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**MYWEB (Measuring Youth Well Being)
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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 (Germany)

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MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Fieldwork characteristics	3
2.1. Fieldwork.....	3
2.2. Methodological differences among interviews and focus groups.....	9
3. Main empirical findings	9
3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children.....	9
3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people.....	11
3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalisation of ‘well-being’ in the fieldwork.....	17
4. Differences in the understanding of well-being depending on certain factors	18
5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement	19
6. Other recommendations informing the MYWEB project	24

1. Introduction

This report summarises the lessons we can learn from carrying out focus groups and interviews on well-being with children and young people in Germany. Thus, the fieldwork is explained in detail first, and the main results concerning views on well-being follow. We distinguish between interviews and focus groups conducted with children and those conducted with young people throughout the report. Any difficulties that came to the fore when doing the fieldwork are presented in separate sections. The last chapter suggests some ideas for conducting a longitudinal study on the well-being of children and young people.

All children and young people interviewed showed an interest in the topic of well-being. The main factors contributing to positive well-being were social ties (family as well as friends), a high standard of living, education, having leisure time and autonomy, and feeling that they spend their time productively. Problems came up when the interviewees were asked to distinguish between different dimensions of well-being which seemed to overlap. Additionally, educational background and level of engagement turned out to be decisive factors when it came to the quality of the interview results.

2. Fieldwork characteristics

2.1. Fieldwork

Completed interviews and focus groups

From October 2014 to December 2014 we interviewed three focus groups: one with young people (five participants) recruited via their school, one focus groups with young people who were part of an organisation (four participants) and also a group who did not belong to an organisation (four participants), recruited via personal contact. We intend to conduct one additional focus group with children at their school, as soon as we gain access to the pupils. The focus group of young people recruited via their compulsory schooling consisted of 15 to 16 year old female participants only. Another focus group comprised young male persons aged between 21 and 24 years, who were not members of any civic or political organisation. The third focus group was carried out with young people engaged in a self-managed political organisation involved with school politics. In this focus group, there were two male and two female participants, who were 15 to 16 years old.

Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with three children (one male and two female children between 13 and 14 years old) and five young people at their schools, as well as ten interviews with young people who were both members of an organisation and non-members. The young people we contacted via their school

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

were between 15 and 26 years old. This group comprised two female and three male interviewees. The young people who were interviewed as part of the section of non-members of an organisation were aged between 17 and 24 years, and with one exception they were female. Among the interviewees who belonged to an organisation, there were two male and three female participants, between 17 and 19 years old.

Selection of schools

For the setting up of focus group and individual interviews with children and young people from two different schools, we contacted a school which consists of two independent parts. One part comprises primary school classes, and the second part secondary school classes. This particular school covers the complete range of the trinomial German school system (“Hauptschule”, “Realschule”, “Gymnasium”, in one “Gesamtschule”). Thus, we were able to interview pupils with different socio-demographic and educational backgrounds within the same school. We cooperated closely with teachers and received their permission to visit the school classes in order to conduct the interviews and focus groups, in the middle of December. Parents’ consent forms were distributed by the teachers, and almost all of them received a positive response.

Profile of young people in organisations

Among the young people who belonged to organisations, we conducted one individual interview with a young girl engaged in a religious organisation. Other interviewees contacted for this type of research, as well as the focus group, belong to a self-managed group which engages in educational politics. They represent all pupils in Bremen in school politics-related conferences, and encourage other young people to speak up for themselves. The group is supported financially by the State of Bremen, and receives guidance from a teacher whenever needed.

Difficulties during fieldwork

Interviewing students in schools is a difficult issue in Germany, as legally it requires the permission of the local school authority, the school’s headmaster, teachers and – in case of minors – parents. It became apparent that securing the permission of all these parties takes a great deal of time, which caused us some problems within a tight schedule.

Another difficulty came up when we tried to reach young people who are not engaged in any social, religious or political organisation. As there is no central meeting point where we could approach these young people, and we are not allowed to contact them on school property (neither legally nor ethically), gaining access to these youths could be done only by word-of-mouth recommendation. This

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

approach also demanded some time in order to prepare and make first contact attempts via personal contacts or public introductions to the project, starting with a snowball sampling system. Thus, the time schedule seemed to be incompatible with interviewing young people who did not belong to an organisation.

