Methodological guidelines

For applying the youth well-being monitoring system at national, regional and local level

Agency for International Programs for Youth Republic of Latvia

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Latvian Child Welfare Network

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T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

Young people today

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According to World Economic Forum (2018), four in 10 people in the world are aged under 25, which means that young people make 42% of the world's population. That means that this generation of youth is the largest ever. Detailed statistics are presented below.

Youth population, aged 15-24 (World Bank Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2017)
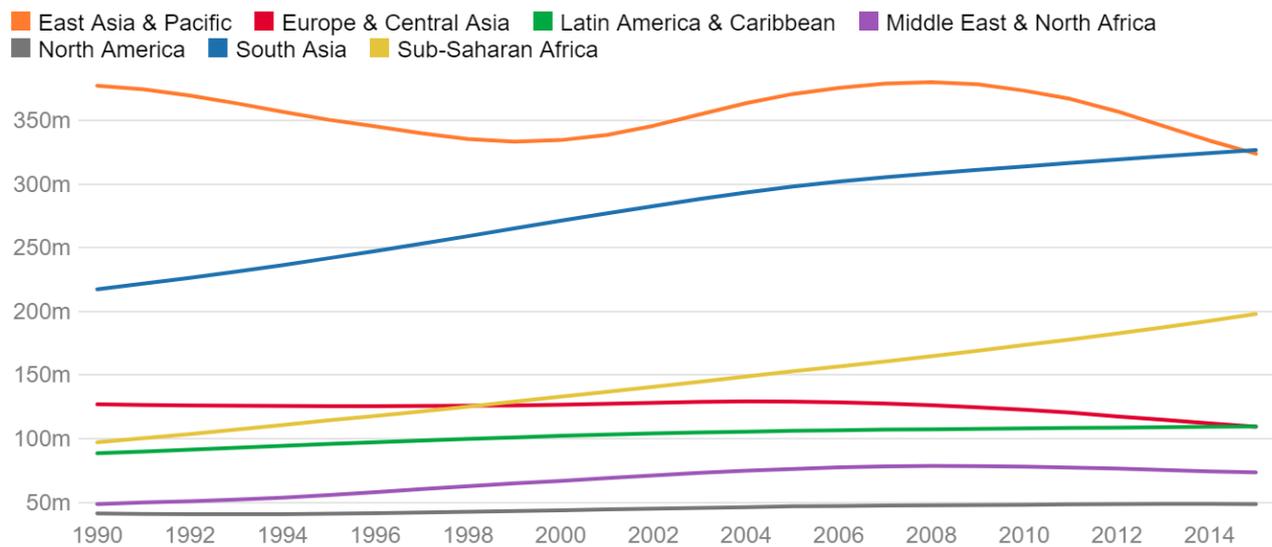
However, in the European Union (EU) the number of young people among general population is decreasing, and has been decreasing continuously over recent years. As of 1 January 2018, the population of the EU, who unites 28 member states, was about 512.7 million people[1]. EU population is also impacted by ageing phenomenon more than other parts of the world, even though it should be stated that there are some significant changes between individual Member States. For instance, in Ireland and Cyprus the share of people aged 0-29 in their total population is about 39%, but e.g., in Italy – about 29%.

There are also other significant aspects and changes in the life of today youth. As highlighted in the report "Exploring the European youth mosaic: the social situation of young people in Europe", there is an overall trend towards longer and more complex transition to adult life. Both positive changes and negative factors are seen in Europe's young people's situation. Some of the observed trends are for instance: longer time that young people stay in full-time education and training, and post-compulsory and higher education and training participation rates are steadily rising. Another positive change is that more and more young people find employment which is often exactly the outcome of better education and improved educational attainment. Youth unemployment has been declining since 2013, same as long-term youth unemployment. At the same time, youth unemployment rates are still significantly higher than general unemployment rates everywhere in Europe, but especially high in southern Europe, in the Central and Easter Europe countries and, most of all, in the war-struck zones of southeast Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. Another common trend across the Europe is the fact that raising number of young people is combining studies and paid work. Some of the young people see it as possibility to develop their skills and gain practical experience as well as to understand if they have chosen the right professional way for themselves. However, the most common reason for

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[1] Eurostat – Population on 1 January 2018. Retrieved 21 January 2019.

having work already during studying time is the need for additional income to cover living costs and costs related to studies. Raising job opportunities and development of more flexible job conditions has had a very significant positive impact on the life quality of young people – they have more possibilities to get financially independent, travel, and in general, have better financial and social life. At the same time, poverty and social exclusion among young people is one of the most worrying social problem across Europe. Despite a slight decline since 2014, the rate of children and young people at risk of poverty and (or) social exclusion is still considerable and higher than that recorded at the beginning of the decade[2]. Therefore, despite overall positive changes in well-being of young people, there still are too many young people in Europe facing high risk of economic and social problems. What is even more worrying, that growing number of young people who experience or are at risk of experiencing poverty are in such situation while in employment.

Getting back to positive changes, statistics and evaluations show that young people are tend to be more aware of their health and the impact of their lifestyle on their well-being, and therefore, it appears that young people appear less prone to risky behaviour. Raising material and financial well-being is related to better health and more conscious health choices. For instance, there is steadily declining number of young people in Europe who report to be smoking daily. Decreasing numbers are also observed among 16 years old young people who abuse alcohol or have been intoxicated by the alcohol[3]. Raising consciousness is also characteristic for the participation of young people in political and civil life. Development of Internet and modern technologies has been one of the crucial aspects in this case providing more possibilities for young people to be involved in political and civil issues and to be more engaged in the society. Social media, blogs and online networks contribute significantly to the communication and exchange of information in this case. Anyway, young people are active not only online, but also in different voluntary activities, e.g., in youth organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil initiatives and similar.

Other changes include decreasing rates of marriage and raising age of young people getting married for the first time. This is also related to decreased fertility rates and risen ae at the birth of a first child as well as to increasing number of women who decide to remain childless. Young people also live with their parents longer than their peers some years ago, and in some parts of Europe young people even don't leave the household of their parents until they get married.

Despite more conscious life choices and improvements in making better health choices, there is increasing rate of obesity and insufficient physical activity. This is more or less characteristic for most of the European countries. Also, despite – as it has been mentioned – raising activity of youth involvement in discussions on political and civil issues, electoral turnout of young Europeans continues to decline. Voting appears to be less and less interesting for young people in Europe, especially in EU elections.

Important differences that lead to inequality are also seen between genders. For instance, despite achieving higher levels of education, young women's participation in labour market still too often is less prominent than of young men. This is usually related to the fact that women still chose more often their family responsibilities and taking care for their children than their career or development of their professional life. Because of this reason, young women are also at the greater risk of poverty and (or) social exclusion than young men. Less active participation in labour market can lead to social or economic marginalisation has also negative impact on political and civic participation of women. Evaluations show that young women in Europe vote, take part in organisations or political parties less

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[2] Situation of Young People in the European Union: Commission Staff Working Document. European Commission, Brussels, 2018, p. 9.
[3] Ibid, p. 8.

than young men. On the other hand, young men do too face some risks. For instance, they are more than young women disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment. They generally complete upper secondary and tertiary education at lower rates than women and are more at risk of leaving education early. Lower levels of participation in education contribute to the higher numbers of unemployed among young men than women[4]. Another difference is related to risk behaviours – men still more often than women are involved alcohol and other substances abuse. They also more often than women face mental health challenges what also leads to higher number of suicide attempts or commitments among men than women.

Beside the gender, some of the differences between EU Member States are seen in different regions of Europe. For instance, young people in eastern and southern Europe face higher than average general and long-term rates of youth unemployment; they also have lower digital skills than EU average which can bring some difficulties in labour market since these skills are of an increasing importance in the labour market and also, contribute to higher involvement in political, civic and cultural participation in the society. Finally, young people in eastern and southern Europe less than their peers in other parts of Europe attain tertiary degrees and higher proportion of them leaves school early. Higher number of students also has lower proficiency in reading, mathematics and science than their peers in other regions of Europe.

These and other changes and challenges in life of young people require new approaches related to support mechanisms and measures for young people, to solutions that could change life of young people significantly and to better development of youth policies. For instance, to increase involvement of young people in educational system and lifelong learning, there has to be an understanding that young people need more flexible and modern ways of learning process and more modern methods of teaching. This means, that comprehensive, coherent and consistent analysis of youth well-being must be made, collecting data and other evidence constantly too, and not only time to time. These evidence and data would help to have a greater understanding and knowledge of young people, their life, their needs, challenges they meet and how these challenges can be solved. Such approach would help to observe trends in young people's life over the years, help to see what measures are working and what need to be changed, and this way, countries would have evidence-based policies which is especially important in the context of rapid changes and permanently fluctuating circumstances of younger generations in Europe[5]. The need of such approach was also the reason to develop the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project in Youth Field "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics".

Further, you will find more information about the project, its' aim, activities implemented within the project and also, the information about the aim and the content of these methodological guidelines.

What are these methodological guidelines about?

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These methodological guidelines are aimed at describing and explaining youth well-being indicators set developed within Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project in Youth Field "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics". The guidelines are planned to be a toll to help better understand the steps needed to do a quality assessment of the well-being of young people, involving both objective

[4] Situation of Young People in the European Union: Commission Staff Working Document. European Commission, Brussels, 2018, p. 10.
[5] Knowledge based policy: better understanding of youth policy framework. Source: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/1663178/Knowledge+based+policy.pdf/effd8203-b2ab-4898-930c-3f5fa317c50c

data (for instance, statistical information) and subjective assessment (for instance, self-reported health situation or feeling of being satisfied with different areas of person's life).

Methodological guidelines provide short overview of concrete indicators that are suggested to be assessed when evaluating the situation of young people in the country, and looking for evidence to have full and comprehensive picture of the quality of life of young people and possible challenges that need to be addressed. Also, the guidelines explain the design of the assessment of youth well-being using indicators, possible data source, collection and analysis of the evidence and possible use of this evidence to develop evidence-based youth policy. There is also an effort to show the benefits of regular assessment of the life quality of young people and of the use of concrete, clear and reliable data when planning and implementing measures aimed at young people and different aspects of their life.

There are 8 areas covered by the youth well-being indicators set developed within the project "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics". These areas cover following areas of life of young people: 1) general data overviewing situation of young people (for instance, proportion of young people in the society; fertility rate; emigration level among young people and similar); 2) education and training; 3) family and peers; 4) material and social well-being of young people; 5) housing and environment; 6) employment and entrepreneurship; 7) participation and 8) health and risk behaviours. There are concrete objective and subjective indicators proposed in each of these areas believed to be the most relevant to collect evidence that can then help to make decisions what issues should be prioritised and what measures could help to improve the quality of life of young people.

