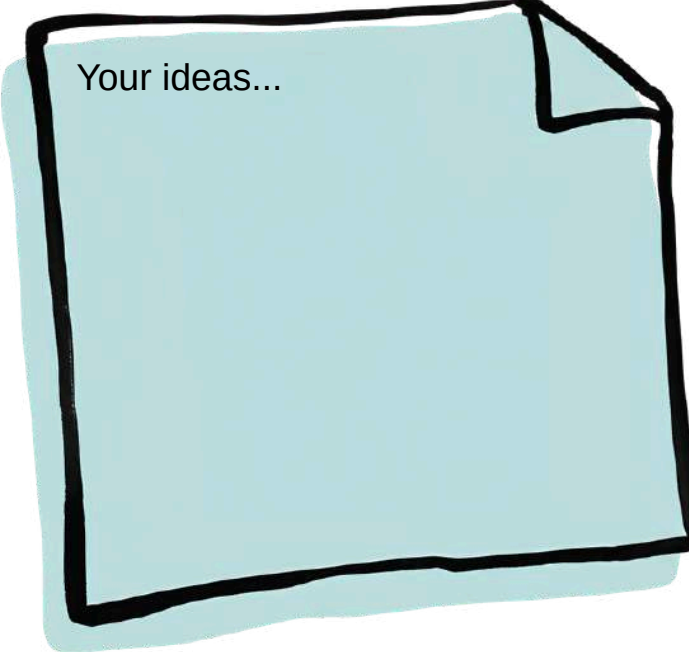
Therapy and Coaching (most desired support)
Supervision (individual/group)
"Trust Circles" for peer support

FLEXIBLE & FINANCIAL PERKS

Flexible/Remote programs
Discounts (Bookster, medical subscriptions)
Appealing to colleagues for ad-hoc support

COLLECTIVE & SELF-CARE

Encouraging use of recovery days/vacations
Collective activities (cooking days, sport)
Nature walks, music, and journaling (Individual self-care)



Your ideas...

Recommendations:

- 1. Definitions & Understanding:**
Adopt a simple, holistic definition of Wellbeing (e.g., the Self-Others-Nature Trinomial). Promote the term "Mental Wellness" over "Mental Health" to shift the focus from a "problem" to prevention and emotional education.
- 2. Lack of Systematic Approach:**
Mandate Policy Formalization: Require all organizations to develop written, formal, and monitored policies for Wellbeing and Burnout Prevention, with implementation mechanisms proportionate to their size.
- 3. Financial Stability & Safety:**
Prioritize Decent Salaries & Job Stability: Systematically link organizational wellbeing strategies to offering permanent contracts and competitive salaries to address the top negative factors identified by youth workers.
- 4. Access to Resources & Practices:**
Establish a National Service Package: Create a funded National Resource Center and a "Service Package" (Interview Andrei Popescu) offering subsidized access to external professional support (therapy, coaching, supervision) for all youth workers.
- 5. Systemic Capacity:**
Advocate for Inter-Ministerial Collaboration: Push for ideal cooperation across Ministries (Health, Labour, Youth) and the renewal of the Occupational Standard to include mandatory staff support and capacity-building (Interview Carmen Marcu, Andrei Popescu).
- 6. Organizational Mindset:**
Cultivate a Wellbeing Mindset in Leadership: Target training and advocacy toward organizational leaders to shift the culture from "reactive" to proactive, thereby overcoming the "mindset barrier" that dismisses wellbeing (Interview with Vlad Dumitrescu).
- 7. Improving Core Competencies:**
Focus Training on Emotional Regulation: Provide training on concrete topics such as emotional education, boundary setting, and conflict resolution as these are key for developing the individual "capacity to anchor oneself".
- 8. Organizational Structure:**
Institutionalize Dedicated HR/Support Roles: Organizations should designate an HR or Wellbeing Focal Point to be responsible for implementing, monitoring, and enforcing support measures and ensuring the accommodation of staff needs.
- 9. Examples of Practices:**
Promote Collective Wellbeing: Encourage the adoption of collective, low-cost practices (e.g., Trust Circles, monthly cooking/sport days, celebration moments) to build mutual support and prevent burnout proactively (Interview Carmen Marcu, Local Event).