Table 1 displays the result of our WP4 fieldwork.

Table 1: Completed fieldwork for MYWEB WP4, Germany

	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Employment	Education	Place of residence	Residential status	Family status	Ethnicity
Recruited in schools									
<i>Focus group with children will be conducted soon</i>									
Interviews with children	Maria	13	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German (parents: Polish)
	Ali	14	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	Turkish
	Petra	13	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German (parents: Brazilian/Turkish)
Focus group with young people	Anna	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Brigitte	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Christina	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Doris	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Eva	16	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
Interviews with young people	Mario	16	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German (parents: Sri Lanka)
	Lars	16	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German

	Thalea	16	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Ritterhude	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German (parents: Arabian-French, Polish-American)
	David	15	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Ilse	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
Recruited from organisations for young people									
Focus group	Angela	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Johanna	15	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Peter	16	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Gottlieb	15	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
Interviews	Susanne	19	Female	Student (University etc.)	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	Polish
	Bernd	18	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
	Ella	17	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Zackary	17	Male	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives in sheltered youth accommodation	Single	German
	Sabine	17	Female	Student (School)	Currently in general academic secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
Recruited outside organisations for young people									

Focus group	Heiko	22	Male	Student (University etc.)	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Rainer	21	Male	Student (University etc.)	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
	Hubert	24	Male	Student (University etc.)	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	German
	Erik	23	Male	Working and in part-time education	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	German
Interviews	Heike	20	Female	Student (University etc.)	Completed general academic secondary and vocational education	Delmenhorst	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
	Stefan	24	Male	In full-time employment	Completed university	Bremen	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	German
	Birte	16	Female	In full-time education	Currently in vocational secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
	Silke	17	Female	In full-time education	Currently in vocational secondary education	Bremen	Lives at home with parent(s)	With partner	German
	Ellen	23	Female	Trainee	Currently at university	Bremen	Lives independently alone	Long distance relationship	German

2.2. Methodological differences among interviews and focus groups

The interviews and focus groups conducted with young people suggest that individual interviews are more productive than group interviews. This impression stems from the depth of the results. In particular, when it comes to relationships with family members or partners, young people seem to be inhibited about talking exhaustively about this in front of their peers. Because of these observations, we assume that serious personal problems with family situations or illnesses that were discussed in individual interviews we conducted would not have been mentioned in focus groups.

Additionally, it was a bigger challenge for focus group participants to concentrate on the interview situation rather than the other peers who were present. Furthermore, focus groups offer less communicative participants the opportunity to withdraw from the interview, and thus reduce the variety of the overall findings.

3. Main empirical findings

3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children

Global understanding/definition of wellbeing

A general finding from interviewing children is that they had problems with the term 'well-being', and especially with differentiating between diverse aspects of well-being (global well-being, happiness, life satisfaction). Another aspect typical for interviews and the focus group conducted with children is that it was barely possible to develop a flowing conversation. Instead, they gave limited answers to the scheduled questions, and seemed to struggle to think about the details of their own well-being.

The children interviewed were – despite probing – not able to differentiate between a global understanding of well-being and the diverse factors and domains that contribute to well-being. We tend to assume that children have an idea of what well-being means. However, their cognitive development might not be pronounced enough yet to grasp and express this in detail.

Major domains

Clearly, the most important domain for children's well-being is the family. This refers

not only to their parents, but also to other family members such as siblings, aunts, uncles or grandparents:

“I feel well, when I’m at home with my family. For instance, my family lives in Poland ... most of them ... my grandma, my uncle ... so I feel well when I drive home to Poland.”(Interview, Maria, female, 13 years old).

Also, the well-being of the family members themselves was mentioned as a factor contributing to the children’s own well-being:

“Feeling well! When I see that my mom and my dad are feeling well. So when my family is feeling well, then I am, too.” (Interview, Ali, male, 14 years old).

Other factors contributing to positive well-being mentioned in the interviews are spending time with friends, being healthy and achieving success. As Petra explains it, feeling well comes:

RES: “When one gets complimented on something he or she did. [...]”