The development of indicators set was implemented during 5 stages:
1. identification of the initial set of indicators – overview of different monitoring systems of different countries as well as international instruments was made, to look for positive experience and expertise already existing in the field of the assessment of the quality of life of young people. In total, overview of more than 10 monitoring systems focused on the assessment of youth well-being and their life quality was made. Initial set of indicators was developed based on these overviews;
2. draft set of indicators was discussed with researchers and experts in the field of youth and youth affairs. In total, 28 experts and researchers from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were involved in this activity – they have commented on the indicators, provided their opinion if all indicators are necessary, if there are any that are missing and similar. Young people were provided with the possibility to express their opinion too – focus groups with young people (in total 71) aged 13-25 years old were organised in all three Baltic countries, to pilot indicators set together with young people;
3. the initial set of indicators was adjusted later based on the results of consultations with experts, researchers and focus groups with young people;
4. adjusted set of indicators was piloted within the survey of youth well-being. In total, 2377 young people from 15 to 25 years old have taken part in the survey (Latvia – 1005, Estonia – 485, Lithuania – 887);
5. after the survey, the set of youth well-being indicators for monitoring the quality of life of young people in Baltic States was finalised, and is presented in this document.

Main terms used in these methodological guidelines are limited to following content:
   ✓ *young person or youth* – in this document, a young person is a person from 14 to 25 years old;
   ✓ *youth well-being* – a number of averages of social conditions covering most important aspects of life of a young person (health, education, relationships and similar) that create a full possibility for realisation of the social, cultural, economic, political rights of the young person and for the fulfilment of the full potential of every young person;

- ✓ *assessment* – careful study and investigation for the purpose of finding evidence that can comprehensively describe the situation that is evaluated;
- ✓ *evidence* – objective and subjective data or other type of information that explains and (or) describes why, how and under what conditions a policy intervention in the youth well-being field will be effective.

Further you will find more information about the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project in Youth Field "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics" as well as explanation on the use of the indicators.

Restrictions and limitations

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We would like to note that neither these methodological guidelines nor the proposed set of indicators for the assessment and monitoring of the quality of life of young people are of the scientific nature. The set of indicators was developed with the aim to show the possible content of the assessment of life of young people and how such assessment can help to make better decisions for youth. Therefore, the nature of work done has no strict scientific standards although basic requirements like for instance, reliability of the data were taken into account.

Another important aspect that need to be stress out is that the assessment of the quality of young people life includes self-reported data too. During assessment performed within the project, young people have expressed their opinions and feelings about the quality of their life in different areas, like relationships with their peers and family members or the state of their health. In this case, it has to be taken into account that self-reported data contains several potential sources of bias that can include: 1) selective memory of the respondents (distorted memory, not full memory or no memory at all of the experience or the events that have occurred in the past); 2) attribution (for instance, positive experience is usually attributed to person's own achievements while negative events and experience can be attributed to external forces. E.g., a person can feel unhappy because he/she doesn't receive a health-care service when needed, and indicate this as not enough access to health-care services even though the reason for not receiving the service might be that the person didn't contact health-care service provider); 3) exaggeration (when outcomes or details of the event or experience are seen and presented as more significant than they actually are / are actually suggested from other data); 4) telescoping recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time).

We also believe that such areas like the quality of life of young people should be monitored and evaluated on the regular basis, to indicate trends and changes in the youth situation. Therefore, only longitudinal assessment can provide a very comprehensive overview of how the life of young people is changing with years. The time available to investigate life of young people and their well-being within the project was limited to few months, and therefore, it is not possible to evaluate any change or stability within a sample of the research. In general, work done within the project can be described as pilot study and the results are aimed more at showing the possibilities of assessing the well-being of young people as well as showing ways in which young people themselves can be pat of such assessment. This can be a great groundwork for a more complete monitoring of the quality of youth life in the future, done on the local and (or) national level in any of the Baltic country. Participation of young people must be crucial in all decision-making process related to their life, and therefore, young people should be included in the assessment of their well-being too.

Another limitation can be related to legal issues of each Baltic country – there is a significant difference between the age of the young people in the laws of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In Lithuania, the young person is described by the law as a person from 14 to 29 years old, in Latvia – from 13 to 25 years old, and in Estonia – from 7 to 26 years old. Having in mind this difference, in this project and methodological guidelines a young person is seen as a person from 14 to 25 years old. These age group was also used when involving young people in the focus groups and the research performed within the project. We believe that there are no other important cultural, social or other type of difference between Baltic States that could make a significant impact on the outcomes of the research or the content of the indicators.

(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics: what is the project about?

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The well-being of young people is one of the most important issues for every society – the conditions under which children and young people grow and develop determines the future of every country. The well-being of young people must be assessed in a complex way, including material, emotional and social conditions of young people. Likewise, well-being assessment of young people should focus on both current situation of young people and on their future prospects, include both objective (e.g., statistical data) and subjective indicators (i.e. how young people themselves evaluate their lives). It is important that the quality of life of young people is constantly monitored and assessed, observing trends and developments in the youth situation, and that the data obtained is used to develop evidence-based youth policies, planning measures to address the most relevant youth issues.

Evidence-based youth-policy-making and knowledge building is indicated as one of the measures of the effective implementation of the European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027. The strategy emphasizes that the youth policy of the European Union should be evidence-based and anchored in the real needs and situation of young people. That requires continuous research, knowledge development and outreach to young people and youth organisations. The collection of disaggregated data on young people is of particular importance to foster understanding of the needs of different groups of young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities[6]. This shows clearly that comprehensive and regular data collection and evaluation of young people well-being is needed, to have information that would enable to make decisions based on solid evidence. Unfortunately, none of the Baltic States has performed such monitoring and evaluation regularly, to full extent as they do not have in their possession a comprehensive monitoring tool for assessing youth well-being providing data for evidence-based decisions in youth policy and youth work. There were some evaluations and attempts to collect data on young people performed, but still it can be said that decisions and actions are based mainly on ad hoc data collections that does not allow to carry out effective long-term planning and to implement proactive solutions. A dashboard of youth well-being monitoring indicators would enable to obtain a quick yet comprehensive overview of the situation of young people. In this way it would increase the visibility and recognition of the youth policy and youth work and highlight youth policy particular characteristic as a cross-sectoral policy domain. Such situation was the main reason to develop and implement a project – "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics".

Erasmus+: Youth in Action Strategic Partnership project "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics" (No. 2017-2-LV02-KA205-001657) was implemented from 1 September

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2017 to 28 February 2019 in cooperation between organisations from three Baltic countries: the Latvian Children's Welfare Network and the Latvian company Excolo Latvia Ltd, NGO partners Ziburio Fondas (Lighthouse Foundation Lithuania), Estonian Union for Child Welfare and the Estonian company "Web Multishop Company OÜ". Activities of the project were performed in all three Baltic countries, by mentioned organisations. The idea to implement the project in three Baltic countries was also based on the situation that all Baltic States are at quite similar stage of development, including the youth field, and are keen to learn from mutual experience and to overtake foreign experience, as well. Also, these countries are quite similar when it comes to social, economic, cultural situation. The project was implemented as a pilot project, to find out what are the possibilities to have common monitoring system of youth well-being.

The objective of the project is to facilitate evidenced based youth policy and youth work practice in the Baltic States by developing the youth well-being monitoring system and promoting using its results regularly in youth policy and youth work at national, regional and local level, as well as to promote youth research practice of the Baltic States at international level. The main ambition of the project was to promote the need of evidence-based youth policy development and to initiate the discussion on the need of constant evaluation of the situation of young people and monitoring different areas of their life.

Project direct target group are people involved in youth policy, youth work and youth research in the Baltic States. Indirect target group – young people in the Baltic States.

Within the project:
1. the Baltic Youth Researchers Platform has been established to strengthen cooperation and information exchange between youth researchers working in the Baltic States;
2. the indicator system of youth well-being has been established and piloted, allowing to conduct a regular, internationally comparable assessment of the well-being of young people in the Baltic States, as well as to conduct assessment of the Baltic States indicators at international scale;
3. the website, www.YouthPitStop.com, dedicated to youth field has been developed serving as a point of exchange of information, data and experience for those who are working in youth field (policy makers, youth researchers, youth affairs specialists, youth workers, etc.).

Total project budget – 144 244 EUR.

Who are projects partners?

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Erasmus+: Youth in Action Strategic Partnership project "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics" was implemented by Latvian Child Welfare Network, together with partners from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

Let's get to know us!

Latvian Child Welfare Network is non-governmental organisation founded in Latvia in 2014 with aim to contribute to the development of public opinion and policy in order to improve situation of the welfare and rights of children in Latvia.
More information:

http://www.bernulabklajiba.lv/

https://www.facebook.com/LatvijasBernuLabklajibasTikls/

Excolo Latvia Ltd is a company founded in Latvia that specializes in development and implementation of socio-economic and social studies and projects in such sectors as education, youth policy, culture, creative industries, economics, and regional development, working closely with national and local institutions.

Žiburio Fondas (Lighthouse Foundation Lithuania) is non-governmental organisation established in 2014 in Lithuania. Main activity field of the organization is support, services and assistance to children left without parental care and to their caregivers, adoptive parents and other family members as well as to persons considering foster care or adoption of the child.
More information:

🌐 http://ziburio-fondas.lt/

f https://www.facebook.com/ziburiofondas/

Estonian Union for Child Welfare is established in 1988 and is the oldest and biggest non-profit advocacy organisation that contributes to ensuring children´s rights and shaping a child-friendly society in Estonia.
More information:

🌐 https://www.lastekaitseliit.ee

f https://www.facebook.com/Lastekaitseliit/

Web Multishop Company is Estonian IT company specializing on development of modern online platforms and websites.
More information:

🌐 http://www.webmultishop.com/

f https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Internet-Company/Web-Multishop-Company-LLC-154521724727459/

Short summary of foreign experience overviews

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Before starting the development of youth well-being indicators set, overview of existing monitoring system and indicators sets in different countries and worldwide was done. In total, overview of different monitoring systems was done, this included following youth well-being monitoring systems: 1) Well-being indicators – Online Tool for Youth (US); 2) Youth welfare monitoring system (Finland, Helsinki city); 3) Indicators in youth field (EU); 4) Young people's well-being (United Kingdom); 5) How's Life? Measuring Well-Being (OECD); 6) Global Youth Well-being (global); 7) Child Well-Being (EU); 8) Children and Young People: Indicators of Well-Being in New Zealand; 9) Study of the Youth Situation (Lithuania) and 10) Youth Opinion Tool (Estonia) as well as few other analyses and evaluations of children and young people well-being made in Estonia; 11) Children Well-Being Monitoring System (a proposed set of indicators developed within previous partnership between Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia).