Good Practices

Structural level

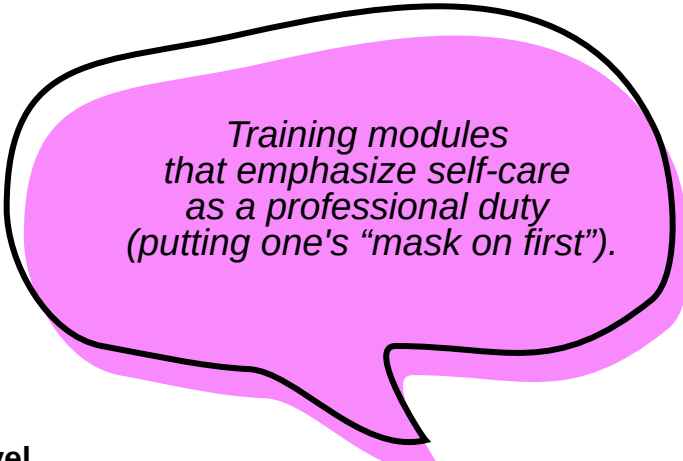
Mandatory Recovery Time & Policy: Formal written arrangements for extra recovery days, paid retreats, and annual professional coaching/therapy allowance, backed by a dedicated, protected budget line.

Systemic level

Peer-to-Peer Support Circles: Formalizing “Trust Circles” or group supervision mechanisms for youth workers to ensure a safe, structured space for peer reflection and support, preventing isolation.

Organizational level

Leader Alignment & Role Definition: Leadership visibly commits to creating a culture that accommodates needs, moving away from “only when needed”. Clear designation of a team member responsible for monitoring and implementing wellbeing.



*Training modules
that emphasize self-care
as a professional duty
(putting one's “mask on first”).*

Individual level

Self-Care as Professional Competency: Training modules that emphasize self-care as a professional duty (putting one's “mask on first”) and equip workers with tools for journaling, emotional mapping, and setting clear professional boundaries.

Inspiration from Interviews

Interview with **Carmen Marcu**
Head of Division for Youth Activities

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Wellbeing & Support Context	The formal support framework is currently geared more towards youth than towards the youth staff themselves . Youth workers frequently engage in individual, unstandardized development (e.g., Erasmus+ courses) and transfer personal practices to the workplace, which, while beneficial, is not a systemic solution. There is a general lack of explicit organizational concern or focus on supporting staff wellbeing .
Systemic & Organizational Gaps	Initiatives are disparate and non-systemic, relying on the goodwill of individual organizations. High staff turnover and the fact that many youth workers are volunteers (lacking employee rights) highlight the sector's instability . Discrepancies exist between employees, some manage their load, others take on too much, due to the absence of a clear organizational framework.

Advocate for new working policies related to youth staff and a designated person (HR or leader) responsible for accommodating these needs.

Carmen Marcu
Head of Division for Youth Activities



Inspiration From Interviews

Interview with **Carmen Marcu**
Head of Division for Youth Activities

A leadership with a focus on this, an understanding of the importance of accommodating these kinds of needs.

Carmen Marcu
Head of Division for Youth Activities

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Recommendations & Needed Practices	Formalization is Crucial: The expired occupational standard needs renewal to include a module on capacity building and support for youth workers. New Support Mechanisms: Implement a “cleaning” or support system for wellbeing/burnout prevention, which could include collective practices (e.g., a monthly cooking day, themed parties, team sports). Systemic Change: Advocate for new working policies related to youth staff and a designated person (HR or leader) responsible for accommodating these needs. Financial View: Organizations must consider the organizational costs of not establishing a support system (as opposed to small, sustained investments like World Vision's 15-minute online wellbeing sessions).



