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WP4: Direct engagement with children and young people (CYP)

Deliverable 4.1: Country level reports on interviews and focus groups from delivery partners (Estonia)

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1. Introduction

This report is produced for project MyWeb working package 4: Interviews with children and young people. Accomplishing the task included identification of interviewees and focus group members, carrying out interviews, analyzing them and writing a report. The work was done following guidance provided by the WP leader. The names in the report are not the real names of the interviewed persons.

2. Fieldwork characteristics

2.1. Fieldwork

School interviews with young people were carried out in a school located in the centre of Tallinn. Interviewees were recruited with help from teachers. A focus group with 6 pupils from secondary school was carried out on 11th of November 2014 and 5 individual interviews on the next day, both on the premises of the school. The interviews with children were carried out in different regions: not in the capital city, but in the provincial city of Pärnu. In that school, a focus group with 5 pupils and 5 individual interviews were carried out. Pupils studied in the third grade (aged 10-12).

Interviews with involved young people were obtained from members of the Defence League Boys Corps and Defence League Girls Corps. A focus group interview with 5 participants was carried out on 6th of January 2015, and 4 individual interviews were carried out in December 2014. Interviewees were recruited with help from Defence League youth leaders and youth workers. The focus group took place in the Defence League training centre in Tallinn, with the individual interviews taking place in different places.

Interviews with non-organised young people were carried out at an open youth centre in Saku. Saku is a small settlement near Tallinn. Interviewees were recruited with help from Saku youth centre and interviews took place on the premises of the youth centre on 9th of January 2015. A youth centre is a youth work agency whose activities are organised by local authorities or non-profit associations. A youth centre has the widest range of services of youth work and is the primary performer of youth work. Most of them are characterised by applying the open youth work method, which means that they are open to all young people. Applying the principle of openness makes the centres different from other forms of youth work which assume that a young person is a registered member of a youth association, group or some other form of organisation.

The table below summarises the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees and the participants of focus groups.

Table 1. Main socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the fieldwork

	Interviews	Focus groups
Pupils from primary school (children)	3 girls, 2 boys One was 12, others were 10 years old All were whites All were Estonian-speakers 2 were involved in a sport club, 2 in music school	3 boys, 2 girls All 10 years old All were whites All were Estonian-speakers 3 were involved in sport club
Pupils from primary school (young people)	2 boys, 3 girls One was 16, the others were 15 years old All were whites All were Estonian-speakers 2 were involved in a sports group, 1 in a hobby group	
Pupils from secondary school		3 boys, 3 girls All were 16 years old All were whites All were Estonian-speakers 1 girl had dual nationality: Estonian-Canadian 4 were involved in a hobby group 1 was involved in a youth club
Non-organised young people	2 boys, 5 girls Age: 19, 14, 15, 15, 14, 22, 14 All were whites All were Estonian speakers None was involved in a youth organisation or association or in organised hobby activity	All boys Age: 18, 15, 18, 21 All were whites All were Estonian-speakers None was involved in a youth organisation or association or in organised hobby activity
Involved young people	1 boy, 3 girls Age: 17, 16, 18, 18 All were whites 3 were Estonian-speakers, one was a Russian-speaker but spoke Estonian very well The boy was involved in Defence League Boys Corps and the girls involved in Defence League Girls Corps	3 boys, 2 girls Age: 16, 16, 16, 15, 15 All were whites All were Estonian-speakers Boys involved in Defence League Boys Corps and girls involved in Defence League Girls Corps

2.2. Methodological differences among interviews and focus groups

Children

The teacher was asked to choose kids for the focus group (FG) with different grades, but all talkative. It was indeed the case, that all kids were very talkative in the FG. At the same time, all kids expressed very similar ideas; there was little variety and almost no contradicting views among participants. As one spoke one topic out, others tended to repeat the same topic/thoughts over. Participants in the FG were all good communicators; it was easy for them to verbalize their feelings and ideas, which was not always the case in individual interviews. Thus, personal interviews varied considerably more. It might be partially explained also by the selection of interviewees. The participants for individual interviews varied more: one girl has had problems with harassment, one boy was very active and has had several behavioural problems at school, one girl was from a materially deprived family and two of the kids were more introverted than their fellow pupils in the FG. I think that the FG would not have been suitable for kids who are not so talkative and are shyer. One girl, who was interviewed, said, "*I would not like to talk about these issues in front of others, I would be embarrassed*".

Young people

In a single personal interview, a lesser number of themes came up than in a focus group. In a focus group, participants threw in their ideas and thoughts so that the variety was bigger than in one individual interview. However, since the number of individual interviews was higher, then the total amount of information obtained from individual interviews was probably roughly the same as in focus groups.

In the focus groups, it was necessary to encourage some participants to be more actively involved in group discussion and express their ideas and thoughts. In some individual interviews, it was necessary to encourage interviewees to go more deeply into a concrete theme or topic, to expand their responses on certain topics.

Individual interviews were somewhat more structured and followed the initial interview plan, compared to focus groups. In focus groups the whole process was somewhat less orderly and more chaotic as participants did throw in their opinions and others picked them up and reacted to them.

Contact at the start of an interview was easy in case of both individual interviewees and focus group participants. Also, keeping individual and group interviews flowing was rather similar and did not require a major effort.