The overview of the existing monitoring systems, used indicators in different evaluations and analyses has shown that first of all, well-being of children and (or) young people is described quite differently in different countries and different evaluations. In general, it can be said that well-being is a multidimensional concept that includes different areas of the life of a young person. Most of the analysed monitoring systems included such areas like: physical and mental health of a young person; education; physical safety; opportunities to express oneself and realize yourself; participation in society's life; economic situation. Some other areas – to some lesser extent – were included too, like for instance, participation level of young people in political life of the country; relationships with their peers and parents; risky behaviours and similar. In general, there were 38 dimensions indicated as the areas that are analysed in different countries or worldwide to evaluate the situation of young people. These are:

1. Life and health / unhealthy habits / mental health / cognitive health / physical health
2. Subjective well-being / personal situation / feeling of happiness / personal wellbeing
3. Relationships
4. Material well-being / income and wealth / economic capital / personal finance
5. Risk / safety / security
6. Education / Skills
7. Housing and environment
8. Gender equality
9. Economic opportunity / economic security
10. Citizen participation / active citizenship / participation in various organizations and structures / civil and political rights / civic engagement and governance / youth participation
11. Information and communication technology
12. Developing yourself
13. Managing the future
14. Emotions and interaction
15. Equality
16. Nature and sustainability
17. Youth as a social group
18. Youth values and attitude towards other social groups
19. Main social problems of youth
20. Politics
21. Advocacy of youth interests
22. Work / work-life balance / jobs and earnings / employment and volunteering
23. Leisure
24. Family
25. Home / housing
26. Crimes
27. Justice
28. Cultural identity
29. Social connectedness
30. Environment / environmental quality/ natural capital
31. Relationships in the family (between young person and parents)
32. Social support, personal security and sense of belonging
33. Community
34. Purpose
35. Entrepreneurship
36. Social inclusion
37. Culture and creativity:
38. Youth and the world.

Still, it seems that most countries see the "well-being" of young people and children with slightly different approach. Idea of young people's welfare is based on Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's *capability approach*, and the question is put forward whether young people have the skills and opportunities to cope in everyday life, to do things that they value and to have a good life. Capability approach – the idea is to see young people as active actors that learn and develop their skills in interaction with other members of the community where they grow up. Youth is a time for developing skills and talents, and it is important that young people have equal opportunities to grow up and develop themselves comprehensively.

In the countries that have participated in the project, well-being is also described in different laws, strategic documents, studies and similar. It can be said too, that even within a country the concept of well-being is often a question of debate what it really means. For instance, in the Lithuanian Child Welfare State Policy Concept, the well-being is described as "system of organized social services and institutions aiming at helping individuals and groups to reach satisfactory standards of living, health, personal and social relationships that will enable them to develop all their abilities and improve their quality of life, taking into account the needs of their families and the community". In the research made in Lithuania "Impact of non-formal education on person's well-being" (2017), well-being of a young person is described as the state of material and spiritual richness. In Estonian publication "Child Well-Being", publicized by Statistics Estonia, it is said that children well-being can be described with different indicators as well as indexes, which are sets of indicators. Indicators can be objective or subjective, negative or positive[7]. This shows that well-being of children and young people must include not only usually used objective indicators such as e.g., material situation, access to education, health of young people etc., but also subjective aspects such as feeling of happiness or feeling of satisfaction in different life areas by young people themselves.

Another important aspect of the well-being of children and young people is that their well-being should focus on the immediate lives of children and young people, but also consider their future lives. This is important because children and young people are still in development process – they grow, develop physically, mentally, emotionally, and therefore, the measures that are developed and used to ensure best possible life conditions for people and young people should be effective not only in this very moment but also have effective positive impact on children's and young people's future life.

In general, the well-being is understood not only as the absence of illness, and it goes beyond life satisfaction. It is linked with an individual's physical health, health behaviours and resilience (the ability to cope with adverse circumstances). The Foresight Report (2008) defines wellbeing as "a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in society". Within analysed monitoring system, young people's well-being includes both the circumstances of young people's lives and their own perspectives.

Based on the overview of different monitoring systems, set of indicators within the project "Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics" was developed. Both objective and subjective indicators were included in the set. For the indicators set developed within the project, those indicators were taken into account that are most often used as important for a person's happiness, quality of life and welfare. In this perspective, following areas were chosen to be evaluated: 1) sound material base and available support (housing, health, education, meaningful work); 2) participation in life and society (right to be

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[7] Child Well-Being. Statistics Estonia, 2013, p. 11.

heard, possibility to decide about own future, life choices); 3) environment of safety and security, an atmosphere of community responsibility and a feeling of belonging (personal identity based on the relationship with community and society, dignity and positive functioning in everyday life); 4) level of success of young person at school; in relating to friends and partners; and emotionally.

To evaluate chosen indicators, youth researchers in all Baltic countries (Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) were approached to collect their opinion about the indicators (if they are the best to evaluate the well-being of young people; if all indicators are needed or some of them are excessive; if no important indicators are missing and similar). Youth researchers were from different areas – academic institutions (such as universities), non-governmental organizations working with / for youth, independent experts. After collecting the opinion of youth researchers, set of indicators was adjusted according to their comments and recommendations. After that, focus groups were organized with young people in all three Baltic countries too. Indicators were discussed with young people in the way that young people were asked questions based on chosen indicators, to see what subjective indicators would be the most important to include in the final set of indicators. The set of indicators was adjusted once again after the analysis of the outcomes of the focus groups. Finally, a questionnaire was developed to approach broader number of young people – it was tested in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia too. In total, 2377 young persons filled the questionnaire (Latvia – 1005, Estonia – 485, Lithuania – 887). Some of the results are presented below.

The survey has shown that most young people assess their city/municipality they live in as friendly (31,6% in Estonia, 34,4% – in Latvia and 28,9% - in Lithuania) or very friendly (30,8% in Estonia, 37,7% – in Latvia and 22,5% - in Lithuania), although young people in Lithuania were more critical than their peers in Estonia and Latvia. The survey has shown that the environment – especially its' tidiness, green places, places to hang out and spend their free time – is very important for satisfaction of young people with the place they live. Most young people who were unhappy with their environment indicated that they feel like there's nothing to do in leisure time in their living place and (or) there are no rest, entertainment activities. At the same time, young people who have assessed their environment as friendly, has said that they think so because they have different opportunities to spend free time, to do something interesting.

Also, young people in Baltic countries are quite satisfied with the quality of their education, housing and family. Although, again, young people in Lithuania have expressed significantly lower satisfaction than their peers in Estonia and Latvia. For instance, percent of young people who are satisfied with the quality of their education in Estonia made 80,3% and in Latvia – 78,9% while in Lithuania only 54,5% of young people had the same opinion about their education. During focus groups, young people in Lithuania has expressed their worries that they learn a lot of things at school or university that they feel they will not need further in their life. Also, negative relationships with teachers and professors as well as lack of respect from their side for young people was expressed by young people in Lithuania too as one of the reasons, they feel unhappy with their education. When it comes to living place of young people (flat, house or dormitory), youth in Lithuania was unhappiest too – only 59,4% percent said that they are quite or very satisfied, while in Estonia 78,5% of young people were happy with their living place and in Latvia – 82,3%. Major difference is seen when it comes to satisfaction with work and safety too. In Estonia, 76% of young people are happy with their work, following by 72,6% in Latvia. However, in Lithuania only 40,2% of young people said that they are satisfied with their work, and only 27,2% were satisfied with their incomes (salary, stipend and (or) allowances). Satisfaction with incomes made 52,5% in Latvia and 67,1% - in Estonia. Personal safety in Estonia was quite highly evaluated by young people in Estonia in both internet and social networks (80,5% feel safe) and outside home (83,8%), and even higher in Latvia – 81,9% and 84,3% respectively. In Lithuania, only 58,2% of young people feel safe online and only 59,4% - outside home.

Relationships between young people and their families as well as friends were best evaluated in Latvia too. Here, 90,1% of young people are happy with their relationships with friends and 89% - with their family. Similar situation is in Estonia – 85,3% of young people are happy with their friends and 83,4% - with their family. Seems like young people in Lithuania are more concerned with their relationships – 68,9% are satisfied with the relationships with their friends, and 69,2% - with relationships with their family members.

Areas where young people feel less opportunities to participate actively were: opportunities to do business (only 19,9% of young people in Lithuania have said that they have all or great opportunities to do own business, followed by 35% in Latvia and 46,4% in Estonia); to engage in the activities of political organizations and parties (17% of young people in Lithuania have said that they have all or great opportunities to participate in such activities, followed by 21,8% in Latvia and 24,5% in Estonia); to influence decisions in their municipality (great or all opportunities to have impact on the decisions made in municipality were indicated only by 8,7% of young people in Lithuania, 11,8% - in Latvia and 20,8% - in Estonia). In general, opportunity to influence decisions in different areas (school or university, municipality) was assessed quite low by young people in all Baltic countries except decisions made within family (70,5% of young people in Lithuania have said that they have all or great opportunities to influence decisions in their family, 74,5% in Latvia and 74,4% in Estonia).

Young people were also asked to evaluate general satisfaction with their life, on a scale from 1 (completely unsatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). Satisfied or totally satisfied with their life (8 to 10) were 37,4% of young people in Lithuania, 46,8% - in Latvia and 45,6% - in Estonia. Unsatisfied or totally unsatisfied (1 to 3) were 11,2% of young people in Lithuania, 3,3% - in Latvia and 7,4% - in Estonia. Main reasons for being unsatisfied with their life for people in Baltic countries are lack of finances (indicated by 18,9% of young people in Lithuania, 31,3% - in Latvia and 15,5% - in Estonia); too much load at school, studies or difficulties combining studies and work (7,6% - in Lithuania, 10% - in Latvia and 6,2% - in Estonia); difficulties in finding work / unemployment (10,4% - in Lithuania, 9,3% - in Latvia and 6,2% - in Estonia). Emotional issues like depression, bad relationships with friends or family members, personal problems were indicated too.

