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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 (Hungary)**

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## 1.Introduction

The self-evaluation of one's quality of life depends not only on the 'objective' socio-economic, technical and biological environment, but also on the 'subjective' interpretation of these factors. From an action theoretical point of view, this process is embedded in the context of everyday experience that is the 'reproduction of the lifeworld' (Schütz 1974) or the 'social reproduction of reality' (Berger-Luckmann 1966). Obviously, different social groups not only face divergent challenges, but they also have various capabilities and potentials for interpreting them. Children and young people are in a special situation concerning both of these dimensions. Being in the middle of the process of acquiring autonomy in the psychological and social sense, they are in a 'liminal state' characterized by various difficulties and paradoxes.

While parents are primary reference points of recognition and identity construction, they are also obstacles to constituting an independent social sphere. Such emotional features make families one of the most important sources of subjective well-being: the parents' material difficulties or the families' emotional conflicts are amongst the most important threats to children's and young people's well-being. While schools are the primary institutions for evaluating worthiness and determining social mobility, they are also agencies of 'discipline and punishment'(Foucault 1975) provoking resistance and revolt. Such instrumental and disciplinary functions make schools another key dimension of the constitution of subjective well-being: school failures and dysfunctions are amongst the most important sources of anxiety, low self-esteem or deviant behaviour patterns. As time passes, peer groups and intimate relationships become more and more important reference points for one's self-esteem. Accordingly, they become central constituents of subjective well-being: peer exclusion, bullying or the lack of intimate relationships are amongst the most important sources of depression or identity crisis.

These factors indicate the specific challenges affecting children and young people. These cohort effects are contextualized by macro socio-economic factors. The level of inequalities, the institutional culture, the discourses of pedagogy and intimacy and youth culture all affect the potential difficulties in family, school and peer groups and the available interpersonal or institutional help. In this sense, Hungarian children's and young people's interpretation of the most important challenges and the options of treating them expresses the local specificities of constituting subjective well-being. These are explored based on interviews and focus groups conducted with Hungarian children and young people selected from various social backgrounds.

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## 2. Fieldwork characteristics

### 2.1 Fieldwork

Three researchers of the Hungarian team participated in making the interviews and focus groups. Five interviews and one focus group were conducted with pupils of an elementary school found in a suburban area of Budapest. The school was chosen because of its pedagogical characteristics and the background of the students. The school is considered amongst the better schools in the area, with much innovation in the curriculum. The students come from two types of social background: part comes from the middle class garden suburb nearby and part comes from the working class block flats also nearby.

Another six interviews and one focus group were conducted with high school students in Nyíregyháza. The school was chosen because of its location and the background of the students. Nyíregyháza is a regional city in northeastern Hungary. This enables the comparison of schools located in urban areas, but characterized by economic differences. The students come from two types of social background: urban middle class and socially mobile inhabitants of nearby villages. In this sense, three characteristically different ideal typical social groups were represented: urban middle class, working class and post-peasantry.

Four interviews and one focus group were made with activist young people. The activists were partly recruited from the members of a student organization at the University of Debrecen, which is aimed at discussing public and political issues. Partly they were recruited in an organization aimed at helping young people facing various difficulties (e.g. family or school traumas, alcohol or drug problems). The remaining five interviews and one focus group were led with young people reached through the network of these participants, with a special emphasis on young people facing economic, physical or psychological difficulties in their life. Such focus was the consequence of the presumption that such a target group is difficult to reach, but may provide important information on the challenges of well-being. Table 1 summarizes the demographic data.

**Table1. Demographic characteristics of the participants**

	Interviews	Focus groups
<b>Pupils from primary school</b>	3 boys (12, 13, 14 years old), 2 girls (12, 13 years old), all live in Budapest with their parents, learning full time in a suburban school	1 boy (13 years old), 2 girls (both 13 years old), all live in Budapest with their parents, learning full time in a suburb school
<b>Pupils from</b>	1 boy (17), 5 girls (18, 17, 16,	2 boys (both 15), 1 girl (14), all live

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<b>secondary school</b>	18, 16), all live in Nyíregyháza (county capital in northeastern Hungary) with their parents, learning full time in a local high school	in Nyíregyháza with their parents, learning full time in a local high school
<b>Non-organised young people</b>	4 boys (17, 18, 20, 22), 1 girl (20), random young people reached through the network of Budapest students. 4 of them were learning full time, 1 was working part time	3 boys (all 16), 1 girl (15), random young people reached through the network of high school students in Nyíregyháza
<b>Involved young people</b>	3 boys (20, 19, 21), 1 girl (22), members of a university political debate circle at the University of Debrecen. 2 of them were learning full time, 2 of the were working part time	1 boy (18), 4 girls (16, 18, 20, 20), members of an organization for young people in difficult situation in Budapest

## ***2.2. Methodological differences among interviews and focus groups***

We experienced that interviews were more suitable for discussing issues of well-being, as sensitive topics often came up. In focus group situations, children and young people were keener on preserving their façade, which made it more difficult to dig deeper than is common. Focus groups turned out to be more suitable in one case: the discussion of public issues. Topics that evoked collective identity instead of personal identity were explained more willingly and in more detail. This partly explains why interviews worked better: subjective well-being seems to be more related to personal than collective identity. However, as this is not an exclusive connection, mixing both methods still seems to be a valid choice.