I: “What would you say, which aspects are important for you to feel good?”

RES: “Family, friends.”

I: “Tell me, how does your family or your friends make you feel good?”

RES: “Well, they make me laugh and they are always there for me.” (Interview, Petra, female, 13 years old).

When considering their well-being in the past days or week, children always referred to significant people like family members or friends. In general, all of them felt well, despite some difficulties arising from bureaucratic matters they took care of (in order to relieve the parents who had to work and take care of the family), fights with their parents, divorces and insecure neighbourhoods.

Happiness

As mentioned above, this aspect could not be separated from the global understanding of well-being by the children interviewed.

Life satisfaction

Our interviewees expressed general satisfaction with their own lives, as they are aware of having a high standard of living:

“Yes, I am satisfied with my life. I think I have everything I need. I have a family, can go to school. Yes, I am satisfied.” (Interview, Maria, female, 13

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

years old).

However, some children see room for improvement in their lives. In relation to this, they refer to health issues with their relatives and to their own performance at school:

I: "How satisfied are you with your life?"

RES: "Well, it's OK. Actually, I think it is great how it is at the moment. However, it could be better. My father is ill, very ill. He cannot go to work. But we are fine anyway." (Interview, Ali, male, 14 years old).

Psychological well-being

The majority of the children interviewed did not mention any aspects of psychological well-being. Just one interviewee said that being complimented on the things one does would contribute to positive well-being. We assume that psychological well-being is a domain which is too abstract to be grasped by children. The young people we interviewed were more aware of this aspect.

3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people

Global understanding/definition of well-being

The young people interviewed had different views on the concept of well-being. Some thought of security or a harmonious life, while others connected well-being with need satisfaction, freedom, or satisfaction with their own behaviour. To summarise, particularly important aspects for well-being from the point of view of the youths interviewed were social ties, their economic and occupational situation, having leisure time, leading an autonomous life, being socially secure and having the feeling of leading a meaningful life. They evaluate their own performance in their occupation (school, studies or vocational training) as very important also with respect to their future well-being. When it comes to negative influences on well-being, the same aspects seem to be important as for positive well-being. One respondent summarises the most important aspects of well-being when she mentions her social contacts, an absence of problems in general, and her performance when it comes to reaching her aims:

"I understand the term well-being as being relaxed and not having many problems. Not having any fights with friends or with the family, and that

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

everything goes well at school.” (Interview, Ilse, female, 15 years old).

Need satisfaction and security seem to be especially important to young people belonging to the age group of 18 years and older. Stefan, for example, summarises well-being as the following:

“Probably the priority is the satisfaction of the needs one has. I would say this starts with “I have a home”, “I have enough to eat”, “I don’t have any life-endangering problems”, which means no serious illnesses or something like that. [...] So well-being means living without any major worries and real threats.” (Interview, Stefan, male, 24 years old)

The aspect of health is mentioned by respondents of all age groups (including children). However, those young people who have been confronted with illness (concerning themselves or the people they are close to) are more aware of the importance of this aspect and do not need any probing.

In contrast with the interviews with children, some young people mentioned more abstract aspects of well-being, such as being accepted or a positive sense of self:

I: “When you think of the term well-being in general, what crosses your mind, what is important, which aspects contribute to it?”

RES: “In my opinion well-being means not having to pretend to be anyone else. So, when I know that people love me and accept me as I am and I don’t have to hide my opinions, because they might be uncomfortable. And probably also when I can quarrel and know at the same time that everything will turn out fine.” (Interview, Ella, female, 17 years old),

“Currently ... that I am satisfied with myself. So, I don’t say that I am not happy with what I do, or like it is in this saying: “If I died tomorrow, I would not regret anything.” At least I have to be satisfied with what I do and who I am. Additionally, everything that relates to my standard of living also contributes to well-being, like how is my accommodation, my family and contacts with friends, as well as how I feel myself.” (Interview, Ellen, female, 23 years old).