Further, you will also find short description of youth and youth policy in each of Baltic state, for a better understanding of environment that project was implemented in.

Short overview of youth policy in partner countries

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LATVIA. Age. By the Youth Law in Latvia young people are from 13 to 25 years of age. While the Youth Law defines a particular age group, in reality in different aspects of the youth policy and the youth work the definition of a target group may vary even considerably.

Legislation. The Youth Law (in force since 2009) is the main law in relation to youth – it defines the responsible authorities, their competences, the order for allocation of funding, the opportunities and principles of the participation of young people, and other important regulatory matters. The youth policy directions, activities, result indicators, involved and responsible institutions are detailed in the Youth Policy Action Plan for 2016-2020. Besides, the youth policy in specific thematic aspects is also defined in the planning documents of line ministries (education, social sector, health care, regional

development, etc.) – in Latvia youth policy is explicitly cross-sectoral policy, with a very broad range of involved institutions.

Responsible body. The Sports and Youth Department within the Ministry of Education and Science has the primary responsibility for youth policy and issues. Its major tasks include promoting cooperation and implementing youth measures, organising trainings for youth workers, and enabling access to information. Local governments plan youth work at the local level, elaborating local planning documents of the youth policy development and providing an institutional framework for the youth work. A Youth Advisory Council exists to promote a coherent youth policy and encourage youth participation in decision-making and public life.

The national youth organisation in Latvia is The Latvian Youth Council (here and further – LYC). LYC was founded in 1992. Its mission is to represent the interests of young people and to improve the quality of their lives. The LYC promotes the importance of youth organisations and encourages the development of cooperation and public participation in political processes. The LYC's objectives include advocating for youth policy based on young people's needs, promoting youth participation in decision-making, and supporting the development of youth organisations by increasing access to information and government funding[8].

LITHUANIA. Age. Lithuanian youth policy is targeted at young people aged from 14 to 29 (as stated in Law on Youth Policy Framework of the Republic of Lithuania).

Legislation. The activities of structures of youth policy in Lithuania are governed by the Law on Youth Policy Framework of the Republic of Lithuania. The Law underwent a few revisions after its adoption (amendments in 2005 and 2018). It establishes the main terms of youth policy and principles of its implementation as well as defines the areas of youth policy and establishment of institutions executing and managing youth policy on national and municipal level.

The National Youth Policy Development Program for 2011-2019 establishes the main strategic goals of youth policy. The youth policy directions, activities, result indicators, involved and responsible institutions are detailed in the Action Plan for 2017-2019 by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Specific thematic aspects of youth policy are also defined in the planning documents of ministries and agencies (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, the Drug Control Department under the Government of Lithuania, Lithuanian Labour Exchange, and Department of Youth Affairs). In the line with above, municipalities plan youth work at the local level, elaborating local planning documents of the youth policy development and providing an institutional framework for the youth work.

Responsible body. The Department for Youth Affairs (here and further – DYA) within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for youth affairs, including policies, programmes, youth research and coordination of activities across state and municipal institutions. The Commission for Youth and Sport Affairs, is a parliamentary committee which analyses, scrutinises and provides advice for the implementation of the state youth policy. The Council on Youth Affairs is an advisory body under DYA on youth issues, and comprises of government and youth organisation representatives.

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[8] Youth policy in Latvia. Source: http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/latvia/

Lithuania does too have **national youth organisation** called The Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT) that was formed in 1992. LiJOT is an umbrella organisation with 64 members representing more than 200,000 young people in Lithuania. The LiJOT seeks favorable changes for young people by serving as a platform for dialogue, Lithuanian youth organization interests and initiatives[9].

ESTONIA. Age. The Estonian Youth Work Act (2010) defines youth as between 7 and 26 years of age. This is the same range of age used in the 2006-2013 Youth Work Strategy.

Legislation. Main law is Estonian Youth Work Act. The Act provides the legal basis for youth work, defined as "the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons". Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 addresses the youth participation at all levels, however particular attention is paid to participation at the local level.

Responsible body. Ministry in charge of youth is the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. Department responsible for youth is the Youth Affairs Department. Also, Estonian Youth Work Centre[10] (Eesti Noorsootöö Keskus) was etsablished as a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main objective is to develop and organize youth work in the framework of the national youth policy. It implements the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 and performs other functions arising from the Youth Work Act and other relevant laws.

National youth organisation in Estonia is The Estonian National Youth Council (here and further – ENL). ENL is the representative body for youth, and an umbrella organisation for non-profit groups that deal with young people or perform youth work. As described in the youth work strategy, ENL delegates representatives from youth associations to the Council of Youth Policies - a governmental-civil society council that advises the Ministry of Education and Research, which is responsible for the implementation of the strategy. ENL advocates for youth interests in legislation and better financing for youth organisations[11].

Of course, important question is why constant evaluation of youth well-being must be performed constantly, with a clear set of indicators that would help to observe tendencies in life of young people and important changes.

Why youth well-being evaluation is needed?
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Youth well-being evaluation that is constant, well thought through and comprehensive is important because it helps to develop evidence-based policy. It means that evaluation helps to improve performance of the government and better follow-up to promises made from government for young people in relation to their life situation. Major events in the world such as financial crisis in recent decades forced many governments to make major budget cuts and reductions, and look for better and more thoughtful decisions on how to use available resources, including financial resources. This requires better information and understanding what measures of the policies are working and giving best possible effects, and what are not worth to invest in them. Basically, evaluation of well-being of young people helps to see what is the situation of young people in different areas of their life – what statistics show and what young people think themselves, and based on such overview, it is easier to

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[9] Youth policy in Lithuania. Source: http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/lithuania/
[10] Estonian Youth Work Centre. Source: https://entk.ee/en/
[11] Youth policy in Estonia. Source: http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/estonia/

make decision what are the main problems of young people and in turn, what are priorities that require immediate attention of policy makers, as well as what measures could be implemented to improve life situation of young people. States and local governments can avoid duplication of effort and use this evidence to inform their policy and budget decisions[12]. In summary, it helps to develop evidence-based youth policy. More information about what youth policy is and what main components of it are, can be found in the further parts of this document.

Youth well-being evaluation must be performed regularly, to have clear picture of the situation of young people as well as of what changes can be observed, what are some tendencies in life of young people, what are the changes, which changes are negative or positive, and why it is so and similar. In most countries, evaluation of the well-being of young people is performed fragmentally, through organization of some surveys or short-term evaluations when there is a need to assess the situation in some concrete area of life of young people. However, to have clear picture and to follow changes in life of young people, evaluation must be performed more frequently, to have enough data to develop youth policy, and at the same time, to compare youth well-being throughout the years.

Also, as it was already mentioned in this document, it is important to evaluate not only objective indicators that are based on statistics or similar facts, but also to include subjective indicators such as feeling of happiness or satisfaction of young people in different areas of their life. This helps to ensure that the voice of young people is being heard, and they can express how they feel about their life and what changes they think they need. This, in turn, ensures that young people have more opportunities to participate and influence decisions that are directly related to their life and their situation.

What is evidence-based youth policy?

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Evidence-based youth policy can be explained as policy decisions that are informed and based on rigorously established objective evidence. It helps to select and plan goals that use scientific evidence that help to prove comprehensively why selected social issues must be solved, why their solution is important for the society, what are the priorities of further developments in policy field and what ways are the best to solve these issues and (or) achieve desired outcomes of planned developments. It is for sure a better way to develop policies and their strategic documents than usual, more of a general kind descriptive overviews of the field or opinion-based policy that is often a result of dominant political ideology and political conviction.

Why it is important to base development of the policy on the clear evidence? **Evidence let to develop policy decisions that are better informed and based on the real situation in the field that the policy covers, and include rational analysis.** Collecting and analysing clear evidence also lets to see what initiatives or policy measures work and wot not, and what are the reasons for successes or failures. It also helps to develop measures based on the real needs of the target group of the policy – in our case, on the needs of young people. This way, it can be ensured that available financial and other resources will be invested in the right way and will cover actual needs of young people and target issues that are important for their life and further development. If to say simply – evidence-based policy helps to make better decisions and as a result get better outcomes because of trusting best available evidence that can be collected from different sources like researches, statistical data, and similar.

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[12] 'Evidence-based policymaking: a guide for effective government' (2014). MacArthur Foundation, p. 3.

Shaxson (2005)[13] also believes that the policy, based on the evidence helps to:
1) understand the policy environment and how it is changing;
2) appraise the likely effects of policy changes so we can choose between different policy options and subsequently assess their impacts;
3) demonstrate the links between strategic direction, intended outcomes and policy objectives, to show that there are clear lines of argument and evidence between what we are aiming for and what we are doing now;
4) determine what we need to do to meet our strategic goals or intermediate objectives;
5) influence others so that they help us achieve our policy goals and take them through to delivery;
6) communicate the quality (breadth and depth) of our evidence base to meet the open government agenda.

Similar opinion is provided in the overview paper of the University of Cape Town (2014). The paper states it clearly that evidence-based policy is more successful because it helps to make better decisions about[14]:
- the nature, size and dynamics of the problem at hand;
- policy options that might be considered to address the problem;
- effective and ineffective interventions to solve the problem;
- the likely positive and negative consequences of the proposed policy option;
- the intended and unintended consequences of the proposed policy option;
- effective and ineffective modes of delivery and implementation;
- how long the policy will have to run before positive results will be achieved;
- the resources that will be required to implement the policy;
- costs and benefits of the proposed policy;
- on whom will these costs and benefits fall;
- the sustainability of the policy economically, socially, and environmentally.

This shows once again that evidence-based policy helps to make best possible decisions and at the same time, to take into account a lot of other important aspects, like planning resources, understanding what will be costs and benefits of one or another chosen measure, and plan in advance the sustainability of all measures.

> In summary, it can be said that evidence-based policy helps to:
> - **save:** make better budget allocations and save as well as to use more efficiently available resources because evidence help to eliminate ineffective programmes, initiatives or other measures and understand the reasons of their failure;
> - **progress:** as the world changes rapidly, and social issues grow or change similarly fast as well, evidence-based policies take into account such changes and prompt to look and fund innovative solutions that can deliver better outcomes to the society, reduce costs and (or) find better ways to deal with common challenges. At the same time, evidence-based policy requires to evaluate comprehensively if chosen innovation is the best available solution;
> - **strengthen accountability:** evidence-based policy requires to ensure regular and continuous evaluation and data collection that show clear outcomes, describe situation or indicate made progress, it also makes it easier to hold decision-makers and responsible institutions accountable for results and spending.