Inspiration from Interviews

Interview with **Andrei Popescu**

Former Youth Program Coordinator and State Secretary at Ministry of Youth and Sport

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Conceptual Definitions	Wellbeing is seen as the umbrella term, focused on ensuring basic needs (Maslow's hierarchy), including material security and salary. Mental Health focuses on the <i>problem</i> . Andrei Popescu prefers Mental Wellness , which emphasizes prevention, emotional education, and coping strategies . Burnout affects highly enthusiastic workers who lose enjoyment and often stems from the need to prove and validate their competence.
Systemic & Sectoral Status	The Youth sector is “undervalued” compared to Labour and Education. There is insufficient investment in the sector’s capacity to reach youth outside of school and develop their “human, citizen” dimension. The youth worker role is poorly defined in the collective mental space, contributing to the pressure. Support mechanisms are largely informal, ad-hoc, and targeted at young people (e.g., school counselors), not staff.

“A framework to have services that equip the worker with a package on how to work with young people and also remain balanced”.

Andrei Popescu

Former Youth Program Coordinator and
State Secretary at Ministry of Youth and Sport



be well

Inspiration from Interviews

Interview with Andrei Popescu
Former Youth Program Coordinator and State Secretary at Ministry of Youth and Sport

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Recommendations & Needs	Service Package: A national framework is needed to create a “Service Package” for wellbeing - specific training and services to equip the worker with the tools to work with youth while remaining balanced. Ecosystem Development: A complete Youth Ecosystem is missing (vision, financial resources, safe spaces). A National Resource Center is required to develop worker competencies beyond basic course accreditation. Collaboration: Ideal collaboration is necessary across Ministries (Health, Labour, Education, Youth) and with organizations and practitioners. Mutual Support: Need to institute a system of mutual support measures, ensuring youth workers “put their own mask on first”.

What do you think is needed in your systems?

Would you support creating a national resource centre or would you welcome to have access to service package?



Inspiration from Interviews

Interview with Vlad Dumitrescu
Capacity Building Expert

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Holistic Approach & Definitions	Wellbeing should be viewed through a holistic, action-oriented lens focused on the trinomial: Self - Others - Nature/Environment. Wellbeing is an umbrella term encompassing more specific issues like Mental Health and Burnout. Current models are too disparate or niche, lacking an integrated, multi-viewpoint approach. The concept must be simple and non-academic (“what you do for yourself, for others, for nature, to be balanced”).
Systemic & Organizational Barriers	There is significant resistance to wellbeing concepts at the decision-making level, often dismissing it as irrelevant (“you are too young/sensitive”). This resistance, coupled with a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept, is a major challenge. Funding is not the main challenge, the lack of a wellbeing mindset and strategic alignment prevents organizations from effectively utilizing existing funds for this purpose.

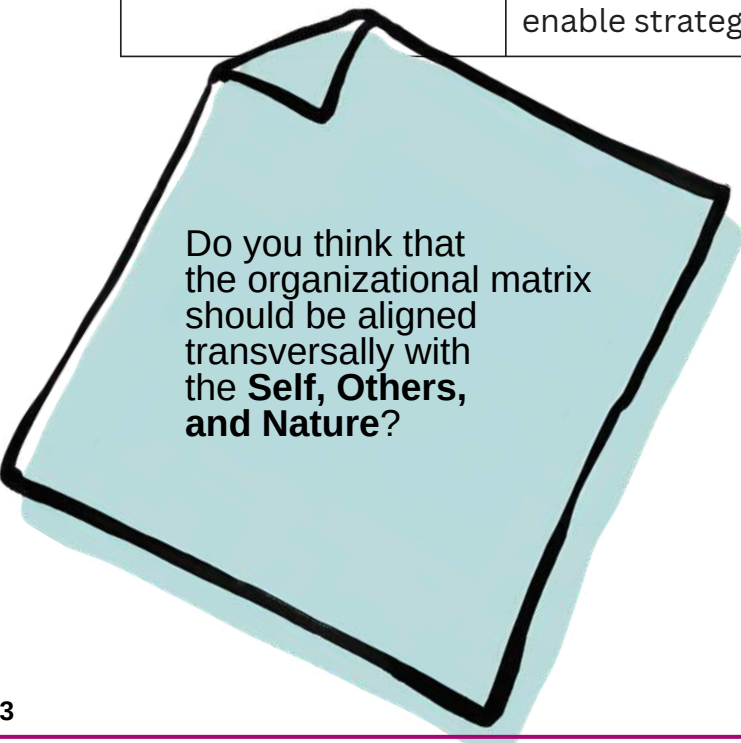
*“A holistic and integrated approach:
What to do for my own wellbeing,
for the people around me, for nature
and the environment - the trinomial:
Self - Others - Nature. And there
is a need for an organizational mindset
oriented towards wellbeing”.*