There were relatively talkative individual interviewees and focus groups and also relatively quiet interviewees and groups; there were no significant differences in this respect. At this point, the reasons for being quiet are hard to tell. It could be that activism was limited because of shyness or it could be that interviewees did not have a ready answer to questions asked by the interviewer.

3. Main empirical findings

3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children

Global understanding/definition of well-being

Children did not use the word "well-being" in their conversations, although the interviewer used it repeatedly. It shows that this term is not usual in children's vocabulary. However, all understood it and no one had problems talking about it. However, children always rephrased it. Mostly, well-being meant for kids "if I feel good and if everybody is happy" (girl, Joan, 12-y-o, from deprived family), "if there is fun going on" (FG, Ran, boy, 10-y-o). Girls tended to answer more generally, at least some of them replied in the way not talking about themselves, but trying to verbalise a more general meaning of well-being. Most boys replied as it would have been asked, what makes them personally feel good. For instance, one boy also said that well-being is if "I can be at home and do not have to hurry somewhere" (Marttin, boy, 10-y-o).

Major domains

Two main domains appeared spontaneously though throughout all the interviews: family and friends.

In all cases, children in a really candid way expressed how important it is to have a **family** and how important for their well-being it is to be part of a family. Despite the fact that many kids spend very long days at school and at extra-curricular activities, they still connected their well-being first hand with the situation inside the family. There was no difference in this respect between boys or girls or along any other division lines. All valued the family very highly.

I feel good if I am not alone. /.../ I don't feel alone if I travel with my family or if I am at home and my parents are also. /.../ Doesn't matter where we are, just being together [with my family].

(Marttin, boy, 10-y-o)

"Feeling good is to have THE WHOLE family together. My sister works in Tallinn [other city] and my father has been for a very long time in Finland and works there. However, my brother, my mum, and grandmother and

grandfather are still at home! I had a cat too, but it was hit by a car /.../"

(Ran, boy, 10-y-o)

It is important that all [family members] would be at home and that all would be well! I feel bad if no one is at home ... its boring!"

(FG, Ermel, boy, 10-y-o)

[makes me feel good]"/.../ four animals, my sister and brother, although my sister will return only after 1 month from Spain, my family and then I even don't know [what else makes me happy]"

(FG, Matu, boy, 10-y-o)

"If the whole family is together and, yes, if the family is together!"

(Otto, boy, 10-y-o)

If overwhelmingly only the presence of all family members was desired for well-being, some kids also pointed out that the atmosphere at home is also important for well-being.

"If everybody is in a good mood at home"

(Kerttu, girl, 10-y-o)

Secondly, all children talked about the importance of **friends** for well-being. Boys expressed that they need friends in order to have fun, to have someone to play with, to have someone to talk to at trainings or to play with during the breaks at school. Girls talked about the same, however, in addition several girls pointed out that having friends gives them a secure feeling at school. Having a friend or several friends means that they feel more confident. Several children also pointed out that it's very important that no one bullies them at school.

" [I feel good at school] if friends at school and classmates do not bully me, that I would have all homework done and all my things would go well"

(Rosie, girl, 10-y-o)

The school environment was also discussed by most of the children and with close relationship to friends. Children associated a good school environment with good friends and no harassment. The role of class teacher was also stressed by all kids talking about school. It seemed that children who were interviewed had very close contact with their teacher and thus, they had many good words to say about their teacher. However, some pupils also talked about several teachers and stressed that it's vital to have teachers who are kind and do not shout at minor things like leaving

books at home or having some little part of homework not done etc.

Other domains were less mentioned spontaneously. However, once raised by interviewer, kids related very easily with different domains. No one mentioned **health**, but all agreed if asked, that it's very important to have good health to feel good. Children recalled very easily the times when they were sick and it connected with strong negative feelings. All recognised that it's important to be in good health. Also more specific health problems were mentioned in personal interviews.

"Recently...last year my teeth were very broken and hurt seriously ... now I eat such stuff like cucumbers and tomatoes. I don't eat so many sweets anymore."

(Otto, boy, 10-y-o, behavioural problems at school)

Housing was mentioned by some kids. All of them, who raised the housing issue, wanted to stress that it's not so important to have well-equipped or spacious homes, but rather that basic needs for comfort are met.

"It [home] does not have to be luxurious, the main thing is that it has water and food and that one would have money."

(Otto, boy, 10-y-o, behavioural problems at school)

"My home has to be good, warm. I want to be able to sleep here, eat and would just feel cosy. To do my things and learn."

(Rosie, girl, 10-y-o)

Interviewed kids did not complain about their housing being too small; on the contrary, one boy expressed anxiety if he was left at home alone in a big house (in Estonia, 10-year-olds can be left home alone).

Kids didn't mention spontaneously **city or neighbourhood**. If asked, then most of them had a hard time relating to the more abstract notion of "home town". They would rather talk about their street/neighbours etc. Around home, it's important to have other kids but also security is important.

" [It's important that] there are no burglaries, and all thieves would become good "

(Rosie, girl, 10-y-o).

Happiness

While asked to think about a good day when they felt happy, the kids tended to talk about **non-routine events together with family and friends**. Several mentioned that

they were very happy when they were in a water park with family.

"[a day is great if] we go to a great place or something great happens! It's like I don't have to go somewhere alone. That we [family] all can be together and then we all together go to some place... like into a Water Paradise [a water park]!"

(Marttin, boy, 10-y-o)

"Yesterday, I liked the most that we went to water park and we had friends with us as well. It was so great fun there in the water park!"