Major domains

Like the children interviewed, the young people of the age of 16 years and older also appreciate social contacts such as the family and – more important to this age group – friends and partners as important factors contributing to their well-being. Those young people who have finished school and are studying or doing vocational education also emphasise the importance of their personal job situation:

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

“Important for me is a partnership, my family, my friends and that my job and my private life can be balanced somehow.” (Interview, Stefan, male, 24 years old).

The focus group members who were interviewed at their school tried to identify a hierarchy of well-being domains:

Brigitte: “I agree with Doris. Family and friends ... as a basis. If you feel good on this level, you can do other things like education and everything more freely. The family is the lowest level, the basis for all other domains of well-being.”

Christina: “Maybe as an addition: sports. That is the first step of socialisation for young children. So this is the basis for making social contacts. If you have a lack of contacts in your early years, it may have the consequence that, I don’t want to say becoming an outsider, but you may have difficulties with socialising. If you take this into account for well-being then this would be clear-cut.” (Focus group, secondary school, 15 – 16 years old).

Even though the family is important to children and young people, the latter are less focused on their families. Young people also appreciate their individual orientations and leisure time activities. Thus, the family often takes a back seat for young people:

“In former times it was much more important to me to always be together with everyone, which means my parents, my siblings, my grandparents. I always appreciated that. Today this is of less importance to me, because I also do my own stuff.” (Interview, David, male, 15 years old).

Education is another factor contributing to well-being that was mentioned by almost all the young people interviewed. For this factor, they pointed out that it can affect their well-being positively as well as negatively. When being asked about their well-being during the last week, many young people argued that school grades (good ones as well as bad ones) and the pressure they were exposed to due to tests at school had a significant impact on their well-being.

Johanna: “And also the stress you are sometimes put under by school. That also has an impact on your well-being.”

Angela: “Yes, indeed. When you need all your leisure time just to learn for school and you can’t do anything else”

Gottlieb: “All through the night [...].”

Johanna: “[...] Well, it is a question of how well you are getting along with school.”

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

Angela: "And also, how important this is to you. What demands you have concerning yourself and your performance."

I: "Is it important to you?"

Angela: "Yes, for me it is relatively important to get good grades before the final exams start."

Johanna: "For me it's difficult to find a happy medium. Because in principle I want to learn for myself. I want to learn for myself, because I want to learn for my life, so to say. But on the other hand you have to consider that it is your final school exam which you will also finish for your own life. In order to receive as many opportunities as possible for your future job. But in the end I would prefer learning without this pressure. In order to learn for learning itself." (Focus group, young people involved with an organisation, 15-16 years old)

All the youths interviewed reported that material well-being is also an important pillar for overall well-being. With respect to social surroundings, it was agreed by all interviewees that among many young people, pressure is placed on those peers who cannot afford the clothes that are currently dominating the market. However, this is not true for all young people. Youths in organisations especially emphasised that there are peer groups that ignore fashion trends and assume that it is a matter of the individual school (not necessarily school form) when it comes to the question of how much pressure young people place on each other. Apart from social pressure related to material issues, young people also argued that having a reliable financial background also means some relief in their everyday lives, as they are able to spend more money for their leisure time activities and social lives.

"Other things also relate to it [well-being], I mean the financial aspects. If I cannot afford stuff, financially, then I have a problem. This concerns me more and more, also the immaterial aspects I mean. Of course I can spend my leisure time with nice people. However, if we don't have any money for cooking some delicious food, then it's crap." (Interview, Bernd, male, 18 years old).

Some young people also referred to their everyday surroundings (flat/house=warm atmosphere/rest area; neighbourhood=security; city=opportunities structures for spending leisure time). Interestingly, living in an inner city was not necessarily perceived as a negative influence on well-being, as long as the young people could still feel safe.

Happiness

There are three main aspects of happiness our interviewees mentioned: friends, partnerships and their performance at school:

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

“For example, you are happy when you have a good friend or a partnership that you are satisfied with.” (Interview, Ilse, female, 15 years old).

In the focus group interviewed at school, a discussion was initiated when the impact of school grades on happiness was questioned:

I: “What about school grades in general? Would you agree if I said that one is happy when one has good school grades? And correspondingly, when you have bad grades, would you be unhappy?”

Brigitte: “I don’t think so.”

Eva: “But I do.”