## **3. Main empirical findings**

In general, children's and young people's perception of well-being differed concerning their level of reflexivity and consciousness. Children proved to be more dependent on their families, which mean that they were less likely to express individual desires, goals and problems. Instead, they tended to express the norms of the relevant authority figures of their life (e.g. parents or teachers). On the other hand, this also means that they tended to

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channel the problems of these socialization agents more directly into their own life, resulting in augmented susceptibility to the dysfunction of family and school.

### ***3.1. Understanding and measuring well-being among children***

#### **Global understanding/definition of well-being**

For most children, the concept of well-being is fundamentally related to material well-being, i.e., the potential to satisfy one's needs of consumption.

“Q: If I ask you what well-being means to you, what do you say?

R: Well, those who are capable of buying anything. I mean, not everything, but the things they desire. (interview, János, male, 12)

Q: What makes life good?

R: Obviously money. Not too much, but an average amount.

Q: How much is too much?

R: Well, if you have a car that is too expensive for example, like a BMW. I think having a BMW or an Audi is showing off. (...) I would like to have everything I need. Not everything in general, but things I need. For example, if I want a chocolate bar, I can buy it.” (interview, Péter, male, 13)

As the excerpts indicate, material well-being is not at all an extreme, infinite richness, but instead the basis of a good life. These children are aware of the negative moral connotation of infinite richness, which makes them cautious. On the other hand, their perception of material well-being is in many ways naïve. This is expressed in the chosen symbols of consumption, which either belong to the sphere of adult life (e.g. the car), or to the children's world (e.g. the chocolate bar). Material well-being in this sense is a distant phenomenon for children. As it is mainly the concern of adults, they do not have many firsthand impressions: “I think well-being is when parents are together. You have siblings, you can participate in sports or artistic activities, so your parents can finance your activities.” (focus group, Juli, female, 12).

Besides material factors, various aspects of recognition appear on children's horizons when asked about well-being. According to Axel Honneth's theory, the different forms of recognition are central dimensions of social interactions, as they are indispensable for maintaining an autonomous self. Love, which is the recognition of one's individuality by another individual, is the first aspect of recognition ensuring trust and confidence. Solidarity, which is the recognition of one's particular identity and performance by the community, is the second aspect of recognition ensuring self-esteem. Rights, which are the recognition of one's universal human dignity by the community, is the third aspect of recognition ensuring

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moral competence and self-respect (Honneth 1996). In the narration of children, all of these factors appear with different weight.

The most important factor seems to be family peace and the experience of love.

“Q: What does well-being mean to you?

R: Well, to have everything in order at home, not to argue, just a good atmosphere.”  
(interview, Kati, female, 13)

“Q: Could you explain to me, what does well-being mean for you?

R: Firstly, the material background, secondly the relationship of the family members.

Q: What do you mean by that?

R: That the parents are not divorced.

Q: Why do you think it’s so important?

R: Because this way the family members are together and help each other. Let’s say my parents were divorcing, I would be really angry. Let’s say I would go to my father, but that would not solve anything.” (interview, Anna, female, 12)

Family quarrels, a tense atmosphere or the chance of divorce are all among the most frightening potentials in the eyes of children, which can happen at home. In this sense, the emotional climate of the family plays a particularly important role in the subjective well-being of children: while love experienced in a secure climate is perceived as an essential precondition for a good life, various signs of tension are perceived as indicators of a distressing life.

Besides a peaceful, supporting family, the evaluation of the school also plays a key role in overall well-being.

“Q: What do you need to feel good in an ordinary day?

R: Well, to get good grades.

Q: And why is it important to get good grades?

R: Well, I would like to ‘become someone’ in my life. I would like to avoid jobs that I don’t like at all and pay little. Instead, I would like to have a job that pays well and I enjoy.” (interview, János, male, 12)

Even though not every child sensed the importance of school performance as clearly as János, most of them referred to the feedback of the school as a key component of their everyday well-being. School is the main field of productivity in children’s life, where their individual capability is measured by the community. Consequently they internalize the measures and evaluation of the school, culminating in the fetishizing of grades. Good grades are uncritically perceived as a sign of worthiness, while bad grades as a sign of incompetence. Being the primary source of self-esteem, school success expressed in grades plays a distinctive role in subjective well-being.

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Leisure activities contribute to well-being in a different way. They are distinctive terrain of identity construction, as they refer to chosen experiences that express one's identity (Giddens 1991, Schulze 1992). Even though leisure activities, such as sports or arts are chosen less individually (compared to young people), they may already play a key role in well-being.

“Q: If someone asked you what well-being is, what would you answer?

R: For me, well-being is not necessarily having everything I want, only the chance to do what I really like to do. I mean doing sports, playing my drum or going to a concert. The things I like to do. (...) I really don't like to be hindered in these activities. Unfortunately there was an example: one of my classmates' parents forbade him to do sports because of a bad grade. I think that's a really bad reaction, which I condemn.” (interview, Lajos, male, 13)

Even though not every child had such strong identification with either sports or other hobbies, many of them had their own autonomous sphere of action. Such activities seemed to be evaluated as particularly important terrains of identity construction, which explains their relevance for well-being.