(Joan, girl, 12-y-o)

All other specific examples of a great day were associated mainly with **school or out-of-school activities**. Kids in the focus group also talked about learning, that they like learning and talked about specific topics they have covered recently which have been fun, for example learning about planets, doing geometry in a mathematics lesson etc. Boys also really liked that one break was recently turned into a sport break at school and they can play in a sport hall. In a focus group, one girl could not recall good moments from the recent days and then boys right away tried to offer possible great moments like a sport break: it was the only issue where the two girls from the focus group did not enthusiastically confirm their fellow pupils' opinion, but stayed quiet. At the same time, all pupils outlined that harassment can easily destroy the pleasure. For instance, boys did not like that bigger boys take away basketballs from them if they play during the sport break. Friends and fellows at school were stressed this over and over again as crucial factors in feeling good or also in feeling bad.

Children recalled bad feelings if they **felt alone or bored**, if they had to wait or they did not have a good idea what to do.

"My Xbox was broken and I didn't know what to do the whole evening"

(FG, Ran, boy, 10-y-o)

"I had to wait at my dads' workplace. I didn't have anything to do"

(FG, Matu, boy, 10-y-o)

"We arrived at the sport hall 1 hour before training started and we didn't have anything to do. We just hung around"

(FG, Mare, girl, 10-y-o)

Children also talked about the **stress of learning**/doing homework and that it's hard to meet the demands of teachers in out-of-school activities.

"I don't like that over the last few days my studies have lasted upto midnight. Actually, there is not so much to do, just I start somehow to watch TV and then my attention goes there and I will leave learning aside."

(FG, Kerli, girl, 10-y-o)

Life-satisfaction

In general, all kids expressed rather high life-satisfaction. It might also well be that this is also what kids think that an adult interviewer expects from them. In focus groups, kids found it hard to express the aspects in their life they don't like at all. Also in personal interviews, most kids didn't have or didn't want to express things they would like to change. Still, the face-to-face individual interviews created more opportunities to express themselves openly. It was visible that while in the focus group, the topics were more general, in personal interviews, some more intimate topics arose.

"I am satisfied with everything at the moment, except that I eat a lot of sweets and that I, ... sometimes, I get so nervous that I start hitting others"

(Otto, boy, 10-y-o, behavioural problems at school)

Psychological well-being

On the whole, kids felt that things they were doing were worthwhile. In some interviews, it was clear that this is not a category they think about. Children found it easier to say if they liked or disliked something instead of whether it's worthwhile or not. In personal interviews, some kids talked more specifically about concrete situations when they felt things were out of their control or could not meet the demands set on them.

"/.../ sometimes teachers at music school or at acrobatics training have such high demands and I cannot meet them. Then I feel SO bad."

(girl, 10-y-o)

The question "Would you say that you are learning a lot at the moment" was not very applicable for respondents. Children either looked surprised or answered something vaguely. It was visible that it would have been easier to answer a more concrete question than about such a generalisation. In addition, it was hard for interviewees to answer questions about the influence of classmates, teachers and family. It seems that for some kids, it was hard to understand how the influence can be anything other than good and others didn't feel polite to speak negatively about their friends, family or teachers.

Kids had also a hard time comparing themselves with 3 years earlier or in the future. In all cases they had to find or an interviewer had to give them a reference point. As

all children interviewed were in the third grade, it was easy for them to answer if they recognized that 3 years earlier, it was the time, when they were in the first grade. Answers were rather similar as they all recalled the stress of starting their first days at school with new schoolmates. Therefore, children said that now it's much better as they have more friends. Some also added that they have learned a lot or gained self-confidence, which adds value to their life at the moment.

3 years in the future was more abstract for most children. Therefore, some kids were not sure what to answer. Some outlined that then they will have more independence, as they will be older. Others said they would be wiser, but also have to learn more.

At the same time, no one had problems imagining being as old as their parents. Only one respondent asked if he could talk about the times when he will be in his 20s not in his parents' age. Thus, it seemed that giving a specific reference point (parents age) made discussion much more lively and easier for children.

Surprisingly, it was prevalent that kids were anxious of becoming older. They related becoming older with less free time and having considerably more responsibilities and worries. Therefore, all who had a clear opinion stated that their current life is much better.

"Then it's much harder, because I have to do everything without help from others. I have to cook, I have to work. I have to do all kinds of things alone and pay taxes, which before were paid by my mum and dad."

(Rosie, girl, 10-y-o)

Some kids could not make their mind up if their life as an adult would be worse or better. However, they all said that the negative side of growing up is having more responsibilities. However, the positive sides were different, mainly associated with independence.

"Then I can become a youtuber!"

(FG, Ran, boy, 10-y-o)

The responsibilities of taking care of kids were associated by some kids with worries and by some kids as great thing to do.

"Then it would be also good...then I would have kids to take care of and a husband to love! Like a family again."

(Joan, girl, 12-y-o)

3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people

Global understanding/definition of well-being

For the purposes of MyWeb, well-being is defined as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudemonic conceptions of well-being.

Using this definition as a guiding concept, the first finding was that all focus groups discussed well-being as a multidimensional phenomenon. Groups of young people identified different aspects and then discussed how these aspects function in their daily life as well as how the aspects could influence their imagined futures. Focus groups viewed well-being as an essentially multi-dimensional phenomenon and discussed different components of well-being and relations between the components.