Vlad Dumitrescu
Capacity Building Expert

Inspiration from Interviews

Interview with Vlad Dumitrescu
Capacity Building Expert

Section	Key Findings & Perspectives
Recommendations & Principles	Organizational Mindset: A fundamental shift is required towards an organizational mindset oriented towards wellbeing. The Organizational Matrix (vision) should be aligned transversally with the Self, Others, and Nature trinomial (e.g., intersectionality). Values Framework: The sector needs a clear set of transversal principles/values (e.g., wellbeing as a human right, accessible, non-hierarchical, non-capitalist/non-colonial) to guide all actions and training. Mainstreaming: The conversation must be brought to the table and mainstreamed across the sector to enable strategic funding utilization.



Do you think that the organizational matrix should be aligned transversally with the **Self, Others, and Nature**?

3.3. Latvia

Key Findings

1. Burnout is widespread, yet poorly understood. **Burnout is consistently identified as one of the most urgent challenges** facing Latvian youth workers. Only 1 in 10 youth workers is certain that they have never experienced burnout, while 1 in 5 is unsure whether what they have experienced can be defined as burnout. Youth worker training should therefore focus not only on prevention but also on recognising the symptoms of burnout, understanding its stages and risk factors, and learning effective recovery strategies.
2. Youth workers face emotional overload because **professional boundaries are unclear**. Many youth workers take on roles beyond their professional responsibilities, acting as psychologists, mentors, crisis supporters, janitors, and project managers simultaneously. The emotional burden of supporting vulnerable young people often continues after working hours, making healthy boundary-setting one of the most needed competencies. Training should include boundary-setting, emotional detachment techniques, and recognising when to refer young people to mental health professionals.
3. **The main causes of poor wellbeing are systemic rather than individual**. Low salaries, staff shortages, excessive bureaucracy, high workload, project-writing pressure, and lack of recognition were repeatedly identified as major contributors to stress and burnout. Advocacy should therefore complement individual resilience training with calls for organisational and policy changes rather than implying that wellbeing depends solely on personal coping skills.
4. There is a **need for practical wellbeing education** rather than awareness alone. Interviewees emphasised that they do not simply want lectures about wellbeing. They want practical tools they can immediately apply, including healthy time management, workload planning, saying "no", managing emotional baggage, recognising when professional help is needed, stress management, self-care techniques, and maintaining work-life balance. Youth workers also valued opportunities to actually practise wellbeing during training instead of only discussing it.
5. Prevention is hindered by low awareness and persistent stigma. **Many youth workers recognise declining mental health only after serious problems have developed**. Although attitudes towards mental health have improved compared with the past, many still do not feel safe discussing their struggles. Training should therefore normalise conversations about wellbeing and create safe environments where seeking help is viewed as a professional strength rather than a weakness.
6. **Professional learning and peer support are among the strongest protective factors**. Youth workers consistently identified training courses, exchanges of experience, supervision, supportive colleagues, community, recognition from supervisors, and opportunities for reflection as factors that improve their wellbeing.
7. There is an **urgent need for evidence-based advocacy**. Despite widespread concern about burnout and mental wellbeing, Latvia still lacks comprehensive national research focusing specifically on youth workers. Stakeholders - including the National Agency and youth workers themselves - identified this as a priority because robust evidence is needed to understand the scale of the problem, evaluate existing support measures, and guide policy decisions. Advocacy campaigns should therefore call not only for more services but also for systematic monitoring and research on youth workers' wellbeing.
8. Support structures exist but remain limited and unevenly implemented. Latvia already offers promising initiatives, including free supervisions, the Youth Workers' Excellence Programme, and Erasmus+ learning opportunities. However, workplace-level wellbeing practices remain uncommon, and **many organisations still lack prevention strategies, action plans, or clear procedures for supporting staff experiencing mental health difficulties**. Future programmes should build upon these existing structures while advocating for wider implementation.