I: “Could you explain that to me?”

Brigitte: “I think you don’t have to be unhappy when you have bad grades at school. You can also be happy when you have Ds or Es in your finals.”

Anna: “But that is depressing. You would be concerned about it.”

Christina: “Indeed, concerned about not making it into the next class level.”

Doris: “Exactly!” (Focus group, secondary school, 15-16 years old).

Also, spending leisure time on hobbies or participating in events was mentioned as a contributor to happiness. Thus, having a positive work-life balance is an important aspect for young people’s well-being.

Life satisfaction

Almost all of our respondents reported that they were satisfied with their current lives. They attributed their satisfaction to their high standard of living, their independence, reaching their aims, and their freedom of choice. Some of them saw some potential for improvement; however this does not mean that they are less satisfied:

“Of course, there are some aspects where you clearly notice that you’ll have to change something. But I guess this is quite common in this phase of life. Because doing everything right immediately is difficult, I think. So I assume that some problems have to arise, but so far there haven’t been any problems that could not have been solved. So I would say that I am very satisfied as long as I have the opportunity to change some things.” (Interview, Stefan, male, 24 years old)

Having good opportunities for a future career was also considered as an important aspect of life satisfaction. One interviewee reported having finished her studies and training with a famous car producer. She received a good job reference and has the

opportunity to spend a year in Japan:

I: "Which aspects in your life are making you more satisfied? And in which fields do you recognise it when things don't work that well?"

RES: "In general? Well, the obvious things. [...] Having a career, having the opportunity to earn some money, at least for a few years ... and still having the opportunity to go to Japan. That would make me happy. [...] And also the company of animals." (Interview, Ellen, female, 23 years old).

Those young people engaged in the political organisation emphasised that being satisfied was always a matter of individual demands. In this context a clear criticism of capitalism came to the fore, as young people were aware of the high standard of living they have in Germany, but on the other hand they also recognised increased demands stemming from this:

"Recently I heard the saying: "If you don't have any problems, you will create some." I think it is difficult to transfer, but it demonstrates the tendency for people from the first world [...] to behave by showing how values which are irrelevant from my point of view are reproduced, by evoking the need for buying a new car or having Nikes." (Interview, Zackary, 18 years old).

Psychological well-being

Some points contributing to the psychological dimension of well-being have been mentioned in the sub-sections before (e.g. reaching personal aims). Also, freedom was mentioned several times as an important contributor to positive well-being:

"Well-being? Feeling free, not being ashamed in front of others, feeling good in every situation." (Interview, Susanne, female, 19 years old).

Diverse respondents stated that they were longing for autonomy, and that this aspect has become more and more important for their well-being during recent years. At the same time, they still live with their parents and are not mature when it comes to the law. Thus, their parents actually constrain their wish for autonomy and their individual development. As Ella puts it:

"I think these parent-children relationships are very difficult for young people, because the point is to emancipate and feel independent and autonomous. So, getting free and going your own way, and despite this parents still have the power of the last word." (Interview, Ella, female, 17 years old).

The focus group members who were not involved in any civic or political organisation discussed different kinds of success and appreciation as driving factors for their

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

happiness, and thus also their well-being:

Erik: "I guess I am happy when I succeed in whatever I am doing. This can be at university or the football club. It's always good to know that the time you invest in some activity is worth it and you will receive something in return. If you realise that, it'll make you happy.

Hubert: "[...] You really have this feeling of happiness when you have reached a certain position in a group, when you are valuable for this group. [...] On the other hand the group gives you as much as you give to the group."

Rainer: "Above all, I feel happy when I know that despite all the problems that might arise at university or in a job, people around you give you support. That is the highest level of happiness for me." (Focus group, not involved in an organisation, 21-24 years old)

3.3. Remarks on the definition and operationalisation of 'well-being' in the fieldwork

The term 'well-being' was hard to grasp for some young people, as they realised that there are several dimensions contributing to well-being. Thus, questions asking for a global understanding of well-being were often considered difficult to answer. Even for well-educated and reflective respondents, it was hardly possible to distinguish between a global understanding of (positive) well-being and happiness. Also, the section focusing on life satisfaction was perceived as redundant, as this concept was considered too similar to previous concepts to represent an additional interview section.