The same cannot be said about all individual interviews. In the case of some interviewees, only one aspect was mentioned when the interviewer asked them to describe what comes into their mind in connection with the word well-being or with feeling good. Some interviewees, not many though, had a rather one-dimensional understanding of well-being:

“I help other people and do good to them”

Interviewer: “Could you name something in addition to helping others, any other activity?”

“No. I think this is what gives me the feeling or sense of feeling good”

(Georg, boy, 15, unorganised)

“Well-being for me is when I feel ok, when I feel good”

Interviewer: “Could you be more specific? For instance, others named friends and school for instance. Could you name kind of similar things too?”

“No. /.../ if I had a feeling of being well, then everything would be fine for me. I’m striving toward getting that feeling but at the moment I have no good understanding what exactly could it be”.

(Holger, boy, 19, unorganised)

Their understanding of well-being was quite one-dimensional, not multi-faceted. This does not match well with the definition of well-being adopted for the project which sees well-being as a holistic phenomenon, consisting of several aspects or

components.

The finding that not all young people have a multi-dimensional understanding of well-being, suggests that for some young people, well-being might mean something rather concrete. If such understanding is temporary and might change over time, or whether it is a consequence of a certain circumstance, cannot be answered here. It remains to be explored by further research.

Material and non-material aspects of well-being

In focus groups and in individual interviews, a distinction between material and non-material aspects of well-being came to the fore. Material aspects in general refer to services and things that can be obtained through commercial transactions for money. Such things are, for example, clothes, food, accommodation / place where one lives. Among services, education was mentioned frequently. Also travelling was mentioned but it was not always clear if travelling was associated with being together with one's family and close relatives or as a commercial service. Naturally, one needs to have money to obtain things and services. Since the majority of the young people did not earn a living themselves (although some of them had a part-time job or had work experience from earlier times), assuring such things was seen as contingent on one's parents. Interviewees quite often said that they did not have enough money to do things they would have liked to. None of the interviewees saw money as a "thing-in-itself", it was seen as necessary for obtaining things and/or services.

Non-material aspects in general refer to emotions and feelings. These were most often associated with parents and other members of the family, with close relatives but equally so with friends and peers. Interviewees mostly talked about positive emotions and negative reactions were mentioned less often. Positive emotions referred to feeling secure, merry, feeling cared for and feeling needed by others.

Interviewees expressed the idea that both material and emotional needs needed be met to at least some extent to achieve well-being.

"To me, well-being means that you have your material needs satisfied. This is things like food, shelter, clothes, good education. Also the emotional side of life needs be satisfied, this means that you are loved, cared and being needed"

(FG, involved)

A notion closely related to emotions was the notion of having **good relationships with other people**. This covered the idea that in everyday life, each person has connections with and depends on contacts with other people. Contacts are significant not only in an instrumental sense but also in the sense that interaction with other people influences mood and is valuable in its own right.

Having good relationships with friends and peers was perceived differently from having good relationships with parents and relatives. The company of friends and acquaintances of the interviewee's own age was associated with having fun together, doing things which excite them, getting involved in activities and situations which were perceived as 'chill' or 'cool'. Being together with parents and other relatives (e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters) was associated with enjoying oneself and feeling good, calm and comfortable.

"When I stay with my relatives, then I feel calm, I feel peace of soul, it is comfortable and merry. But in the company of my friends it is different – it is a kind of groovy and cool. We are just chillin' out, and that's it."

(Anna, girl, 17, involved)

The **well-being of other young people** was discussed but not with great interest. Interviewees tended to consider the well-being differences between young people as quite considerable. Well-being differences were often seen as differences in material opportunities and in educational opportunities. In general, education was perceived to be important as a determinant of one's well-being in the future, in one's adult life.

Both global scale and socio-economic differences were put forth as explanations for the differences. Within the global perspective, it was mentioned that young people in developing countries had much poorer living conditions than the interviewees themselves. The global perspective was used by relatively few.

The socio-economic framework was used to account for parents' capability to provide their children with an adequate developmental environment. Interviewees saw that there were significant differences in parents' capability to provide development conditions and opportunities for their children.

All interviews held an opinion that **when they become older and grow up**, their life will become more troubled. Troubles and worries, as the interviewees saw them, referred mainly to mundane daily tasks: going to work, earning money, paying bills and loans, not being able to get involved in pleasant activities at one's leisure (e.g. watching TV or sleeping when it pleases). This look into the future was not very exciting and inspiring in this sense. Most of the interviewees held an opinion that life in the future will be much harder than it is at the moment. And not because big problems will emerge or that they get into an accident but simply because then they will need to carry out everyday tasks which at the current moment are done by their parents.

A decrease in well-being was associated also with becoming a parent. Assuring a good life for their children was seen as an important task of a parent, and as a corollary of this, interviewees saw that parenting will put an additional load of tasks on their shoulders. Thus parenting was seen as one aspect in their future that will reduce their well-being. However, this did not introduce any novel concept; it was just "more of the same" – due to the children they will have, they will be involved

more in caring activities.

In spite of having such a non-inspiring perspective of their future life, they did not think that growing up and becoming an adult was entirely negative. On the contrary, growing up was still seen as a positive development.