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[13] Shaxson, L. (2005) 'Is your evidence robust enough? Questions for policy makers and practitioners'. Evidence and Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 101-111.
[14] 'Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation' (2014). University of Cape Town. Source: https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/evaluationsSite/Evaluations/What%20is%20EBPM%2014%2010%2013_mp.pdf

Evidence-based policy can be developed using different methodologies, but Banks (2009) describes most common characteristics of such methodologies[15]:

- tests a theory as to why the policy will be effective and what the impacts of the policy will be if it is successful;
- includes a counterfactual: what would have occurred if the policy had not been implemented;
- incorporates some measurement of the impact;
- examines both direct and indirect effects that occur because of the policy;
- separates the uncertainties and controls for other influences outside of the policy that may have an effect on the outcome;
- should be able to be tested and replicated by a third party.

These shows once again, that evidence-based policy not only describes the topic targeted by the policy, but also examines if chosen measures are the best available option, what would happen if no such measures would be implemented and tries to predict possible outcomes.

Main components that support a system of evidence-based policymaking are presented in the figure below (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Steps in the evidence-based policymaking[16]
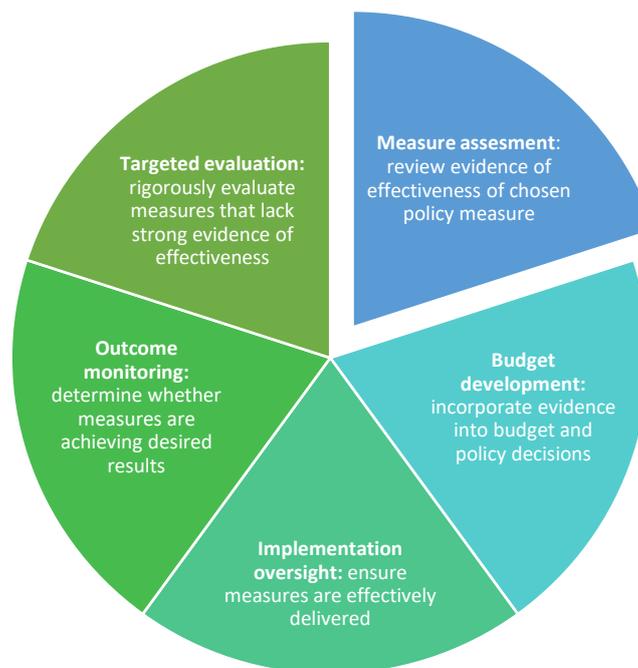
Measure assessment means that regular monitoring and evaluation of all implemented policy measures is performed which helps to collect evidence that show how effective the measure is and what is return in the investment for each measure (i.e., how much resources was invested and what the outcomes are). This provides baseline information that helps to identify what measures are effective and working, and what measures don't deliver desired or planned outcomes. This, in turn, enables to decide what measures can be used and developed further, and what solutions must be changed. Budget development incorporate evidence of measure effectiveness into budget and policy decisions, giving funding priority to those that deliver a high return on investment of public funds and helps to achieve desired outcomes in best way. In this case, it is important to show if the measure is really working; if its'

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[15] Banks, Gary (2009). 'Evidence-based policy making: What is it? How do we get it?'. Australian Government, Productivity Commission. Source: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1616460

[16] 'Evidence-based policymaking: a guide for effective government' (2014). MacArthur Foundation, p. 4.

benefits outweigh its' costs and how the measure compares to alternative measures. Implementation oversight means that there is a clear and well thought through implementation design of the measure. A measure itself can be very innovative and meeting the needs of the target group, but even the best available measure can result in poor outcomes if its' implementation is poorly managed. Monitoring plays crucial part in this case – there should be main criteria that describe crucial components of quality and fidelity to the design of the measure developed and monitored. Monitoring system should also foresee how collected data will be used to make adjustments that will help to improve performance of the implementation of the measure or (and) to manage risks that may occur during implementation. This helps to implement measures of high-quality. Meanwhile, outcome monitoring ensures routine measurement and reporting on the outcome data to determine whether measures are achieving desired planned outcomes. Most important aspect in this case is to find instruments, methods or ways that would help to show what change has been made. Too often report systems focus on collecting information about outputs (e.g., number of activities, number of participants of these activities, and similar) when the most important question is – what are the results of the measure implementation, i.e., how the situation has changed since and because of the measure implementation? For instance, how it helped to reduce the problem, change approaches or attitudes or increase positive effects. Finally, targeted evaluation means that there must be budget / resources planned and allocated for evaluation of implemented measures.

Since evidence-based policy must be based on clear and proven evidence, it is also important to **determine what is the meaning of "evidence"**? Quite often, evidence in policy is referred to statistical data since there is common belief that numbers are clear, easy to explain and understand, and show the prevalence of the problem. However, there are also areas where quantitative data and quantitative research is not enough due to their complex nature. For instance, policies that are concerned with human rights or social justice require far more and complex evidence than just statistical numbers. Such policies are also often related to aspects that cannot be described simply with numbers. For instance, social issues that are related to subjective feelings of well-being, happiness or satisfaction with life and similar require more philosophical approach and quality-based evidence. Therefore, statistical data is only one type of possible evidence. Other type of evidence is related to information that can show us why, how and under what conditions a policy intervention will be effective[17]. In this case, for different target groups there will be different information that is most important and can be used as a source to understand and evaluate the issue.

Main difference between statistical data and evidence that is qualitative is that numbers reflect more what is generalisable and qualitative approach is usually focused on what is particular and context-specific[18]. Usually, both type of evidence is needed to have a solid argumentation and make best possible decisions. Another important aspect of the evidence is that this information doesn't provide a clear answer what and how we should do or move further. Decisions are based on a personal judgement of the person using them, who has to understand the meaning of available information, its' significance and relevance to evaluated issue. Therefore, all information that is analysed, is based also on the experience and expertise of a person, his/her beliefs, values and priorities that influence the political environments within which decisions are being taken[19]. Last, but not the least, not all information that can be seen as an evidence is of the same quality and therefore, not the equal value. In this case, such aspects like credibility, validity and reliability is important that helps to decide which information meets scientific standards and is of a high quality, and which is questionable, i.e., low quality.

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[17]   'Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation' (2014). University of Cape Town. Source: https://www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/evaluationsSite/Evaluations/What%20is%20EBPM%2014%2010%2013_mp.pdf
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

How young people can be involved in data-collection?
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To ensure best possible decisions for young people, it is also important to involve young people themselves in decision-making as well as in the assessment of their well-being. Experience, perspective, ideas and opinions of young people in regards to their life is a crucial part to have comprehensive and full picture of youth well-being. Therefore, young people themselves can contribute significantly to the collection of the data that can be used as evidence when assessing their situation and developing evidence-based policy.

What are main benefits of involving young people in data-collection and evaluation of life of young people? As it is indicated in "A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research: for researchers, research commissioners, and managers", involvement of young people in data-collection can have important benefits for young people themselves, as well as for data-collection process and research in general. For young people, involvement in the assessment of their life, performing data-collection by approaching their peers and (or) giving recommendations to evaluation content or process can create great opportunities to enable young people to be actively involved in issues affecting their own and their peers' lives; it can provide opportunities to contribute to their communities and services; it can give young people a way to learn about their community and society in general, about citizenship, about life of their peers and also, learn a lot of useful skills; it can also contribute to the development of the personality of a young person (help with personal development, including increased confidence self-esteem and the belief that their views matter and can impact a change). During data collection activities and similar, young people can learn such skills like survey design, analysis of the data and proper understanding of data, critical thinking, improve their communication skills, especially if such data collection tools like interview or focus groups are used, and similar. This can help young people not only perform better in school, but also later have important skills for work and life or activities in their local community and society as a whole.

For the evaluation, and specialists performing evaluation, involvement of young people can help to identify issues and questions that professional researchers may miss or not prioritise; it can also help to ensure that questionnaires aimed at young people are in language friendly to them (i.e., questionnaires, interview schedules, leaflets, reports etc. are worded in a language that is clear to young people); young people can offer a different perspective on what questions should be asked of respondents; young people can also ensure that their peers will give more sincere answers because they can make setting of the evaluation less formal (e.g., if the tool to gain data is interview of focus group). In many cases, it is also easier for young people to open up to their peers, and therefore, more important information can be collected. Too, researchers can develop their understanding of youth issues by working with young people and it can help researchers to stay mindful of young people's perspectives on the research agenda and process[20]. So, it can be clearly seen that involvement of young people in evaluation of their own well-being can bridge gaps between youth and adults, and help both sides to understand better each other and in turn, reach better understanding. Working together on matters that impact life of young people, and also, of the society in general, can be a great way of having respectful dialogue with young people. What is more important, is that children and young people are often seen as having less important opinion than adults due to their limited life experience and similar. Involvement of young people in activities that focus on the issues related to their life, creates a great opportunity for youth participation and ensures that young people's voice is being heard too,

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[20] 'A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research: for researchers, research commissioners, and managers'. Hampshire: research Consultancy, pp. 7-8.

especially when decisions are related to the life of young people. Joint activities let build partnership relationships between adults and young people, and create better understanding between them.

It is of course possible to involve young people in evaluation of their well-being during different stages of the evaluation. They can be involved right from the beginning when identifying areas to be evaluated, indicators in each area, prioritizing indicators and important questions related to life of young people, but also during later stages like undertaking evaluation, performing it and processing collected data. However, it is important to remember that the earlier young people are involved in the process of evaluation, the more motivated they will be to help. For instance, it would be more difficult for young people to help with dissemination of the questionnaire or other tool selected to perform evaluation, if they were not involved in development of questions. In any case, if there is a plan to involve young people in performing evaluation, the ideal situation would be to ask them when and in which ways they would like to be involved, before making final decision about their involvement. At the same time, it must be also decided and indicated clearly why young people were decided to be involved in the research (it is not enough to just want to have youth participation if there is no clear understanding what concrete benefits such participation brings to both research and young people themselves). It is also good to evaluate other factors (e.g., the topic of the research) to see how much of the youth involvement is needed. So, young people should not be involved only to meet formal criteria, but to have meaningful participation that can enrich their life.