Questions asking for a general perception of well-being aspects for young people in Germany were clearly criticised by the interviewees. They emphasised that it was not possible to make statements referring to youth, as in fact the plurality of society contradicts generalisations like this. The interviewees pointed out that there are huge differences among various groups of young people, and thus, well-being will always be a matter of individuality.

Recalling what was important with respect to well-being in their childhood seemed to be a difficult task for the majority of our interviewees. They summarised that "family", "friends" and "playing" underpinned their well-being at this stage, but were not able to remember these times in depth. Imagining their well-being in the future seemed a bit easier, as they could refer to their parents' lives. However, as a consequence, assumptions about which dimensions of well-being will be of special importance to them in the future were more a summary of the well-being of today's

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

parents' generation. Thus, this section appeared to us as not providing information about children's and young people's well-being.

Apparently, health-related aspects of well-being, such as physical health in general and also mental illness only came to the fore when the interviewee had recently been confronted with difficulties in this area. This might concern the interviewee himself/herself or people close to them. For example, one interviewee was worried that she might become depressed in the future, because her mother does. Similarly, negative influences on well-being such as abuse or drug and alcohol consumption were mentioned only by those interviewees who lived in a deprived area. Due to this observation, we are wondering if it could be fruitful to implement a section concentrating on health-related issues.

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

The interviews with the children demonstrated that it was a demanding task for them to distinguish between the diverse dimensions of well-being. Additionally, the interviews with children remained on a rather superficial level, as the interviewees were clearly overwhelmed by the content of the interviews and the interview situation.

Respondents with a good educational background were more reflective about the different aspects of well-being, and thus were able to contribute more to questions about the global understanding of well-being, happiness or life satisfaction. The focus group for non-members of organisations, for example, considered micro and macro sociological levels as well as the influence of the media when it came to life satisfaction:

Rainer: "That's why you have to take into consideration the personal level when it comes to being satisfied or not. I consider my life satisfaction as very high, but when I think outside the box, I am not satisfied, because of the things that are going wrong all over the world. So, everyone has to decide for himself how much of this dissatisfaction coming from the big world he will internalise. In the end, the most important thing is being satisfied with my life. Everyone has to decide about this on his own, within the global framework given."

Hubert: "I would probably say that depending on the group you are involved in there will be certain differences. By this I mean that one person might own the latest console and the next one only its predecessor ... it starts with things like that. I guess this can also cause some dissatisfaction. [...] I am convinced

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

that this is a result of the media's influence. The media makes society seem dissatisfied. But when you are in a situation like this interview, you suddenly recognise that this is not true. They are creating this dissatisfaction. That is an indicator of their intention to generate purchasing power. [...] What is your car worth, if you could also have the latest model? And then your neighbour gets the latest model ... "Wait, I could do that as well!" (Focus group, not involved in an organisation, 21-24 years old).

Furthermore, those young people who are engaged in the political organisation were able to consider well-being from different perspectives without any probing. Similarly to well-educated young people in general, they not only referred to their individual situation, but also reflected on broader sociological contexts and the importance of existing structures in Germany. In this context, they mentioned diverse support opportunities, such as coaching for pupils, financial support for students, or organisations which help to arrange voluntary work abroad after school exams. Also – from a critical perspective – they were aware of general pressure to perform and fit into stereotypes, which works against tolerance and the acceptance of people's individuality.

I: "It just became clear that in Germany people suffer from a kind of pressure to adapt to norms, because you don't usually express all of your opinions straight to one another's faces. And that this can set up some pressure on you?"

RES: "Yes, exactly. For example, I have a very left-wing oriented opinion as I am very active in feminist issues. And often people who don't know me give me the feedback that it is totally stupid what I am talking about, or not feasible at all. And I think that this is a problem that is connected with opinions which contradict conservative mainstream opinion. So I think it is a problem for young people to develop freely." (Interview, Ella, female, 17 years old).

Additionally, the psychological dimension of well-being was covered by these interviewees in more depth than was the case with other respondents.