Closely related is the theme of **what is good and bad about being young**. Virtually all individuals and groups expressed the opinion that **being young is good** since one does not have many responsibilities and tasks. He or she needs to care only about his or her immediate tasks like doing fine at school and not undertaking too many activities so that he or she could get exhausted or even depressed because of not being able to accomplish everything he or she had planned or dreamt of. There is no need to worry about food, accommodation, clothing, well-being of other people, even about their own future since this is to a large extent taken care of by school and parents. Having few responsibilities and associated limitations was the topic that was discussed quite extensively and by all interviewees.

Having everything still ahead – having their entire life still ahead – was also mentioned as a positive side of being young.

Bad things about being young involved not being able to do everything that you want. However, their dreams in this respect were limited mainly to two rather concrete things: a) being not able to go to parties that were for adults (18+ years old) only and b) not being able to travel alone. These were seen as limitations but by no means were they seen as real problems that significantly reduced their well-being – they were just mentioned as facts of life with which you can live, and live well.

Limits set by parents and mandatory housekeeping chores at home were mentioned and discussed too. In general, interviewees and focus group participants took a stance that parents set restrictions and tell them to do things that are reasonable in general. Complying with demands of parents was generally seen as reasonable. There was no protest or revolt against parents. “Parents” at this point can be seen in two meanings: as biological ancestors and as an older generation. Young interviewees did not express opinions of discontent or protest against their biological parents or against older generations in general.

A girl in the focus group of involved young people described that she sometimes runs into conflict with her parents because they do not understand each other properly. Then a quarrel arises because each of them attributes false thoughts, beliefs, and motives to the other party. However, when they understand each other’s actual and real thoughts it appears that there is no reason to quarrel.

Shortage of (pocket) money was not mentioned as a real problem although it did come up a few times.

Interviewees remembered that in their **childhood** – some 5 to 10 years earlier – their mood was good in general plus that it was very easy to get into a good mood. During

childhood, joy could be induced by simple things like a fountain or playing with a dog. The topic of responsibilities and tasks was also mentioned here. As interviewees said, life was easier then since they had even less tasks and responsibilities than they have now, at the time of the interview. This was seen as a significant (and positive?) difference between their present day and their past.

Adulthood with its demands on the individual looked a bit frightening. Interviewees expressed the opinion that when you are an adult, you don't have either time or energy to get involved in things that you are interested in and enjoy. In spite of the opinions that the amount of demands will increase significantly and the amount of freedom will decrease, interviewees saw adulthood and their future in positive tones.

Interviewees did not have very elaborate plans or dreams for their future and their visions did not extend too far. Most interviewees said that they wanted to go to university and have a good job afterwards – in addition to having a family and kids, a flat or a house. Having their own family, their own place to live and economic independence was to be achieved by their 30s. Regarding ways of how to achieve this, they mostly saw that education and work were keys to well-being in adulthood.

However, before growing up and becoming fully adult, a few interviewees talked about a period in their life when they would like to travel and try out different things. Some associated this with studying abroad. It was seen as a kind of period for enjoying pleasant things before entering into the world of duties and tasks, before having a serious job, own family and kids.

Major domains

In all group interviews and nearly in all the individual interviews, the following domains were mentioned when well-being was discussed:

- Home and family, spending time with family members, feeling cared for and secure at home;
- Friends and being together with friends, getting involved in joyful and pleasant activities;
- Leisure time and hobbies;
- School and education, self-development, preparing for future job.

The topic of personal health was not mentioned by most of interviewees. The probable reason for not giving this topic much attention was that most young people did not experience major health problems that would have had impaired their ability to do things they liked or were expected to do. For them – healthy young people as our interviewees were – this topic was simply irrelevant. One can ask at this point whether the results would be the same if disabled or injured people were interviewed. However, this question remains unanswered at this moment. Health was explicitly mentioned by one interviewee (Mari, girl, 15, unorganised youth), but

only as a casual remark. In an indirect way, the significance of health came to the fore in the interview with a young man who had been diagnosed with mental health problems. His remark at the end of the interview hints that his mental health condition may interfere with his daily life:

“I want to add that in my opinion the thoughts which I expressed during the interview should not be written down anywhere because my mental health does not allow me to express myself clearly and give serious answers to the questions because I really am nuts”

(Holger, boy, 19, unorganized)

Living environment deserved very little attention. It was actually mentioned by a participant in a focus group of unorganised young people: *“Here in Saku, you have got nothing to do in your free time...”*. It might be that the reason for not giving much attention to living environment was that it was “invisible” – for most of interviewees, it met all their needs and wishes and “functioned” so well that they simply did not notice its presence or concrete features. Most of interviewees lived in the capital city or near it, in the most socio-economically developed living environment. Had we conducted interviews in a remote corner of the country, what would have been interviewees’ opinions then? This question remains unanswered at this stage.

Significance of each of the domains varied from interview to interview. For some individuals and groups, school and education were the most important domains. For others, family, home and close relatives were most important. For over a third of respondents, it was friends and hobby activities or circumstances where they met with friends, which was considered to be the most important aspect of well-being.

At the same time, there was no hesitation or debate of the importance of each of the domains during individual or group interviews separately. Individuals and groups were rather confident about what they said: they did not change their preferences of relative importance of each of the domains, they did not hesitate in formulating and wording their understandings of relative importance of each of the domains. In individual interviews, there was no extensive contemplation about “What domain is more important and what is less important for me”. Groups did not start a debate over relative priority of different domains for members of the group.

In sum, both individuals and groups were quite confident in prioritizing different domains for themselves, for their lives.