There are few key aspects that need to be taken into consideration when involving children and young people in research activities. First of all, it is important to create safe and empowering environment for a young person to participate actively. Not only physical, but also emotional and psychological safety must be taken into consideration. E.g., it is important to evaluate what is the content of data that young person will have to collect and does it include any sensitive moments that can be harmful or too difficult for a young person to deal with alone. For instance, during data collection on the topic related to violence and abuse, if interview method is being used, respondents can share traumatic or other emotionally difficult information. A young person therefore must be prepared how to react in such situation. Safe environment also means that all young people involved in the research can freely express their thoughts and ideas, without fear of being misunderstood or not taken seriously. They need to feel that their ideas are seen as important and valuable, and taken as serious as the opinion of adults. In this case, it is also important to provide young people with timely and proper feedback – e.g., if there were any ideas collected from them, it is important to inform young people which their ideas were used or involved in the final decision. Safe environment of course means also physical safety – it is important to ensure that there is no danger to the health and (or) life of a young person that can be caused by the activities a young person is involved in. In different countries, the age of a young person is described quite differently, but in any way, the age of young people usually starts with the age when a person is still underaged. Therefore, any research must be carefully evaluated what possible dangers it may include. For instance, if a young person will be involved in performing focus group, it should be evaluated, in what place it will be performed, how old the young person is and if there is a need for the supervision of an adult person. Summarizing, it can be said that one of the most important aspects that must be thought-through carefully and developed before involving young people is safeguarding policy and clear procedures of its' implementation.

Beside safeguarding policy, strategies how to minimise possible stress for young people involved in the activities must be planned too. Young people must have contact information of a concrete person they can turn to in case of any emergency or when they need additional support, or have questions or any concern. Stress can be caused not necessary by the topic of the research or the workload (even though this also must be taken into consideration), but also by conflicts between team members or

disagreements between members. There should be clear procedures and strategies how to solve such situations effectively, without causing any harm to any of the team member.

Another important aspect is that all materials related to the research and data collection must be prepared in youth-friendly language. In this case, the age of young people involved in the activities is important too. For instance, if there are some legal documents or other materials that are important for the research, there should be summary of them prepared in the language young people understand. Legal materials, laws are usually written in quite difficult, legal language, that can be too difficult to understand correctly for young people, especially of a younger age. Therefore, materials explaining most important aspects to young people will help them to understand better the context of the research. Young people also should have a possibility to ask additional questions if needed, and in this case, a supervisor or a tutor available for support when needed is one of the aspects that could be taken into consideration when involving young people in performing research.

When involving children or young people in research, it must be also ensured that not only young people, but also adults/specialists who will work together with young people are prepared accordingly for cooperation with youth. Specialists must be skilled, caring and understanding the importance of youth involvement. They need to understand the importance of the views of young people, and see their participation not only as formal must, but as a valuable contribution to the activities/research. Specialists must have skills how to discuss with young people different matters (e.g., how to ask questions properly), how to ensure safe environment, how to ensure participation of vulnerable or having less opportunities young people, and similar.

Important aspects when involving young people in the research is also ensuring that youth group is diverse and capable. Diversity means that there is gender balance, and also that there are no discriminatory aspects that can limit the opportunity for a young person to participate in the activities because of his/her nationality, beliefs, social situation or any other aspects. Diversity also means that vulnerable groups pf young people must be provided with the opportunity too. Often, their voice is even less heard and they are seen more as "troublemakers" or similar than as valuable participants. Therefore, their involvement is crucial to also fight with stigma and to ensure that youth matters are represented by all youth groups not only those who usually are active. Summarizing, it can be said that it is important to ensure that the team of young people chosen for research should reflect diversity that exists in the community (ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status and similar must be taken int account). Special attention must be provided to groups that are marginalized.

Justice is also an important aspect of the youth involvement. This requires that all young people are treated equally, the benefits and burdens of participating are distributed fairly, young people are not unfairly excluded and that barriers to involvement based on discrimination are challenged[21]. Young people must be informed fully about all activities they will be involved in and provide their consent. If young people are underaged, and their parents must provide written consent to for young people to be involved in the activities, this doesn't mean that consent of young people themselves can be excluded or is not needed. Their consent must be always sought as it shows respect to young people as partners.

The size of youth team depends on the objectives of the research, i.e., it is important to see how many respondents are planned to be approached, what is the geography of the research, how much data must be collected and similar. This will help to decide how many human resources are needed, and in turn, how many young people can be involved. However, it is important that the size of youth teams is proportional to the amount of other resources and that proper adult and technical support is available.

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[21] Ethical research involving children. Florence: UNICEF, p. 23.

Young people can not be left as responsible for all matters, including technical provisions that are necessary for the performance of the research. So, giving the responsibility doesn't mean transferring full responsibility to youth team, but rather finding effective ways of working together.

All these aspects are related to one more important principle – participation of young people must be meaningful. Meaningful involvement requires thought and consideration for those who will be involved to ensure they are able to usefully contribute to, and benefit from, the research process. If participation is done badly, this may have negative consequences, including cynicism from young people about the value of taking part in future initiatives[22]. So, as stated previously, involvement of young people can not be based on sole fact that youth participation is seen as must or something as formal obligation.

When involving young people in the research, a good idea can be approaching youth through youth organizations or youth groups. They can be a great resource and partner developing together activities based on youth participation. Also, below you will find some more free to download resources that describe involvement of young people more comprehensively. They can be used as an additional source when planning involvement of young people.

Here are few available resources on involving young people in data collection / research that you can find online!

Sources:

✓ Child Led Data Collection: a guide for young people to learn how to do research and create a positive change (2012). Save the Children Sweden.
Here: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5901/pdf/5901.pdf

✓ Researching with and for Children and Young People (2011). Center for Children and Young People.
Here: https://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=ccyp_pubs

✓ A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults (2008). Save the Children Norway.
Here: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/kit-of-tools_1.pdf

✓ Children and Young People-Led Research Methodology: an easy guide for young researchers (2016). World Vision.
Here: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WV-CAY-Led-Research%20Methodology-03-11-2016%20FINAL.pdf

✓ Youth-Led Research: Listening and Learning Toolkit (2017). Search for Common Ground.
Here: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Youth-Research_Listening-Learning-Toolkit_dr-1-1-1.pdf

✓ A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research (2004). Research Consultancy.
Here: https://www.invo.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/InvolvingYoungPeople2004.pdf

✓ Youth as researchers: training manual (2015). National University of Galway.
Here: https://agsci.psu.edu/unesco/our-programs/youth-as-researchers/youth-as-researchers-manual

✓ Ozer, J. E.; Piatt, A. A. (2017). Adolescent Participation in Research: Innovation, rationale and next steps. Innocenti Research Brief.
Here: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IRB_2017_07_Adol05.pdf

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[22] 'A Guide to Actively Involving Young People in Research: for researchers, research commissioners, and managers'. Hampshire: research Consultancy, p. 10.

- ✓ Taking Young People Seriously – an Australian series of practical toolkits on different aspects of youth participation from consulting young people to involving young people on boards and committees.
  Here: https://www.yacvic.org.au/advocacy/taking-young-people-seriously-handbooks-2/

- ✓ Supporting the design and implementation of youth-led research projects (2017). Search for Common Ground.
  Here: https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Guidance-Youth-led-Research-dr-3.pdf

- ✓ Ethical research involving children (2013). Florence: UNICEF.
  Here: http://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ERIC-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf

Indicators set: youth well-being
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Within Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project in Youth Field "(Re)searching for Quality of Life of Young People in Baltics", a set of indicators was developed, as possible framework for performing constant evaluation of youth well-being. In the project, both objective and subjective indicators were seen as important as objective data doesn't reflect fully such important but more difficult to comprehend and evaluated aspects like feeling of satisfaction with one life or happiness. It is not enough to only assess statistical data or measures that are in place in the country for young people because there can be situation when young people can have full access to free education, health services of a high quality, different support measures and still feel not too happy. In this case, evaluating also subjective feeling of happiness, and reasons of satisfaction/unsatisfaction with life can understand better the real needs of young people.

In the project, developed set of indicators – after focus groups with young people from different age groups and after interviews with youth researchers – was divided in 8 groups, covering 8 main areas of young people's life. Areas covered by set of indicators are:
1. General data
2. Family and peers
3. Education and training
4. Material well-being
5. Housing and environment
6. Employment and entrepreneurship
7. Participation
8. Health and risk behaviours

Detailed set of indicators is provided in Annex 1 of this document.

Each of the areas mentioned above includes both objective and subjective indicators, to have as broad and clear picture of the youth life as possible, and clear data what are the most important issues and challenges related to young people. Objective data can be collected assessing official data available in the country and (or) internationally. It requires data collection and desk analysis – gathering information and data from official sources such as Statistics Departments or similar. Subjective data requires direct approach to young people – during project, data from young people was collected during focus groups and later, using online questionnaire.

General data part includes statistics and data that show the general situation of young people in the country. Objective data that is proposed to be collected and evaluated in this part is related not only to young people, but also to general society, to understand better the place of young people within society. Therefore, beside the proportion of population aged 0-14 and aged 15-24, it would be important to collect data of the proportion of population aged 60 years and more. This would help to see what part of the society young people make. Median age of population will also help to summarize the age

distribution of a population. Other indicators proposed to be included in this part are fertility rate, life expectancy and emigration (of young people between 15-24, per 1000).

Additional data that can help to compare the situation of youth in the country to the youth situation in the world can be obtained from Human Development Index and Youth Progress Index. Therefore, four more indicators (index of the country in Human Development Index and in the Youth Progress Index, and the rank the country has between other countries according to both Indexes) are included in the set of indicators too. Human Development Index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living (see Figure 3 Human Development Index). The Human Development Index is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions. You can also find more information about Human Development Index on the web site of United Nations Development Programme (visit here for more information: http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi).

Figure 3. Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme, 2019)
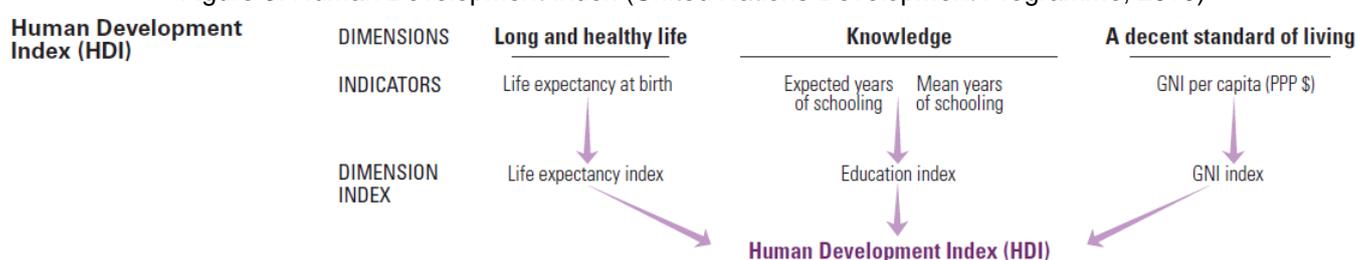
Meanwhile, Youth Progress Index measures the extent to which countries provide for the social and environmental needs of young people. The Youth Progress Index brings together reliable, relevant data to give each country a score on how well different countries meet basic human needs, foundations of well-being and opportunity. It measures factors that matter to and can impact the daily lives of young people, and allows to see a much clearer picture of young people's wellbeing and countries' performance in areas such as education, healthcare, housing and environmental sustainability.