Inspiration: Good Practices

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In 2023 a new Municipality Law came into power. It states that one of the functions of Municipality is to ensure the work with youth. It means recognition for youth work, although in various municipalities there is a diverse understanding of it. Nevertheless, the law has brought many positive changes that, even if not directly related to mental health, is reducing many stressors for youth workers.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

The mental well being of youth workers is important for Latvian National Agency. It is confirmed by the fact that there is a separate section on their website with various support opportunities and resources related to wellbeing. As mentioned above, Latvian NA together with other 12 countries is a part of Mental Health SNACK. That opens up new possibilities not only in the field of mental health of youth, but also for youth workers. Once in a while there are international trainings as a part of this SNACK, this gives Latvian National Agency the opportunity to send also Latvian youth workers to these learning experiences. Thanks to this partnership NA also created a webinar How to Discover Your True Resources of Help and Support for Maintaining Emotional Well-being and a one-time three day training course for youth workers about their own psychoemotional well being.

EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

A special measure in Latvia is the Youth Workers' Excellence Program, financed by the Education Ministry and administered by The Agency for International Projects for Youth. It is a four module training course dedicated for working with youngsters with fewer opportunities, challenging behaviours, addictions etc. One of these three modules is solely dedicated to the psychoemotional well-being of youth workers. It gives a chance to meet psychologists and other mental health experts, learn theory and have a space to try out healthier self-care practices.

SUPERVISIONS

Another essential offer from our National Agency is the chance to get support from a supervisor. With various changes in the offer, this service is available already for five years. In 2025 they offered four supervision groups, free of charge. Each group has 7 meetings within the course of a year.

EXIT BURNOUT

Besides systematic support and resources offered by the National Agency there are of course the opportunities created by various non-governmental associations that are working with the finances of the youth field. These associations offer training courses and create educational materials regarding the psychoemotional well-being of people working with youth. For instance, people who are interested in this project might also find useful the work of the Association of Educational Games and Methods. With the support of Erasmus+ program they already implemented a strategic partnership project on the topic of burn-out and as of now they are in a starting phase of the continuation project.



Inspiration From the Field - Expert Interviews

Interviewed experts agree that **there is still a lack of financial and systematic support that the field professionals would find very impactful regarding the topic of mental health of youth workers**. Unfortunately, there is not much hope about improvements as a big part of Latvian budget is dedicated to defence, military and civil protection. There are many attempts to solve the lack of finances with the help of project funding. But as reported below, in many cases it simply brings more tasks and pressure to the youth worker. As reported by the Youth Workers Association, **there are municipalities where youth workers would not be able to survive the month with their salary if they did not have the support of their romantic partner**.