In spite of the absence of one clearly dominant understanding of what was the most important domain, education seemed to be the idea which surfaced here and there every now and then, in different contexts and meanings. School was seen to have several positive meanings. It was associated with friends – with class- and schoolmates that one meets at school. For some individuals, it was associated with the joy and excitement of learning new things, with self-development. It was also associated with preparation for the future: for university studies, choosing a

profession, finding a job that earns good money and brings pleasure. On the negative side, school was associated with bullying, dullness and also with conflicts with teachers. However, the associations which were made were mostly positive, and negative aspects were mentioned only a few times and by relatively few.

In many interviews, a view that different domains were interconnected was mentioned. The idea of interconnectedness was most clearly expressed and discussed by participants of focus group of involved young people. This group saw well-being clearly holistically, not as consisting of separate domains which perhaps are connected with each other but do not constitute an integral whole yet. Their view was that for individual well-being to be present, at least some amount of all different domains was important. Well-being was seen like a chain: if something is significantly wrong with any of the domains (e.g. family, friends, school) then all well-being will be gone and the entire chain is broken, not only this one link in the chain.

Happiness

Talking about **positive and negative moods** was very natural both in focus groups and in individual interviews. Most interviewees and focus group participants assessed their mood to be good at the time of interview. When asked to describe their mood over the period of recent weeks, the dominant response was similar – the mood has been good.

When asked to describe their mood on a 10-point scale where 0 meant ‘terrible’ and 10 meant ‘fantastic’, all were ready to describe their mood using such scale. The interviewees said that their mood over last few weeks had been somewhere between scale points 5 and 9. As such, their mood had been above average. Interviewees also confirmed that this was their usual mood – meaning that they usually felt good.

However, good mood was not unexceptional and some interviewees assessed their mood to be rather negative than positive.

“I look alright, but actually I feel nervous and uptight, my mood isn’t good. /.../ I need to socialize and spend time with others but I don’t like to be with people.”

(Eve, girl, 14, unorganised)

“I haven’t thought much if I am content recently. But when I think about that now, at the moment, then I don’t feel like being content and in a good mood.”

(Holger, boy, 19, unorganised)

When prompted to talk about periods and moments of **exceptionally high or exceptionally low mood**, interviewees said that such extra high or low moments were relatively short. Either good or bad moods lasted a few days as a maximum,

after which it returned to its usual or normal level. In some cases, such extreme fluctuations lasted a day only. Memories of such strong feelings however, were reported to have lasted quite long. Even if memories of either a positive or negative emotion may last quite long, this did not influence overall mood much; the mood was reported as a rather stable feeling over time.

In general, interviewees and focus group participants held an opinion that such extreme feelings -happiness or misfortune- were caused by some external event. Bad experiences were often associated with school (e.g. having failed a test at school or not getting good enough marks) and friends (having a trouble with girlfriend/boyfriend, being bullied at school). Positive experiences were associated with having accomplished something and having been awarded a prize (e.g. at a competition) or having spent a good time with family (travel to a foreign country or a dinner with family, meeting distant relatives over a long time).

Events which were associated with strong feelings were not very dramatic. On the contrary, they could be seen as usual events that take place in everybody's life.

Quite a lot of interviewees pointed out that differences in thinking make a difference in mood. If you think positively and choose to see positive aspects of life, then also your mood is more likely to be good and you feel well. And on the contrary, if you are negative and run into conflict with others then you most likely won't be in a good mood.

Some interviewees said that feeling well can be and should be induced or at least influenced by themselves – by deliberately and consciously thinking positive thoughts and being in a positive mood.

“When I wake up in the morning, I think it will be an excellent day. /.../ you always need to think positively. /.../ now I do this systematically, I am used to thinking positively.”

(Anna, girl, 17, involved)

Bringing out deliberate, conscious positive thinking as a method to influence one's mood still was not very common among interviewees.

Life-satisfaction

When prompted to talk how **meaningful** they considered their life to be and whether they wanted to undertake major changes, then interviewees and group participants tended to choose the stance that no major changes either in their personal life or in society in general were necessary. They believed that how they spent their time and energy, what goals they had – that all this was valuable and meaningful.

“No, I don't think I want to make any major changes in my life. What I would like to do is “more of the same” – I need to study more to get a good job and

fulfil my dreams”.

(Mari, girl, 15, unorganised)

The interviewees said that in general they were satisfied with life as it was now. They would not undertake any major changes in their life as it was now, even though they acknowledged that sometimes unpleasant things happen and that they did not like each and every aspect of their life. There was no gross dissatisfaction with life, there were no revolutionary views requiring a change of society (e.g. do away with schools or government) or desire to change the way of leading their daily lives.

On the contrary, interviewees and focus groups saw adult life – into which they will enter after a short time – desirable as it is. They did not criticize current social order either at organisational, local, national, European or global level. For all interviewees, it was valuable, something that they wanted be part of. Visions of their personal future very much resembled current ideals: good education, good job, nice apartment or a house, spouse and children, maybe an interesting hobby and friends if they would have energy and time left over from working and other responsibilities. There was no critique of social order.

Some interviewees expressed an opinion that maybe they were not good enough to live up to their dreams. They repeated that they had to obtain good education, be good at school, work hard and be smart to achieve what they dreamt of. There was no hesitation that the goals as well as methods were meaningful.