In some way similar index that can be used as an additional data source is The Youth Development Index. It is a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure multi-dimensional progress on youth development in 183 countries, including 49 of the 53 Commonwealth countries. It has five domains measuring levels of education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, political participation and civic participation for young people. More information on this index can be also find online (visit here for more information: http://youthdevelopmentindex.org/).

As to subjective indicators, where the opinion of young people is important, there are 3 proposed indicators in the general data part. These include: satisfaction with one's life in general (from 1 to 10); satisfaction with life during current days (from 1 to 10) and the view of the young person in relation to the future (i.e., how much young person is optimistic about own future).

For the *Education and Training* part, objective indicators that are included in the indicators set are young people aged 20-24 with at least upper secondary educational attainment level; top performers in all subjects (science, reading and mathematics) and low achievers in at least one subject (science, reading and mathematics) and early levers from education and training (18-24). Early leavers from education and training denotes the percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 having attained at lowest secondary education and not being involved in further education or training. The numerator of the indicator refers to persons aged 18 to 24 who meet the following two conditions: (a) the highest level of education or training they have completed is ISCED 2011 level 0, 1 or 2 (ISCED 1997: 0, 1, 2 or 3C short) and (b) they have not received any education or training (i.e. neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the survey.

Training and courses for nonprofessional reasons over the last 12 months (including online courses) are also included in the indicators set. This is important to evaluate, to see if young people have additional possibilities to acquire education/knowledge, that is not necessarily related to their studies or professional life. Internet use is involved as one more indicator for similar reasons – to see how often young people use Internet to do an online course, i.e., for educational purposes.

In the *Education and Training part* not only education itself matters but also the environment in which young people study. Therefore, in the indicators set bullying topic is included too (indicator – frequently bullied students, i.e., students who are in the top 10% of the index of exposure to bullying among all countries/economies).

Subjective indicators include few, i.e., satisfaction of young people with their education (from 1 to 10), as well as belief of young people how great possibilities they have to acquire education they want and to personal improvement through various courses, training and seminars.

Third part of the indicators set is *Family and Peers*. This part includes more of subjective indicators since the most important aspect here is to see how important relationships are for young people with those close to them (like family members and friends), and how qualitative these relationships are. Therefore, in this part indicators set includes opinion of young people on such matters like: their satisfaction with their family life (from 1 to 10); their satisfaction with their relationships with their friends (from 1 to 10); also, indicators that help to see how much time young people can spend with their family and friends. This helps to evaluate quality of the relationships that young people have. Additional subjective indicators to see how qualitative relationships of young people are include the extent to which young people can make decisions in their family; extent to which young people can get help in difficult, problematic situations and how many opportunities they feel they have to get to know like-minded people (either in their city or on the Internet). Additionally, young people can be asked how important they find it to deal with their life problems and how long does it take them to get back to normal after difficult situations. These indicators can provide additional information how strong is the support network of young people and how much help they get from those close to them in case of any negative happenings in life.

For the objective indicators in this case, following are proposed to be used: share of young people aged 16-24 who still live with their parents; estimated average age of young people leaving parental household; mean age at first marriage (separately for male and female); proportion of live births outside marriage and divorces per 100 marriages. In the indicators set these indicators are believed to be helpful to see what is the approach of young people towards marriage, family life and in some way, what are the opportunities for young people to start independent life outside their parents' household.

Another area that is important to evaluate to see the general situation of the youth well-being is material well-being. In the *Material Well-Being* part, there are also several subjective and objective indicators used for evaluation. Objective indicators focus mostly on the level of the poverty and risk of the poverty that young people are exposed to. In this case, indicators include Gini coefficient of equalised disposable income. The Gini coefficient measures the extent to which the distribution of income within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A coefficient of 0 expresses perfect equality where everyone has the same income, while a coefficient of 100 expresses full inequality where only one person has all the income. Other indicators include:
〉 young people at risk of poverty or social exclusion;
〉 young people at risk of poverty (cut-off point: 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers);
〉 material and social deprivation rate. The indicator "Material deprivation" covers indicators relating to economic strain, durables, housing deprivation and environment of the dwelling;

〉 severe material deprivation rate. In this case, the indicator describes the percentage of the population that cannot afford at least four of the following nine items: 1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills; 2) to keep their home adequately warm; 3) to face unexpected expenses; 4) to eat meat or proteins regularly; 5) to go on holiday; or cannot afford to buy a: 6) TV 7) refrigerator, 8) car, 9) telephone;

〉 difficulty to make ends meet in the household of a young person;

〉 if a household been in arrears for utility bills in the last 12 month;

〉 if a household been in arrears for payments related to informal loans from friends or relatives in the last 12 month;

〉 also, to have more comprehensive picture of material well-being, few more concrete indicators are included, to see if young people have at least basic means for living. Therefore, few more indicators include: possibilities of young people to afford paying for a week's annual holiday away from home; possibilities to buy new, rather than second-hand, clothes; possibilities to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish every second day if young person wants.

Few more indicators are related to social well-being that is understood in this case as peaceful coexistence of different social groups. Therefore, few more indicators in this case are: perceived tension between poor and rich people; perceived tension between different racial and ethnic groups; perceived tension between people with different sexual orientations.

For the subjective indicators, there are also few – young people should be asked how satisfied they are with their own incomes if they have such (that can be different sources of incomes like salary, stipend or allowances) and how generally they are satisfied with their present standard of living. Indicators set also allows to collect the opinion of young people about their belief what possibilities they have to achieve success in life in general meaning and to achieve material/financial success. One more indicator is level of concern that young people have about their income in old age.

Related to *Material and Social Well-Being* part is *Housing and Environment* area that lets to evaluate more comprehensively how satisfied young people are with the place they live in and with the surroundings of their community. In this case, objective indicators include rate of severe housing deprivation which is defined as the percentage of population living in the dwelling which is considered as overcrowded, while also exhibiting at least one of the housing deprivation measures. Housing deprivation is a measure of poor amenities and is calculated by referring to those households with a leaking roof, no bath/shower and no indoor toilet, or a dwelling considered too dark.

All other indicators focus on subjective feeling of young people and on their personal opinion. In this case, important indicators to have comprehensive picture of life of young people are their opinions/satisfaction level with: their accommodation (including shortage of space); their local area as a place to live; with how much their city/municipality is friendly for young people; with the access to recreational or green areas. Few more indicators are related to the feeling of safety – if young people feel safe enough when walking alone in dark as well to which extent, they feel safe online (on Internet, social networks) and if they had experienced any harassment online. General satisfaction with their feeling of safety is one more indicator related to *Housing and Environment* area.

Employment and Entrepreneurship part of indicators is focused on possibilities of young people to participate in labour market and have possibilities to implement their own business or similar ideas. Therefore, following objective indicators are included in the set of indicators:

〉 youth employment rate

〉 youth unemployment rate

〉 youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer)

〉 young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET rates). The indicator on young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) corresponds to the

percentage of the population of a given age group and sex who is not employed and not involved in further education or training. The numerator of the indicator refers to persons who meet the following two conditions: (a) they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the International Labour Organisation definition) and (b) they have not received any education or training (i.e. neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the survey.

There are also few subjective indicators that let to see if young people not only have opportunities to participate in the labour market, but if it also opportunities they have impact their well-being in a positive or negative way. Therefore, subjective indicators include satisfaction of young people with their present job as well as their opinion to which extent they have possibilities to choose profession/occupation they like, to find job they like and to do business if they would come up with some business ideas.

Participation of young people in different areas of the life of society is one of the areas with most indicators since there was a goal to see what the opportunities for young people to participate in different life areas are, including their family life, leisure time, political life and similar. Participation is also usually related to decision-making process, and this aspect is also reflected in indicators set. In general, youth participation is related to ideas of citizenship, personal development, and involvement in society[23], or, simpler – to the idea of meaningful opportunities for young people and ways they can contribute to the society. Key principles of youth participation are:
> empowerment: young people having greater control over their lives through participation;
> purposeful engagement: young people taking on valued roles, addressing issues that are relevant to them, and influencing real outcomes;
> inclusiveness: ensuring all young people are able to participate, regardless of background, culture, where they live, their gender or sexuality[24].

In the indicators set, objective indicators are following:
> minimum age that an individual can be a candidate for elected office;
> minimum age that an individual can vote in national elections;
> minimum age that an individual can vote in municipal elections;
> Internet use: taking part in on-line consultations or voting to define civic or political issues (e.g. urban planning, signing a petition);
> Internet use: posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites (e.g. blogs, social networks, etc.);
> individuals using the Internet for interacting with public authorities;
> individuals who have signed a petition, including an e-mail or on-line petition over the last 12 months;
> persons who cannot afford to regularly participate in a leisure activity.

The information about how often young people can participate in different activities (taking into account last year) is included among indicators too. There are several different activities assessed in this case: cultural and entertainment events; environmental clean-up activities; hobby groups, interest clubs; non-governmental organisations; political parties; youth organisations; school or university events; volunteering; youth projects; youth centers/clubs; pupil/students' parliament/ self-government; youth council; projects calls; artistic activity, amateur art (choir, dance groups, music groups, etc.); travelling across country; travelling abroad; courses, seminars, training, continuing education (including in the Internet).

Also, several subjective indicators are included in this part too. Young people in this case can express their opinion if they have enough time to do things they really enjoy; if they are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Also, if they have possibilities to: do hobby they are interested in;

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[23] Youth participation. Youth Affairs Council Victoria. Source: https://www.yacvic.org.au/resources/youth-participation/
[24] Ibid.

spend free time the way they want it; attend cultural and entertainment events; to travel, explore other countries and cultures; to participate in amateur art and artistic activities; to be engaged in non-governmental organizations; to be engaged in the activities of political organizations and parties; to be engaged in the activities of youth organisations; to participate in projects and activities organized for youth; to be engaged in volunteering activities; to receive reliable, objective information about events in the country and world; to access cinema, theatre or cultural center. Also, few indicators are focused on the opinion of young people in relation to the opportunities they have to participate in decision making. Therefore, subjective indicators included in the indicators set also let young people to express their opinion about their possibilities to influence decisions in: their municipality; at their school or university; as well as to freely express their opinions, judgments, beliefs.