One of the first issues we stumbled upon is the lack of information about the well-being of youth workers. The problems is there, but no one can tell how big and complex it is. **There is no state level research about the situation**. In 2021 Mapping of Youth Psychoemotional Well-being in Latvia was made. It was done as a part of SNAC (Strategic National Agencies Cooperation) Mental Health in Youth Work. Similar national research is needed with youth workers (paid and activists) as a target group. During the course of this research, there is a questionnaire created regarding youth workers' burn out. It is a part of a strategic partnership project between various NGOs, including a Latvian one. Nevertheless, it covers only a small area of the mental health field. Another research worth mentioning is Self-assessment of Youth Workers' Competencies and Professional Profile in Latvia. As the title states, the research mostly deals with competences, but it also includes some valid questions about youth workers' well being. It states that half of respondents are having another job besides their youth workers' position which on hand side broadens the perspective of youth workers and enriches approaches to working with young people while on the other hand it increases the risk of burnout. This research states that "Only one-fifth have been working in the field for more than ten years, and even fewer (15%) have been working in the same position for a long time. Most have been working for a relatively short time: 43% in the field and 64% in their specific position for less than three years, which indicates **high employee turnover**." When talking about the reasons for quitting youth work the most frequently mentioned factor is **remuneration**, which varies significantly between municipalities for equivalent positions.

Challenges highlighted by interviewed experts include **excessive workloads, bureaucracy, practical resource management difficulties, and intensive daily work with young people**.

Other factors mentioned include a **lack of understanding of the importance of youth issues at the national and local government level, an unorganized system, high energy consumption, limited career opportunities, as well as burnout and resource depletion**. What was echoed also in our research is that youth workers are often faced not only with massive amounts but also a **diversity of tasks**. Besides directly working with youngsters, they are also responsible for cleaning the premises, writing projects and reports, even creating public procurements (often without the necessary skillset), taking care of related documentation and more. In one case we would like to emphasize, the youth worker is also obliged to fire up the stove during the cold seasons, which includes getting to the youth center before working hours, and also on weekends, to make sure that the building is warm enough for people to be there later on. There is no agreement on job description policy among municipalities, therefore **it is difficult for youth workers to prioritise their responsibilities**. Similarly it is with the numerous trainings, seminars and webinars where they are encouraged, and in some cases, obliged to participate. It is easy to get confused by the offer and lack time for the direct work with youngsters. As stated by the representative of the Youth Workers Association: "Youth workers often become mentors, psychologists, managers, supporters, and administrative "engines" all at once, performing duties that are not included in their job descriptions."

During conducted interviews burnout was mentioned a lot. Also the representative of the National Agency shared their observation that in their organized events the topic of burnout is present almost every time. However, the understanding of burnout is limited as it is mostly related to the amount of work and lack of financial support in the field. Another element, mentioned both by youth workers and also as observed by National Agency representatives, is that there are **difficulties to draw boundaries** - youth, especially having more serious issues, cannot be "closed" or left behind after the end of the working day. Quite often the boundaries between a mentor and a youth worker are blurred, especially when it's obvious that youth need help. A lot is done with the sense of mission and this might also bring to taking on tasks that are on the verge of the work of a psychologist. This can be explained with the queues and lack of free access to mental health specialists for youth older than 18. Therefore this role often is taken on by youth workers.



Inspiration From the Field - Expert Interviews

What can be observed in the field is that **rather many youth workers realize that their mental health is not stable post factum**. There is not enough awareness about how various challenges are affecting well-being and therefore **there is a lack of action on prevention**. Moreover, one cannot underestimate the cultural aspect. Even if there is less stigma about mental health, youth workers often do not feel comfortable or safe to talk about the issues they are facing and therefore they do not ask for help.

First step that would be needed on a national level is a **quality research specifically about mental well-being of youth workers**, similarly as it was done in 2021 regarding mapping youth psychoemotional health. This need is emphasized by the National Agency as well as by the youth workers themselves. There is a clear need of understanding what is the current situation before developing appropriate systematic solutions. This would also answer the need of National Agency to have understanding if the support elements that they already are offering work.

There are also suggestions that the **well-being topic could be integrated in all types of educational activities of youth workers**, regardless of their topics. Moreover, it could be not only theory and new methods, but actual time to practice it. As one of the participants of our mapping event stated - the best thing was not only to talk about mental well-being but to actually practice it throughout these days.