5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement

Extent to which their own voice is heard within society

The children interviewed reported some adults listening to them, as well as those who don't. There was no consistent result when it comes to the perception of being heard in society, except for the fact that children always referred to the micro level of society (their family and teachers). One respondent pointed out that being heard

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

depends on the person she is talking to:

RES: "Well, when it comes to adults ... adults I am not that familiar with I feel heard. But my family ... they don't take me that seriously."

I: "How does that work?"

RES: "I don't know. My mom ... well, except my grandpa, my father and my stepmom"

I: "Do you mean your mom does not listen to you?"

RES: "No. She doesn't listen to me at all." (Interview, Petra, female, 13 years old).

It seems that adult persons who do not belong to the family circle listen to the children more often, or at least convey this to them. Ali, for example, claimed to trust his teachers when he was asked if he felt heard by adults:

I: "And when you talk to teachers or other adults, do you think that they are interested in your opinions? Or respect your opinions?"

RES: "The teachers, yes. But my brother, for example, does not. He doesn't give a shit about it. Talking to him does not make any sense. In most cases we just insult each other." (Interview, Ali, male, 14 years old).

Some of the young people interviewed who were not engaged in any organisation do not feel the need for fundamental changes in their everyday life. Thus, they were surprised when asked if they felt heard. These interviewees evaluated their chances of being heard (if they developed a need for it) as good. They emphasised that they had various opportunities for public engagement, for instance participating in demonstrations, in political organisations, or through NGOs. If they did so, they summarised, they would feel that they were being heard in today's society.

Other interviewees revealed different views. For example, young people between the age of 15 and 17 years reported that they did not feel heard in society, whereas at least some of the interviewees aged 18 years and older had an opposite perception. However, those 18 year old respondents who were interviewed as members of an organisation were sceptical when it came to being heard in society. Thus, feeling heard or not is not a matter of age. Obviously, those young people who are not convinced that adults listen to them feel disappointed by this, and sometimes even become angry:

Brigitte: "[...] I think at the moment it's worse than it used to be in former times, in our class. Our new teacher ... when we want to say a few things or express our opinions, he just ignores us, because he thinks: "They don't have a say anyway, and I have the control."

I: "How does this make you feel? Do you feel uncomfortable because of this?"

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

Anna: "Somehow this makes you angry."

Eva/ Brigitte: "Exactly!" (Focus group, compulsory school, 15-16 years old).

In the context of organisations, young people perceive that they have better opportunities for being heard and thus to have an influence on the society they live in. Some of them emphasised that it always needed several people banding together to be heard. However, this does not necessarily mean that young people felt that they had a chance to change things they don't like:

"[...] I think we are heard, but perhaps not taken seriously. Especially when it comes to engagement in politics. I personally know only a few young people who are politically engaged." (Interview, Ellen, female, 23 years old)

Finally, one respondent perceived some differences when it comes to being heard in society, depending on the socio-demographic background of young people:

"[...] I am convinced that we are considered differently in society. Young people, depending on ethnicity, education, our parents' educational level, ... I have never thought about it, but I don't think that we are heard." (Interview, Susanne, female, 19 years old).

Usefulness of research on well-being

As implied above, dealing with the macro level of society seems too demanding for the children interviewed. Thus, they were not able to evaluate the usefulness of research on well-being for their own position in society:

"Actually, I think surveys are OK. I don't know what they are used for, but let's see." (Interview, Maria, female, 13 years old).

In contrast, the young people interviewed were able to realise the potential of well-being studies and their usefulness for the development of society:

"[...] In a case where there are any particular findings resulting from a study, one could learn that more support is needed in a certain field. I think society can only be developed when there is enough information as a basis for making decisions. [...] That's why I think it is important to participate." (Interview, Stefan, male, 24 years old).

Additionally, the aspect of comparing studies internationally was appreciated by the interviewees:

"Well, I think that many people don't pay attention to their everyday lives. [...] Everybody abroad, say in Poland, assumes that in Germany everyone has a

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

better life and everybody is feeling well. We'll see if this is really the case or not." (Interview, Susanne, female, 19 years old).