### **Major domains of well-being**

When analyzed in detail, the general impressions cited above were complemented by the personal experiences of difficulties and challenges. These experiences proved to play a constitutive role as children tended to emphasize domains of well-being that caused them problems in their personal everyday life. In this sense, they outlined the domains of well-being in a negative way by indicating the obstacles. Even if the level of hardship differed, many children mentioned experiencing material difficulties.

“Q: Does your family have any material difficulties?

R: Well, it's difficult to say. We manage somehow, even if we have problems.

Q: What do you mean? Do you have problems with the bills at the end of the month?

R: Well, rarely the bills, but other things, which are expensive. Without them we've got problems.” (interview, János, male, 12)

As our research could not reach children living in extreme poverty, the answers usually referred to difficulties of consumption, not to meeting basic needs. However, their interpretations show that the relative economic deprivation may also undermine the sense of well-being and result in anxiety or focus on strictly material values.

Family tensions were mentioned even more frequently and sometimes they indicated more serious problems compared to material insecurity. In some cases, these difficulties were the result of material problems.

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“R: My father, well he earns a lot of money, much more than my mother. OK, he’s not like a millionaire, but he’s rich. Despite this, he doesn’t give us money. Even if he is supposed to give, because they were divorced, so he is obliged to give child support, but he doesn’t. (...) That’s not the reason why I don’t like my father. I mean I like him of course, but he has been arguing a lot with Mom.

Q: So they argued a lot?

R: Yes. I mean not that much. Let’s say there was a big fight once a month.”(interview, Péter, male, 13)

In this case, the emotional burden of family tension is complemented by the trauma of the divorce and disappointment caused by the lack of material support. As a result, there is frustration in Péter, which is interpreted as a distancing from his father and denial of his love. Such unresolved trauma is expressed in the controversial interpretation of his relationship with his father, which has negative consequences for his psychological well-being as well.

Another type of family tension originates in the parents' disciplinary attempts.

“Q: And what makes you sad in an average day?

R: When I argue with my mother, I always have a guilty conscience and I’m sure that I did something wrong or something like that.

Q: And what do you argue about?

R: For example, she wants me to start doing my homework. (...) I remember once I argued with Mom and I knew she was right, but I couldn’t help it and it hurt her. And this was really bad. My father refused to talk to me because of that as well, and I saw that he didn’t like what he saw either. I like to see in their behaviour that everything is fine, but that time I couldn’t help it.” (interview, Anna, female, 12)

It seems that even a conflict as simple as arguing about homework has emotional consequences. For Anna it is a source of guilt and self-blaming. As this example shows, such seemingly insignificant family conflicts may have burdens of psychological well-being as their cost.

Another type of family tension may be the result of unresolved hurt, such as the consequences of a divorce.

“Q: How is your relationship with your stepmother?

R: Well, when I was younger it was better. When I became an adolescent it got worse, because I distanced myself from her and I said I don’t need her.

Q: I see.

R: So there was something within me. And to be honest it’s still there.

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Q: What may be the reason?

R: I don't really know, but I remember that it was really bad for me. When there was a conflict, she sided with my father.

Q: So the front lines appeared...

R: Yes and I didn't want her to be there. And I did everything to make them divorce. It didn't succeed.

Q: What do you mean?

R: You know, we were arguing and I raised the tension. I didn't talk to her at all. Now it's actually getting better. She tries to adapt to my behaviour and I also avoid conflicts by going up to my room. We don't talk too much, but we can manage family time without a fight. Obviously not all the time...

Q: Have you ever been hurt physically?

R: Yes, once my stepmother hit me. But it was just a slap. So nothing serious.”  
(interview, Laura, female, 13)

As Laura says, the divorce of her parents caused frustration that she attempted to handle in confrontations with her stepmother. Even if she has quite reflective and developed perspective for her age, she cannot resist the irrational urge of confrontation, which results in a family cold war. If such unresolved anger is maintained, in the long run it endangers psychological well-being. This potential of escalation is expressed in the expansion of the conflict to the level of physical aggression.

Another type of family tension is the suspension of communication.

“Q: If you have a problem, do you feel could you talk it over with somebody at home?

R: Usually if I have a problem, I don't talk about it at home. I'd rather stay silent and think that whatever they want to do, I don't participate.” (interview, Klára, female, 13)

Ceasing family communication refers to a strategy that does not provide long-term solutions, despite its seemingly pacifying character. By choosing to avoid confrontation, Klára also alienates herself from family relationships, which are meant to provide her with trust and confidence. This potentially leads to difficulties in extra-family relationships as well.

The last type of family tension mentioned by the participating children is the consequence of parental control of either study schedules or leisure time.

“R: There is a good sports club in the next district, but my father doesn't let me go there because that area has bad reputation.

Q: I see. Does he worry much about you?

R: He's really strict and he also worries a lot.

Q: What do you mean?

R: Studying, for example, or going out. I mean I can go out, but there are certain limits. And he knows wherever I go, because he has friends everywhere.” (interview, Laura, female, 13)

Even though limitations of autonomy affect children as well, they seem to be less important compared to adolescence, when identity construction becomes central.

Besides the material and emotional characteristics of the families, school was also a distinctive terrain of potential difficulties and challenges. In school, basically two kinds of problems were mentioned by children: personal educational failures and conflicts with teachers.

“Q: You mentioned your parents are strict concerning your grades.