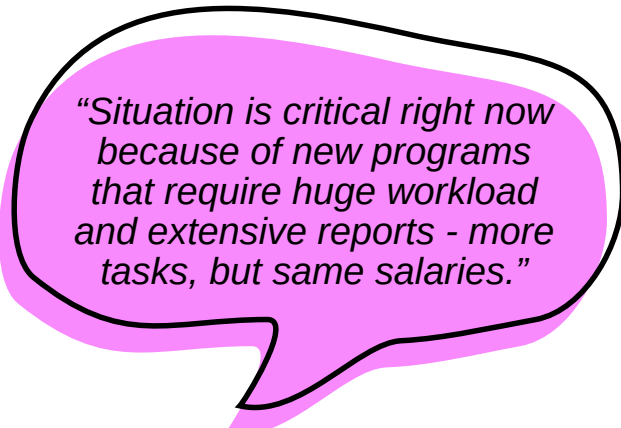
It is also not clear if youth organizations have guidelines or plan of action in case if youth workers are facing challenges regarding their mental-wellbeing. The same goes for prevention strategy - there are organizations that have developed a habit to talk about it on an individual level. Nevertheless, **action plans and strategies are missing**.

Moreover, interviewed people shared that they would like to gain **basic mental health kit**, guidelines about healthy time management in the periods of work overload, and how to develop the work plan, so the tasks are actually done instead of raising the stress levels. There is a lack of skills of drawing healthy boundaries between youth workers and their tasks, the people in charge and also target groups, especially when working with youngsters who need extra support. It was shared that youth workers don't know what to do with the emotional baggage that stays after youngsters have shared their reality and how to regain balance after them. As mentioned before, there is no clear understanding about the burn-out syndrome, its development reasons and stages. Other topics of interest are stress eating and its effects, saying "no", how to recognize when a professional help is needed.



"Large part of our energy goes into getting funding for youth work."

Latvian Youth Council



"Situation is critical right now because of new programs that require huge workload and extensive reports - more tasks, but same salaries."

Youth Workers Association



Inspiration from Local Activities Sharing the Youth Workers Perspectives

In the local mapping event and questionnaires, a diverse group of youth workers participated, working with young people in different settings, from municipal youth centres to associations with different specialisations. All of them were women.

Most Latvian youth workers who participated in the national mapping event or completed the questionnaire defined wellbeing as **being in balance and having good mental, physical, and emotional health**. A large proportion of respondents also emphasized the importance of life satisfaction and having a sense of purpose.

77% of respondents agreed that the **wellbeing of youth workers in Latvia is threatened by emotional tension and unfavourable working conditions**. 54% considered improving the wellbeing of youth workers to be an urgent issue. Only 1 in 10 youth workers believed that the wellbeing of youth workers is not an important issue for the sector.

Many youth workers specifically highlighted **burnout as a major concern**. 81% of respondents agreed that it is an urgent problem requiring immediate action. 46% revealed that they had experienced burnout more than once, while 19% had experienced it once. It is also important to note that 23% were unsure whether what they had experienced could be defined as burnout. **Only 11% of respondents were certain that they had never experienced burnout.**

More than one third of respondents mentioned that their biggest challenge in relation to their wellbeing is **low salaries that are not proportional to the amount of work they perform**. Almost the same number of respondents stated that **there are too few colleagues** and **staff turnover is high**. Youth workers are expected to master a wide variety of skills and perform numerous tasks. **High expectations are placed upon them, while insufficient resources are provided.**

A smaller number of youth workers also mentioned that existing support systems are insufficient and that they lack adequate emotional support. Some explained that **young people's challenges also become their own**. They observed that the number of young people belonging to socially vulnerable groups or experiencing mental health difficulties is increasing, requiring considerable emotional involvement and mental resilience from youth workers. Several respondents also noted a **lack of understanding of why personal wellbeing is important in the workplace**.

When discussing burnout, youth workers identified several additional contributing factors, including poor leadership and lack of ability to set personal boundaries.

Many respondents explained that financial insecurity and the constant need to write project applications contribute significantly to burnout. They also highlighted a lack of understanding of youth work, including among those responsible for administering it at national and local levels.