Also limits and restriction set by parents were considered reasonable in general and complying with demands by parents was seen as having a positive influence on young people. There was no discontentment with, no serious ideas and wishes to protest or revolt against parents, either in the biological or generational meaning.

One respondent talked that her divorced and separated parents put her into a situation that required a considerable amount of planning and effort from her to be able to spend time with both parents which she valued very much. The interviewee perceived this to be a factor reducing her satisfaction with life.

School focus-group participants expressed an opinion that in the long run, life satisfaction cannot be very high all the time. If it were very high then life would be too monotonous and dull. Bad things, which cause dissatisfaction, make life more interesting, dynamic and give motivation to the struggle for a better life.

Psychological well-being

Satisfaction and positive emotions derived from being involved in hobby activities was mentioned by a significant share of interviewees. In some instances, it was related to achieving distinct results and similar occasions. For example, one interviewee described having received a prize from a young musicians’ competition as one of the most pleasant events in her life.

Another interviewee described that satisfaction which he gained from reading and analysing pieces of belletrist writing, and writing literary criticism as being among the most satisfying things he had experienced in recent times.

Also, joy of learning new things at school and studying favourite subjects was mentioned as a source of well-being and satisfaction. Several interviewees mentioned that they derived excitement and satisfaction from learning and getting to know new things and new knowledge. They did distinguish between instrumental value of knowledge and skills and then also mentioned separately that learning new things about subjects that they liked was exciting and interesting for them, that this was a value in itself.

“Oh, I get so excited and satisfied when I learn new things about chemistry and biology at school!”

(Eve, girl, 14, unorganised)

This girl said also that she wanted to specialise in gene-technology in the future and that she needed a thorough understanding of chemistry, mathematics and physics, and that she also needed to develop logical reasoning.

Another girl (Linda, girl, 15, secondary school) said she was very interested in knowing more about languages and several other subjects and that she studied those subjects with great interest.

These themes did not come to the fore immediately; they were not mentioned among the first things. Also, these themes were not mentioned by everybody – actually the majority of interviewees did not mention such experiences or such drive for self-improvement, self-actualisation and self-realisation.

Therefore, it looks as if satisfaction derived from self-actualisation and self-realisation is important for relatively few.

Interviewees who considered self-development, self-actualisation and self-realisation to be important, were similar with other interviewees in other respects. This suggests that self-actualisation comes in addition to usual and normal aspects of life that were mentioned by other people. It does not replace more common experiences but it complements them or adds to them, adding details and making the mosaic more varied and more complex.

3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalization of ‘well-being’ in the fieldwork

Children

Children found it easy to talk about concrete events, but as soon as a question

demanded more abstract thinking or generalization, there were some kids who could not relate to the question.

It was easy to talk about specific domains and what is important to feel good. It was also easy for kids to recall recent events and talk about the feeling related to the concrete situations.

It was considerably harder for most children to say anything meaningful about the overall satisfaction. Then, it seemed it was rather an automatic response reflecting cultural norms: "everything is good".

The questions in the psychological well-being section about the time comparisons often needed help in the form of concrete anchors in the past or future. In case a concrete reference point was given, such as if children had to talk about themselves when they are the age of their parents, it was easy for them to discuss well-being.

More abstract questions like 1) the influence of family, teachers etc and 2) if things they are doing are worthwhile were harder to discuss. Kids did not relate to these and tended to answer just "yes" and "good" without much thinking.

Young people

For most interviewees and focus group participants in the category of young people, the word used in Estonian ("heaolu") was self-explanatory. Interviewees tended to use this word mainly. Using a contrasting word ("pahaolu" – "ill-being") by the interviewer did not deepen the discussions and contemplations about well-being.

The word happiness ("õnnelikkus") was not used during the interviews and interviewees did not mention it. Words that were used in this context were love and caring, calm, joy, cool, comfy, secure and other words describing the feeling of being needed, the feeling of belonging, being together with somebody.

Such general words as 'self-actualisation' and 'self-realisation' were not used during the interview. Related ideas and concepts were discussed using words and expressions describing involvement in hobby activities.

4. Differences in the understanding of well-being depending on certain factors

Young people

The three focus groups of young people did show some differences. They were composed of young people coming from three different backgrounds: group 1) were pupils of an elite secondary school located in the centre of Tallinn, group 2) were involved young people who were members of a voluntary organization, group 3)

were unorganized young people.

The group 1) was most lively; participants in this group did pick up different topics and discussed them actively. Participants were talkative and expressed different opinions. Individual participants did have good group discussion skills which enabled them together to function as a group.

The group 3) was least active, to the extent that some participants in the group did not have an opinion on some topics, and said so. The group was also least talkative and a couple of participants experienced hardships with responding to direct questions asked by the facilitator. They hardly functioned as a group even though participants knew each other from earlier times.

"I don't know, I have nothing to say about it"

(FG, unorganized youth)

The group 2) was in-between but tended to be closer to group 1) than to group 3).

However, the most complex description and discussion of well-being occurred in group 2). This could be due to the fact that participants in the group had somewhat more varied backgrounds than participants in group 1).

The differences could be attributed to the different socio-economic backgrounds of participants in the groups. In terms of social class, group 1) obviously had the highest social class background while group 3) came from the least advantaged settings.