R: Well, they don’t like average or below average grades.

Q: What do you mean?

R: Well, they accept if I get a 3 (on a scale of 5), but not for every subject. They say I have the brains, but I’m lazy.

Q: Do you agree with this?

R: Partly yes, but frankly I can’t learn things I’m not interested in at all. Let’s take history: I’m a stable 3, sometimes I aim for a 4, but I’m not interested at all... And history is unfortunately particularly important for my father.” (interview, Klára, female, 13)

As Klára expresses, grade quality is a social construction based on the expectations of parents, teachers and children. In many cases these expectations are in conflict, which results in either actual social conflicts or internalized conflicts resulting in anxiety. In both cases, well-being is damaged.

Teachers are widely criticized by children because of unfair treatment, which however cannot be discussed properly because of the unequal communicative positions.

“I get angry if I experience injustice. I really don’t like it and this causes many problems. That’s why I have 3 (on a scale of 5) for my behaviour, because if I’ve got a problem I express that ‘it’s unfair!’, because I feel this way and I can’t prevent this even if I should. For example, if the teacher gives me detention for no reason. For example, last year one of my classmates kicked the dust-bin and I was punished, even though I wasn’t involved at all. (...) So I argued with teacher for quite a while, because I felt it was unfair.” (interview, Péter, male, 13)

“Last time I got detention, it was because we were talking loudly during class. I told my father that I would like to object to this punishment, because I felt it was unfair,

but he told me not to do because it could cause problems later. But it really frustrates me.” (interview, Anna, female, 12)

As these excerpts exemplify, teacher-pupil relationships may often become controversial if there is no space for discussing dissent. Péter's angry outburst prevents any rational communication, while in case of Anna a distrustful political culture originates from her parents. According to Habermas, these ‘distortions of communication’ not only limit the moral fundamentals of a community by damaging democratic relationships, but also result in an alienating or anomic atmosphere (Habermas 1990). Such distortions of social integration affect many levels of well-being: they not only distort self-respect by undermining a fair institutional culture in a Honnethian sense, but they also burden interpersonal relationships with distrust and cause psychological stress.

Besides family and school, peer group relationships are also distinctive sources of experiences determining the sentiment of well-being. Isolation and bullying are among the most traumatic difficulties children mentioned.

“Q: You mentioned you have friends on your football team.

R: Yeah, they are better friends than my classmates.

Q: What’s the matter with them?

R: Well, they have been fucking with me, that’s what. Or to be more polite they ‘hurt me’, but that’s a faggot word.

Q: Go on.

R: So they have been screwing with me. They’ve been mocking me because I came from a religious school.

Q: Sounds tough.

R: Yeah, but I don’t care. I used to be religious, but not anymore. I know that I’m not religious anymore. Not that it would be a problem if I was. I have religious connections, people that I don’t hate.

Q: What about friends from your former school?

R: I hate them all. They're a bunch of losers.

Q: Did they hurt you too?

R: No, actually I had good relationship with them... I can’t really explain. There was anger in me, because they allied against me... There was also a time when I was fighting a lot. Also I was a better football player, so they started to treat me as if I was showing off.” (interview, Aladár, male 13)

As Aladár conveys, peer group isolation and bullying has traumatic consequences. His frustration is expressed by the sudden use of aggressive, impolite words and controversies within the narration. He clearly could not resolve the experience of isolation and bullying. Instead, he chooses to channel his frustration into actual or verbal aggression.

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The last domain children mention is health. Only a few participants referred to health problems, but they also felt that it severely limits their ability to do whatever they want.

“R: I can’t really go to parties because of my epilepsy and the flashing lights could disturb me.

Q: Do you take medicines regularly?

R: Yes, they augmented my dose and I’m a bit tired as well because of it.

Q: And does this affect your everyday life in any way?

R: I had seizures two times, which was caused by the continuous lack of sleep and exhaustion..

Q: In school camps?

R: No, with my grandparents, in Serbia, because I have relatives there. We were in the city because of some festivity and I stayed up late and there were flashes too. That may have caused the seizure.

Q: I see.

R: And also because of this, I can’t watch TV or monitors at night. My father forbids me. And this is really bad, because all my friends are chatting at that time and I can’t participate.

Q: How about sleeping? Is it OK?

R: Not really. I have been examined and they told me that my sleep cycles are disturbed. That’s why I’m tired every day.” (interview, Laura, female, 13)

Even though Laura does not overemphasize it, epilepsy plays a central role in her life. Not only does it limit her free time in several ways and hinder her in socializing, it also causes continuous fatigue, which undermines her regular daily activities.

## Happiness

When asked about the factors of happiness, children usually referred to satisfying their desires. The most important of these proved to be the quality of friendships or intimate relationships.

“Q: Now I would like to ask you to imagine a good day. Tell me about it!

R: Well it was a few years ago. I got some good grades and we had great fun with my friends. All of them were there and we played an excellent game.

Q: What were you doing?

R: We played football and just hung out and talked about interesting issues.

Q: Like what?

R: A lot of things! We really like to talk about interesting topics, like the universe or alien life forms or unicellular organisms.” (interview, János, male, 12)

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“Q: Now I would like you to tell me about one of your really good days.