Last area of the indicators set is *Health and Risk Behaviours.* Risky behaviours are those that potentially or directly expose young people to harm or significant risk of harm. For young people, especially in their teenage years risky behaviours are part of their growing and development. Most common risky behaviours were included in the indicators set, such as:
〉 lifetime use of cannabis;
〉 lifetime use of illicit drugs other than cannabis;
〉 lifetime use of inhalants;
〉 cigarette use (past 30 days);
〉 alcohol use (past 30 days);
〉 money gambling during the last 12 months.

Other objective indicators are related to the health, and include:
〉 mean age of women at birth of first child;
〉 live births (mother's aged 15-19; per 10 000);
〉 live births (mother's aged 15-24; per 10 000);
〉 legally induced abortions (mothers aged 15-24; per 10 000);
〉 body mass index (underweight; overweight or obese);
〉 crude death rate per suicide (among 15-19 years old and among 20-24 years old);
〉 Internet use for seeking health information;
〉 people having a long-standing illness or health problem (chronic morbidity concept is operationalized by a question asking if the respondent suffers from any longstanding (of a duration of at least six months) illness or health problem);
〉 delayed visit to doctor to save money (delayed or didn`t go at all);
〉 taking part in sports or physical exercise at least once a week.

One of the subjective indicators is self-perceived health. This concept is operationalized by a question on how a person perceives his/her health in general using one of the answer categories very good / good / fair / bad / very bad. Another subjective indicator is self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problem. This concept is operationalized by using the Global Activity Limitation Indicator for observing limitation in activities people usually do because of one or more health problems. The limitation should have lasted for at least the past six months. Three answer categories are possible: 'severely limited', 'limited but not severely' or 'not limited at all'. One more subjective indicator is self-reported unmet needs for medical examination. Person's own assessment of whether he or she needed examination or treatment for a specific type of health care, but didn't have it or didn't seek for it. Also, few indicators were included to ask young people if they have felt downhearted and depressed; if they think they have enough possibilities to receive health care services; to be engaged in physical activities, sports (outside of their school or university); to consume daily healthy food.

As mentioned, subjective data can be collected with the help of either focus groups or questionnaire. The example of the questionnaire that was used within the project to collect data on the well-being of youth can be found in the Annexes of this document (Annex 2. Questionnaire for assessment of the subjective well-being of young people).

Performing research/evaluation
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First step of every research/evaluation is to formulate a concrete and clear research problem – it should tell what will be researched. In our case, that would be the well-being of youth.

Second step would be description of the research design. A research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems[25]. Basically, research design should explain how answers to research questions will be found. Therefore, a research design should include the following: the study design per se and the logistical arrangements that are proposed to be undertaken, the measurement procedures, the sampling strategy, the frame of analysis and the timeframe. This will help to clearly see what study design is chosen, how the information on research problem will be collected from respondents, how respondents will be selected, how collected information will be analysed and how outcomes (findings) of the research will be presented. For each there is a need to provide rationale and justification and as far as possible support them from the literature reviewed – this will help to show how chosen way of the research will bring valid and reliable results. Summarizing, following questions are the most important to answer:
  〉 Who will constitute the study population?
  〉 How will the study population be identified?
  〉 Will a sample or the whole population be selected?
  〉 If a sample is selected, how will it be contacted?
  〉 How will consent be sought?
  〉 What method of data collection will be used and why?
  〉 In the case of a questionnaire, where will the responses be returned?
  〉 How should respondents contact you if they have queries?
  〉 In the case of interviews, where will they be conducted?
  〉 How will ethical issues be taken care of?[26]

After selecting research design, study design must be described too. Study design depends first of all on the fact if the study is quantitative or qualitative. In the case of quantitative study, the design of it depends on three perspectives, i.e., the number of contacts with the population, the reference period and the nature of the investigation. The first perspective comprises cross-sectional studies, before-and-after studies and longitudinal studies. The second categorises the studies as retrospective, prospective and retrospective–prospective. The third perspective classifies studies as experimental, non-experimental and semiexperimental studies[27]. Qualitative studies' designs are less specific and precise. Also, there is a degree of overlap between study designs and methods of data collection. Some designs can easily be considered as methods of data collection. Some of the commonly used designs in qualitative research are: case study design, oral history, focus group studies, participant observation, community discussion forums and reflective journal log.

Third step would be the choice of the method of data collection. Data collected on the chosen problem can come from either primary sources or secondary sources. Primary sources are those when information is collected directly from the respondents for the specific purpose for which a study is undertaken. In this case, methods of data collection can be: interviewing, observation, focus groups,

[25] Jumar, R. (2011). 'Research Methodology: A step-by-step Guide for Beginners', 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd., p. 10.
[26] Ibid, pp. 96-97.
[27] Ibid, p. 128.

questionnaires. All other sources, where the information required is already available, such as government publications, reports and previous research, are called secondary sources.

For the evaluation of the youth well-being both primary and secondary sources were used. Some information was collected from the official statistics, European statistics (e.g., using Eurostat data), also, from studies and reports related to youth issues performed by e.g., the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs. All of these sources were secondary. Also, primary source was used, as young people were approached within the project directly, first using focus groups and then – a questionnaire. questionnaire was selected as the method of data collection since this method is one of the most common methods that let to approach and survey high number of respondents. Before using the questionnaire, focus groups with young people were organised to see if all questions are easy for them to understand, if there are no words or concepts that young people would not understand and skip a question as a result. Since the questionnaire was posted and available online, it means that there was no one to provide additional explanations if any of the questions would be unclear, therefore, it was very important to ensure that all questions are clear and easy to understand. Another important aspect to ensure was to make the layout of a questionnaire easy to read and the sequence of questions – easy to follow. The questionnaire that was used for the evaluation of the youth well-being in this case was quite long, but most of the respondents filled it completely.

When using a questionnaire or any other method of data collection, it is also important to ensure that it is valid, i.e., whether a research instrument is measuring what it set out to measure. The reliability of an instrument like questionnaire or other, refers to its ability to produce consistent measurements each time. When we use the instrument of data collection under the same or similar conditions to the same or similar population and obtain similar results, then it means that the instrument is 'reliable' – the more similar the results, the greater the reliability. Ambiguity in the wording of questions, a change in the physical setting for data collection, a respondent's mood when providing information, the nature of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, and the regressive effect of an instrument are factors that can affect the reliability of a research instrument[28].

Next step – setting a sample of population that has to be involved in the research to obtain reliable data. Since for the evaluation of the youth well-being questionnaire instrument was chosen, which means that performed research was of a quantitative nature, it was important to ensure that the sample was selected in such a way that it is unbiased and represents the population from where it is selected. In quantitative research, sampling is guided by three principles, one of which is that the greater the sample size, the more accurate the estimate of the true population mean, given that everything else remains the same. The inferences drawn from a sample can be affected by both the size of the sample and the extent of variation in the sampling population. Sampling designs can be classified as random/probability sampling designs, non-random/non-probability sampling designs and 'mixed' sampling designs. For a sample to be called a random sample, each element in the study population must have an equal and independent chance of selection. There are also many sampling designs, e.g., simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling. Most common used methods of selecting a probability sample are fishbowl technique, the table of random numbers and specifically designed computer programs[29]. When performing evaluation of the youth well-being, aacidental sampling was used. Accidental sampling is based upon convenience in accessing the sampling population. In the case of accidental sampling, the data collection stops when the required number of respondents that researcher decided to have in the sample is reached.

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[28] Jumar, R. (2011). 'Research Methodology: A step-by-step Guide for Beginners', 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd., p. 173.
[29] Ibid,

Then, data collection follows. When collecting data on chosen problem, not only methods of data collection or study design are important. There are also several ethical issues that must be taken into consideration. Most important ethical issues are related to respondents and to researchers themselves. In case of respondents, it is important to think about their consent to provide data that will be used for the research purpose and such purpose must be clearly described and presented to respondents; also, to think if consent of parents or other legal representative of the respondents is needed if respondents are underaged; if there is any sensitive information that research seeks to obtain that can cause e.g., some emotional stress for the respondents; the possibility of causing harm to participants; and maintaining confidentiality. It is important to examine these areas thoroughly for any unethical practice. With regard to the researcher, areas of ethical concern include the following: introducing bias; providing and depriving individuals of treatment; using unacceptable research methodology; inaccurate reporting; and the inappropriate use of information[30].

After the collection of the data, all obtained information is 'raw data' – it means that there is collected information from respondents or other sources, that is just set of data without any outcomes yet. Therefore, the next step that has to be done – is to process the data and draw conclusions. Data processing in quantitative studies starts with data editing, which is basically 'cleaning' data. This is followed by the coding of data, which entails developing a code book, pre-testing it, coding per se and verifying the coded data. In the frame of analysis, the type of analysis to be undertaken (e.g. frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, content analysis), and the statistical procedures to be applied, should be specified[31]. After collected data is processed, the findings can be presented to the society. Usually, the findings are presented through text, but of course, in the case of quantitative research, it also includes different types of text visualisation, e.g., tables, graphs and statistical measures. These can make communication better, clearer, more effective and easier to understand.

After all data about youth well-being is collected and analysed, it can be used for the development of evidence-based youth policy. Collected data can show what are the most challenging areas of the life of young people and what important issues must be solved. Collected data can require more action further too. E.g., it can show that young people are not satisfied with their possibilities to access professional health care – it is not clear though whether there are no such services available or the availability is limited in their living place, or young people don't think medical personnel is professional enough, or there are other reasons for such opinion. Therefore, the evaluation can help to determine priorities where some measures must be implemented to change the situation of young people, but to decide what measures would be most proper and successful to solve identified issues, more discussions with young people can be needed. In any case, evaluation of the well-being of young people, especially if done constantly and comprehensively, can meaningfully improve the choice of measures and in general, development of the policy that is able to meet real needs of young population.

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[30] Jumar, R. (2011). 'Research Methodology: A step-by-step Guide for Beginners', 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd., p. 223.
[31] Ibid, pp. 256-257.