When asked about factors that positively influence their wellbeing, Latvian youth workers provided a wide range of responses. Most frequently, they mentioned **opportunities to participate in training courses and national and international exchanges of experience**, demonstrating the importance of learning and networking opportunities for the profession. Many of these opportunities are currently supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, making professional development accessible free of charge.

Only 26% of youth workers confirmed that their workplace has practices aimed at improving wellbeing and preventing burnout. These include supporting participation in training courses and supervision sessions. Some organisations provide access to an art therapist or organise regular internal meetings where staff can share emotions and discuss challenges. Almost all respondents stated that they would like wellbeing practices to be introduced or expanded within their workplaces.

When asked what kind of support they would need to improve their wellbeing, respondents mentioned **a clearer definition of the youth worker's role and responsibilities, access to supervision and mentoring, better remuneration, increased funding for local activities, and reduced bureaucracy**. Many respondents noted that a significant number of challenges could be addressed if they had one or two additional colleagues to share the workload or take responsibility for specialised tasks such as public relations, mobile youth work, or administration.

Respondents highlighted the importance of support and recognition from supervisors and the wider public, supportive colleagues, a sense of community, creativity, freedom and variety in their work, as well as the energy, inspiration, and positive feedback they receive from young people. Many respondents also believed that greater efforts should be made to advocate for the interests of youth workers. Finally, many expressed a desire to learn more about self-care and practical methods that could help them maintain their wellbeing, manage stress, relax, and improve their overall health.



4.Supporting materials

Various materials related the topic of well-being, mental health.

Youth realities

EU “State of Health” country_profile (2023). You can find reports of all EU countries, including Czechia, Romania and Latvia.

Youth Realities in Czechia. Explains the youth realities in the context of Czechia.

Youth Realities in Latvia. Provides a review of youth realities in Latvia.

Youth Realities in Romania. Youth field framework: Youth Law 350/2006 defines "youth" and structures youth governance. Youth Wiki confirms the age bracket (14 - 35), and sector studies describe how youth work is reflected in legislation and practice.

Youth Work and Mental Well-Being. Youth mental health statistics. Generation Europe.

Perspectives on youth seminar report “Youth mental health and well-being”. Youth Partnership. Council of Europe.

Wellbeing and mental health at school. Guidelines for school leaders, teachers and educators. European Commission.

Czechia

National Institute of Mental Health (NUDZ). The institute focuses on various aspects of mental health. The institute includes a working group focused on the mental health of children and adolescents - “*Support for Mental Health and Well-being of Children and Adolescents in the Czech Republic*”.

Partnership for Education 2030+
Started as a platform primarily focused on formal education. Currently, it connects 22 organisations and has operated as an independent body since autumn 2022. In the context of well-being, it provided access to various materials and organised the ‘*Week of Well-being in Schools*’. It also focuses on developing the competencies needed for well-being.

The Czech Council of Children and Youth
Studies and articles on the issues linked to well-being and mental health of young people, youth workers.

Methodology for Educating Youth Workers Focused on Preventing Stress and Burnout Among Young Leaders (CZ)
A publication designed for youth workers and youth leaders, focusing on the prevention of stress and burnout through simulation activities, including virtual reality.

Policies & Advocacy examples related to Romania

Civil research highlights stigma and service gaps, supporting advocacy for community-based mental health models and anti-stigma initiatives. UNICEF Romania Country Report.

UNICEF and WHO advocate for community-based child and adolescent mental health services, prevention, and stronger data systems. Mental health related stigma in Romania: systematic review and narrative synthesis.

Law 487/2002 (amended 2012) Romania’s Mental Health Law: rights, care, and (where necessary) involuntary admission safeguards.

Romanian National Health Strategy 2023 - 2030 includes a dedicated mental health objective (access, community services, prevention, better data). Youth Wiki summarises operational targets.

Work/burnout angle: OSH Law 319/2006. A brief review of the risk assessment in Romania compared to Finland transposes the EU occupational safety framework; risk assessment obligations can cover psychosocial risks even if not explicitly named.

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