R: Well it was a perfect day when my good friend and my boyfriend came over. We watched movies, they slept over, we woke up late, we went to play billiards, we went to the cinema and in the evening we went to a small party. So we spent the whole day together and it was really good.” (interview, Klára, female, 13)

“Q: How did you feel recently?

R: Rather unhappy, because I broke up with my boyfriend. It was partly a relief as we argued a lot, but it was difficult.” (interview, Laura, female, 13)

Time spent with friends or partners is mentioned by almost everyone when asked about an ideal day, which indicates that children’s well-being is strongly dependent on the quality of their social relationships. Friendships serve not only as partners for spending free time, but also a point of reference for identity construction. Accordingly, their quality affects overall well-being as well.

Besides these relationships, happiness is also strongly attached to free-time activities including doing sports or creating art, playing computer games, watching movies or listening to music.

“I love to play handball! I can say it’s my life. (interview, Jócó, male, 13)

I love to sit and listen to pop music. Even if others make fun of me for it, I’m in love with ‘One Direction’! (interview, Anna, female, 12)

We love to play computer games like FIFA and Call of Duty on Playstation. And also strategic games on the phone.” (interview, Aladár, male, 13)

These various activities may differ in many ways, but they serve the same function of satisfying desires. In this sense, they hold not only the opportunity for experiencing pleasure, but also for being rewarded or the potential of escaping problems.

### **Life satisfaction**

While happiness is attached to concrete activities involving friends or hobbies, life satisfaction is a latent dimension of well-being. It depends on the structural conditions, the institutional environment, the stability of interactions and the chances of success. Among these factors, the importance of family resources, including cultural, economic or social capital, were often emphasized.

“Q: You haven’t talked about your family. What needs to be known about them?

R: My parents earn a good living. Not that we are rich, but theoretically we are living well.

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Q: What is their occupation?

R: Both of them are lawyers. Theoretically that's a good paying job, but now we have debt, so we are not in as good of a situation as we could be. (...) On the other hand, they can help me with other things as well. My mother knows the director of the high school where I want to go, so she could arrange my entrance. But I don't want that, because I think that's cheating. I'd rather struggle to get in." (interview, Károly, male, 13)

As Károly expresses, his family provides both material and social resources. Besides the secure consequences, these potentials also have disturbing aspects. Both richness and influence can be perceived as something unjust, as they imply inequalities and undeserved advantages. Even though such sensitivity is not generally found among children, it is important to emphasize its presence in order to understand the complex and sometimes paradox structure of satisfaction.

Families may provide not only capital, but also opportunities to discuss difficulties, whose potential was also emphasized by several children.

"Q: Can you discuss everything with your parents?

R: Absolutely. There is nothing that I should be afraid of mentioning at home, because I'm 100 percent sure they'll understand me. We've discussed everything for as long as I can remember.

Q: How about their problems? Are they stressed often?

R: Not really. They used to be stressed during the divorce, but now things have become calm." (interview, Péter, male, 13)

"Q: How is your relationship with your father?

R: Quite good. I was always daddy's little girl. He practically raised me from an early age. So I can really count on him. Even if I don't tell him everything, if I'm in trouble I can turn to him." (interview, Laura, female, 13)

While capital proved to be controversial in some cases, a deliberative communication climate was mentioned by every child as an essential precondition for feeling secure. Obviously a strong, trustful and communicative climate in the family is essential not only as an expression of love, but also as proof that children are not left alone with their problems. Such emotional and cognitive support can resolve many fears that children and young people experience, while its lack may result in anxiety.

Besides family, positive feedback from school is another important aspect of life satisfaction.

"Q: Could you tell me about a day when you felt satisfied?

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R: Well, there are lot of those. But there is one particularly memorable day when there was a school gathering in the main hall and they announced the winner of the studying contest. And it was me. I received the most 'grade 5s' that semester. So it was really good that I won, even against more clever classmates." (interview, Klaudia, female, 13)

As Laura explains, the most important function of school grades for her is the meritocratic normative order expressed by them. This allows her to acquire recognition purely based on her persistence, despite her relative lack of talent.

Schools also serve as the first institutions with which children get in contact. In this sense, they are the sources of the first impressions concerning public institutions. Similarly to families, such experiences may result in a trustful attitude or disappointment.

"Q: If you have some problem here at school, do you feel that your voice is heard?

R: Well, I'm involved in the student parliament where we can express our opinions. But it doesn't always have an effect.

Q: I see. And what are your experiences?

R: Well, we discuss issues like the new decorations. Sometimes unfortunately the bigger students don't inform us about the gatherings. But the teacher told them already that it's not fair." (interview, János, male, 12)

As the example of János shows us, teacher-pupil communication is not necessarily distorted (as the earlier examples of Anna and Péter indicated). An attempt can be made to establish a democratic school atmosphere where teachers participate in communication oriented to mutual understanding and democratic socialization occurs. Only such a climate is capable of grounding a trustful relationship with public institutions, which is an important aspect of feeling secure.

### **Psychological well-being**

According to the interviews, we may conclude that the psychological well-being of children is endangered by two potentials. First is anxiety, which is mainly caused by school pressure. The second is traumatic life events occurring either in families (e.g. aggression, divorce, death, accidents) or in peer groups (e.g. bullying). School anxiety is mentioned by a surprisingly high amount of the interviewed children, which indicates that it is a general problem.