One focus group member also pointed out that he values being given the opportunity of expressing his opinion when participating in well-being studies:

"I think by doing this it is easy to show that young people are also equal people with problems just like everybody else has. I think this is a good approach ... "What are youths concerned with?", "Why are they dissatisfied?", "Why are they satisfied?" ... this results in a good overview which can also be referred to by older generations. (Focus group, not involved in an organisation, Rainer, 21 years old).

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

The majority of the children interviewed revealed a positive attitude towards interviews and surveys in general and would agree to participate in further studies. The topic of well-being caught their interest, which is the key factor for their willingness to participate in a study.

This result is also true for the young people interviewed. It was highlighted specifically by every interviewee, as well as the focus group from the political organisation, that their motivation for participating in any research study was realising that it would make sense to them. This engagement could be achieved because the topic sounds interesting to them, or by explaining the political potential a study has, or even its importance to the researchers involved.

"On the one hand it would help to make clear what use a project like this has, for instance for you as collaborator. And what potential it has, which approach it uses, what demands it has for itself and what aims it has." (Interview, Zackary, male, 18 years old).

Also, the idea of panel participation was accepted by all the young respondents, as long as the topic of the follow-up studies would be able to capture their interest as much as the first one did. They favoured the need for a distinction from adults' opinions and emphasised the necessity of a longitudinal study, as today young people's needs and opportunities change quickly and thus can only be captured adequately by up-to-date studies. In this context, they especially highlighted the technological progress that influences their everyday lives (e.g. smartphones) and changing determining factors in life (such as forming a relationship or not, having a partner and friends living in the same city or not, studying or doing vocational education etc.). From their point of view, these aspects should not be neglected when doing research on well-being.

MYWEB: FP7-613368

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

Usefulness of incentives

The effect of incentives has to be considered with care. The children interviewed pointed out that incentives would not have any effect on their decision to participate in a survey. For them, the research topic is the decisive point.

I: "If I would like to do another study with you in a year, and you say 'no', would you agree to participate if we gave you a present or another kind of incentive? Or would you say you would not care about that?"

RES: "[Laughing] No, you can't do something like that with me." (Interview, Petra, female, 13 years old).

However, the children interviewed could imagine that other people of their age could be convinced by incentives.

Similarly, the majority of our young people interviewed rejected the idea of being given incentives for participating in studies. They pointed out that the topic and the potential for influencing politics would be the decisive points when it came to deciding on survey participation. Interviewees who would appreciate incentives came from the section of the young people outside organisations, and also from the group which was interviewed at school.

Comfortable places in which to be interviewed

All children were interviewed in a separate quiet room at their school. For most of them this was a comfortable interview situation. However, other interview places such as their home or, in the summer, an outdoor venue were also considered as alternatives.

Young people were interviewed at school, in cafés in the research institute, or in a room belonging to their organisation. Apart from one interview in a café, the interviews were conducted in a quiet and private atmosphere. All interviewees assured us that they were happy with the place chosen for the interview. However, some also mentioned that under different circumstances (e.g. having a lot to do) they would have appreciated being interviewed at home. This result cannot be generalised, as some respondents preferred an environment outside their home.

6. Other recommendations informing the MYWEB project

For all interviewees, the most significant factor for participating in surveys is a topic which is interesting and important to them. Thus, when it comes to planning a panel study, it will be a demanding task to keep up the respondents' interest. If this is not done, there will be tremendous panel attrition from the second or third panel wave onwards. In order to remain interesting, each panel wave could offer something new for the respondents, such as incentives, presentations of interim results, or, if using the web mode, avatars or animations implemented in the survey.

Another aspect young people would appreciate when participating in panel studies is being interviewed by the same interviewers over the course of the study. This would make them feel more secure, especially when talking about negative aspects of well-being.

In order to reduce the respondent burden, the focus group drawn from young people who belonged to an organisation pointed out that it would be advisable to have time periods in between the study waves which should not be too short (e.g. one wave in two years seemed reasonable to them).

Furthermore, it was mentioned several times that some flexibility in the process of interviewing would be appreciated. This concerns flexibility in scheduling (doing an interview whenever the respondent would like to), place (doing the interview at the respondent's home or work place) and survey mode (doing interviews over the telephone or in web mode).