5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement

Children

The extent to which they think their voices are heard within society

Children aged 10-12 years could not understand the question. If rephrased "do you think adults take it seriously what kids tell them" they could easily reply. Most children pointed out that usually parents take their kids seriously or at least when they are not busy with other activities. Some children also believed that some teachers take seriously what kids say. Having a wider understanding of being able to influence broader processes in society was not (yet) reached by the kids in this age group in Estonia.

Motivations for being involved (or not) in a well-being survey

The children aged 10-12 years old were positive about the survey. No one rejected it. However, the meaning was also not very clear for many of them, as they often asked: "what does it mean if I participate in a survey?"

Motivations for being involved (or not) in a well-being panel survey. Use of incentives

Children aged 10-12 years old did not make a difference between a cross-sectional and a panel study even if the difference was explained to them. However, they were really ready to give advice as to how to attract other kids. They recommended explaining what will happen during the interview and why it's important. One boy also said that such things are so important as it's important to help kids in need and in hunger. It was also stressed that kids have to feel good and secure at the interview and that no one is pushed to talk about stuff they do not want to talk about, especially in front of others. It was interesting that only one girl said that incentives could be in material form (sweets or small presents).

Places to be interviewed

Children aged 10-12 years were mostly interviewed at school. However, two interviews were carried out at homes. All kids who were interviewed at school said that they would like to have it at school. One girl said that she wouldn't want to have a stranger at home to interview her. Others just preferred school without further explanation. Two interviewees, with whom the interview was carried out at home, also stated firmly, that they would prefer home. Both explained that they feel more secure at home while talking with an adult.

Young people

Extent to which they think their voices are heard within society

When asked a general question about the status of young people in society, the interviewees' opinion was that the voice of young people in society was not sufficiently heard. There was some variation about the extent of such a belief – whether the voice of youth was not at all heard or was heard but needed to be somewhat more influential – but the position of all the interviewees was that it was not sufficiently heard. They expressed the belief that in general, adults did not take children and young people seriously enough. Also an idea was expressed that some of the young were smarter than adults and some adults were really stupid – but that this did not matter when opinions of young people were considered. Being smart did not help in making one's voice heard.

However, when concrete situations were considered, then quite the opposite picture emerged. Interviewees agreed that young people had good opportunities to have their say at school. Even if not all teachers were liked and even if there were conflicts between teachers and pupils, no one said that their proposal was turned down or that they were not listened to by teachers or school management. On the contrary, everybody agreed that their proposals were given due attention.

The same was true for youth organisations and for youth centres. Both focus groups completely agreed that children and young people could always contact organisation

management with a question or a proposal and that their questions always were given due attention. The ideas and proposals were discussed and all realistic and reasonable ideas were implemented.

Experiences at the level of municipal government were fewer. However, two participants in the focus group of uninvolved young people recalled that when they had a proposal to renovate and rearrange a local skate-park, then they could easily have access to the municipality and that municipal officials reacted very quickly and implemented the proposed rearrangements to the extent that they had proposed it.

All interviews agreed that their parents were very attentive to their wishes, needs, ideas, plans and so on. All said that at home their wishes were discussed and mostly taken into account.

The interviewees did not have personal experiences with large organisations (e.g. political party youth organisations or other national and international level youth organisations or associations).

Usefulness of research for this purpose

There was a modest understanding that such research could contribute to making young people heard in society. However, interviewees were not sure if research in general can have and does have influence on decision-making. So too were they wary whether such research could make the voice of young people stronger.

In general, opinions and beliefs on this topic were less developed than on other topics.

Motivations for being involved (or not) in a well-being survey

Interviewees from the secondary school did not express particular excitement and interest in participating in the survey. As was mentioned in the previous section, the point of giving youth a voice through a survey was seen as contingent on the assumption that research makes a difference, which they did not believe to be the case always. In spite of that, most of them said that they would participate in the survey focusing on themes of child and youth well-being.

Interviewees with a different background did not assume that research must make a difference and they expressed readiness to participate in the survey. In general, they did not contemplate long over reasons and motives to be involved in such research. The main motivation for them seemed to be interest in the topic and an opportunity to express their views on child and youth well-being.

None of the interviewees said that he or she would refrain from participation in a survey or in an interview on the topics that just had been discussed.

Use of incentives

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Deliverable 4.1: Country level reports on interviews and focus groups from delivery partners

No specific incentives or places for doing an interview were mentioned by any of the interviewees. Even if an interviewer prompted them with a question on what could be done to motivate them to participate, interviewees did not come up with any concrete ideas.

Places to be interviewed

Interviewees did not express a clear preference for any particular place or time. The most attractive solution, however, probably would be during school lessons so that they could get away from a lesson.

Data collection modes

A few interviewees said that they would prefer an opportunity to give quite long and thorough responses to the questions, instead of just ticking response options in a questionnaire. Interviews showed that for most of them, talking about well-being was interesting and they wanted to express themselves on the topic. So, too, the wish for an opportunity to give long answers is understandable. The opportunity to express themselves extensively could be realized either in written form (open questions) or orally (as a long interview).

6. Other recommendations informing MYWEB project

Children

Children in age 10-12 were not able to give recommendations except how to motivate participation. Therefore, its not given in the report.

Young people

Interviews and focus groups with young people focused on substantive aspects of well-being as well as on readiness to participate in a well-being research project. Their opinions on motivation to participate and their recommendations for organising data collection are given in earlier sections of the report. Interviewees did not raise or express any other concerns apart from those that are reported above.