"Q: Good. Now I would like to ask you if you are nervous sometimes.

R: Yeah. Usually when we are taking a test, or if I don't understand something, then I become nervous. These occasions usually lead to failure.

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Q: What about outside of school? Is there anything that makes you nervous there?

R: No, not really." (interview, János, male, 12)

"Q: You mentioned that you get stressed a lot. Could you describe it to me?

R: Nothing particular. I just lie at home in my bed. I don't sleep, I just think about what I should do and how I should do it . That I should certainly prepare for the entrance exam or take a preparatory class. Or that I should simply start studying. And why don't I do any of these..." (interview, Károly, male, 13)

"Q: You mentioned that you get stressed if you don't know.

R: Yes, I'm really stressed because of this. Even between classes I read my books over and over until I'm sure I know it." (interview, Klára, female, 13)

"Q: Have you ever been afraid of anything?

R: Not really. Maybe when I was younger. There was a time that I didn't tell my father about a failed test, because I was afraid of his reaction. Now I'm not afraid at all. Maybe I would say I'm worrying." (interview, Laura, female, 13)

As these various excerpts indicate, different levels of anxiety are a common psychological problem among children oriented for good school performance. János specifically worries about good grades, Károly shows signs of depressed helplessness, Klára shows signs of obsessive compulsive disorder and Laura tries to escape from responsibility. These different reactions express the potential psychological disorders originating from school pressure, which seriously damage children's well-being.

Finally, traumas need to be mentioned that require special attention to resolve. Traumas are 'destinal events' (Tengelyi 2004), which means that they are fundamental reference points in the production of identity construction. Being often difficult to tell or unspeakable, traumas represent a narrative challenge, as they urge continuous attempts of reinterpretation that is the narrative construction of identity. In this sense traumas affect well-being on a fundamental level: the events themselves and the way they are handled influences both the self and relationships to others.

"Q: You didn't mention your family. Could you tell me a bit about them?

R: Well, my family is quite a mess because my parents divorced when I was young and I couldn't deal with it for long. I was 6-7 years old and I finally ended up with my father. I love him. I also love my mother, but I thought that I couldn't live the life I wanted with her. That's why I chose my father." (interview, Lajos, male, 13)

"Q: When did your parents divorce?

R: Two years ago.

Q: Two years ago, you say.

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R: Yes, not that it disturbs me or anything.

Q: How about your sister?

R: Well, she has been affected more, but not particularly. However, I was not affected by it at all!" (interview, Péter, male, 13)

"Q: So you have any brothers or sisters?

R: Yeah, a twin sister.

Q: And she comes to this school as well?

R: No. She, or we had a car accident and she was severely injured, so she is in a special school now.

Q: When did that happen?

R: In 2010. When my grandfather died, we went to arrange the funeral and a car crashed into us while my sister was sitting there.

Q: And how is she now?

R: She can walk, but her right side is injured. But now she's becoming quite capable and smart, even though she's still a bit reserved.

Q: I see. How is your relationship?

R: We like each other. I frequently visit her in her room. She doesn't come to mine often. I don't know why but it's always me who has to initiate. If I ask her something, she only replies with a few words.

Q: I see. And what does she like to do?

R: She used to play football, but now she swims. She's got plenty of medals. I collect the school awards and she wins the swimming trophies. I told her she could lend me one of them." (interview, Anna, female, 12)

Divorces appear in many child narratives as unresolved traumas, which may cause long-term psychological difficulties. Sometimes the psychological tension is reflected as in the case of Lajos, and sometimes it is denied as in the case of Péter, who circulates around the problem without facing it. Accidents, illnesses or deaths in the family represent a different type of trauma. As Anna's example shows, such traumas also have unspoken aspects, which require further discussion.

### ***3.2. Understanding and measuring well-being among young people***

While most of the characteristics of children's well-being reappear in the life of young people, several different tendencies and challenges also appear. These differences are mostly analyzed in detail below.

#### **Global understanding/definition of well-being**

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Material well-being was emphasized not only by children, but also by young people as a key aspect of well-being.

“Q: What does well-being mean to you?

R: When you can buy the most necessary stuff, you can do whatever you like and none of this causes them material problems, which means they can afford them.”  
(interview, Felicia, female, 18)

“Q: What did you want to add?

R1: I think both of them are equally important, I mean friends and family plus money. Because you can't buy friendship, but you can't live off your friends either.

R2: I would like to argue. I think you can actually buy friendship. Today that's how it goes, everyone wants to exploit the others.

R1: Yeah, but not true friendship. And how much is a fake friend worth?

R2: You're right, however you can still buy friendship. Not happiness, but company certainly. And it's also certain that lack of money is really stressful and frustrating.”  
(Focus Group, Edina, female 16; Janó, male 18)

The main difference between children's and young people's narratives is their reflexivity. Even children that were aware of the importance of material security had a naïve concept of its preconditions. Young people not only have much clearer concepts, but they are also capable of reflecting on the controversies of material needs, such as their potential of instrumentalizing and objectifying even intimate relationships.

Besides material well-being, most young people mentioned love as a form of recognition amongst the key components of well-being.

“Q: What does well-being mean to you?

R: Well, love and trust. If these are given, that makes one satisfied. Also family and friends. (interview, Jolán, female, 16)

I think that if you get support, not necessarily from family, but also friends, that's the most important thing. OK, material things also matter, but the most important thing is to have a good relationship with your environment. Family members and friends. If there is no conflict, that's well-being.” (interview, Klaudia, female, 17)

It is important to note two differences: unlike children, young people tend to have a more abstract concept of love and recognition, which is less related to family. On one hand, they seem to be aware of their dependence on love and recognition and prioritize it over material security. On the other hand, they already have intimate relationships outside their family, which they evaluate to be just as important. These differences express the slow restructuring of social networks enabling the development of an autonomous life.

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While school as a field of recognition of performance still plays an important role in young people's perception of well-being, it is also complemented by other factors.

“Q: How about your personal plans?

R: I'd like to become an engineer, so I take extra chemistry and maths courses. I could graduate with what I learn at school, but I need more than that in university.

Q: I see.

R: I would like to go to the Technical University of Budapest.

Q: Is it important for you?

R: Yes, because companies consider not only your degree, but also the university, where it has been obtained.” (interview, Aranka, female, 18)

“Q: Is it important for you to graduate from high school?

R: Yes, absolutely, because I would like to continue my studies.

Q: In which direction?

R: Actually, I'm glad to have a few more years because I've been thinking a lot about becoming a programmer, but until I have more experience, I can't say I'll do this or that. If I started university right now, that would cost me a lot of money, so I don't want to waste it.” (interview, Barnabás, male, 19)

While for children school performance is something externally driven, for most young people it becomes important as a means to realize their goals. Accordingly having good grades is not a goal in itself anymore, but an indicator of being on the right track towards other goals. Also, young people reflect on a broader context of education, including its price and consequences for their job opportunities.

Another difference is the appearance of concrete job aspirations on the horizon when asked about well-being.

“R: I'm studying to become a dentist. This is my dream.

Q: Where does this aspiration come from?

R: Well, ever since I was a child, I adored the atmosphere of dentistry, unlike those who were afraid of it. It is my goal to be recognized as a dentist by the people. I'd love for them to come to me not to be afraid.” (interview, Pál, male, 18)

“Q: What would you like to do when you finish high school?

R: Since I adore plants and drawing, I'd like to combine the two. I'd like to become a graphic artist. If I have enough money, I'll certainly become one. There is a project in our school that helps student businesses. I adore bamboo, so I started a project with the help of the school, which is about producing and selling bamboo objects. It's really exciting. Now I've started to learn the legal and technical preconditions of a business, which is quite boring, but I'm enthusiastic.” (interview, Dénes, male, 19)

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Most of the interviewed young people had some kind of idea about a desired career. In some cases, like Pál's, these were closer to an ideal, while in other cases, like Dénes', they were inserted into a pragmatic frame, including attempts at realization as well. As the job market enters the horizon of young people as a primary source of identity and recognition, it slowly overshadows the importance of grades playing a central role in children's life. This however does not mean that all the difficulties of the struggle for recognition and identity construction linked to school disappear; rather – as will be explained below – they are replaced to other terrains.

While free time activities played an important role in children's well-being, they become even more important in the narratives of young people.

“Q: You mentioned you are interested in media and art. What did you mean?

R: Well, my goal is to create things that affect people, that change people. Like if you watch Forrest Gump you know that, well I should reconsider many things. That's exactly what I want to do, make people reconsider. And I thought that filmmaking is a good way of doing this, even if not the only one. When I was young, I participated in a shoot as a procession man and fell in love with it.” (interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

“I became a godmother this year, which is also a responsibility. You have to pay attention continuously, especially since I was taking care of the child all summer. It makes me very happy to see the little girl smiling, playing or eating.” (interview, Angéla, female, 19)

Even though many young people mention activities like sports or art, similarly to children, different framing appears. As these narratives express, free time is inserted into a broader context and used either as an opportunity for realizing one's dream or it is instrumentalized and used as a functional contribution of someone's needs. In both cases, it plays a central role in one's identity construction as the choices of spending free time are the very expressions of autonomy.

### **Major domains of well-being**

Similarly to the global understanding of well-being, a detailed analysis of the potential problems damaging well-being also reveals more reflective narratives considering the broader context of the causes and consequences of certain difficulties. Material problems are not experienced as distant phenomena, but as actual problems.

“Q: How do you see the situation around you?

R: Well, in my social network young people live well.

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Q: And if you expand the circle?

R: Then I have to say unfortunately the opposite. This part of the country is basically poor. What I experience is that many young people face many difficulties. If you look at the country, material problems are inherited from parents. And children also feel that something is wrong." (interview, Tünde, female, 19)

"Q: Do you work because you want to or because your family needs the money?

R: Well I wanted to try myself in a working environment, but primarily it's for the family: three-quarters of the money goes to the family, one quarter stays for me. It's fair." (interview, Dénes, male, 19)

As the example of Tünde shows, material insecurity is often perceived not only as a personal problem, but as a social pathology that requires a political solution. As the example of Dénes shows, young people are not mere observers of poverty, but can be involved in the family economy as a potential worker as well. These two examples outline two potential frames for perceiving material problems: it is either gets inserted into abstract frames or it becomes an actual challenge, which can be fought.

As young people are more independent than children, they play different roles in family conflicts as well. They do not simply endure the consequences of their parents' divorce or disciplinary attempts. By reacting to these effects, they are also active participants in the tensions.

"Q: You mentioned the divorce. Who do you live with now?

R: That's a bad joke, what goes on at home. They are in the middle of the divorce process, but it's stuck because my father doesn't want to leave the flat, which he built up throughout his life. So he wants us to move. So the only consequence of the divorce at the moment is the separate bank accounts. There is Mom's money and Dad's money. Dad's croissant and Mom's bread. So when we go to eat, we don't know what can we eat and what is forbidden. So it's a childish crap: Mom buys me shoes and Dad has to pay for half of them.

Q: So it's all about money nowadays...

R: Yes, and of course there are fights every day. That's why I go drinking on the weekends. OK, not only because of this, but it occurs frequently that I wake up in the morning, but choose to go back to sleep back because they are shouting at each other. With a serious hangover, I don't give a shit. But truly, there have been times when I was woken up by the noise of breaking plates and glasses.

Q: How about your sister?

R: Well, she tried to distance herself from all of this. Sometimes she cried, sometimes she ran off to her friends or built her own little world by decorating her room." (interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

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As Frigyes explains, living through a divorce as a young man may result in various reactions. He and his sister both chose to flee from the conflict as much as possible. In Frigyes' case, this meant leaving home whenever possible and also lessening the stress with alcohol abuse. In his sister's case, this meant actual or virtual distancing from home. Despite their differences, both strategies express the potential consequences of family conflicts for young people, who are incapable of solving them, but capable of reacting to them in a self-destructive or self-isolating fashion.

Another potential reaction to family conflict is participation in the fight.

“Q: You mentioned that you had conflicts with your stepfather.

R: Yes. It consisted of small episodes, quite difficult to explain.

Q: Maybe if you gave me an example...

R: He doesn't like that I'm more important to my mother than him. At least that's how I see it. So it was important for him that I retreat from him symbolically in certain situations. For example, it was particularly important that he wanted to have food first, me second.

Q: I see.

R: I found it really childish, so did Mom. Of course I wasn't a saint either, so I fought back. I wanted to have the food first... so it was a kind of rivalry.” (interview, Dénes, male, 19)

As Dénes' example shows, young people may also choose to participate in family conflicts as rivals. In these cases, 'games' in Berne's sense emerge, resulting in latent confrontations between the participants playing the role of an adult, a child or a parent (Berne 1964). Obviously, such confrontations do not always remain latent. Sometimes they culminate in actual aggression.

“R: We live together with my stepfather and mother. I also have two stepsisters, but we are not in contact.

Q: And how is the atmosphere?

R: Well, I haven't been happy since the beginning. Since my father died I have basically been alone. I've got memories of going to school and telling my friend that here is this guy and I don't like him at all. It's just bad, I don't know.

Q: But do you manage now?

R: No. We don't talk at all. When I went to high school and couldn't perform adequately, skipped classes and had troubles with classmates, well he hurt me really badly... He said he would discipline me, but my problem was not with studying, but a conflict with a classmate. So once we had a serious fight and he broke my ribs.

Q: How did your mother react?

R: Well, my stepfather wanted me not to tell anyone, but when I went to the hospital...

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Q: Something had to be said, I guess.

R: Yeah, so I said that I fell from a bike. But I know that the doctors didn't believe it, they weren't stupid, so they wanted to keep me inside as long as possible. I thought they know everything, but maybe I was just imagining it. Then I told my mother what happened. I don't know what happened after that at home, but my stepfather stayed. And it was really bad for me that my mother didn't stand by my side in this conflict, because I thought that she wouldn't be able to stay with a guy like this. I was furious that a man hurt me who is a nobody to me. That was when I realized how much I miss Dad. He would never do such thing to me." (interview, Orsolya, female, 19)

As Orsolya's story shows, family tensions may result in actual violence, which potentially traumatize the victim. Even if this case is extreme, its inadequate handling is unfortunately not rare at all. Neither the institution, nor the mother was capable of helping Orsolya, which further increased the psychological damage that was already heavy. As the other elements of Orsolya's life story shows, such experiences fundamentally undermine one's well-being. According to Honneth's theory, physical violence is the elementary form of deprivation from recognition, which not only destroys the capability of trusting others, but also demolishes confidence, potentially resulting in depression (Honneth 1996).

Another source of family conflict mentioned exclusively by young people is the parents' stress.

"My mother is a boss in her workplace. So she is made really angry every day by her employees. That results in a basic level of tension at home. And I'm not an angel either. But the problem is that the world doesn't allow parents to be calm and pay attention to their child. They have to work at two or three places and also ensure that the child goes to school properly. Well, it's not easy at all to be a calm parent." (Focus Group, Edina, female, 16)

As the excerpt exemplifies, young people are often capable of understanding their parents' point of view quite well. Such reflectivity holds the potential of a communicative resolution of the conflicts.

On occasion, family conflicts were the result of lack of disciplinary power.

"Q: You mentioned that you haven't been properly disciplined. What did you mean?

R: Well, my mother raised us alone since my father died. So she left in the morning to work and arrived in the evening. She didn't have much time. And it's not easy to discipline two adolescent boys. Not that she didn't try, but no one ever taught me, or convinced me to study. She just yelled at me why don't I study and why do I skip classes?! (...) My father had the strength to discipline my older brothers. If they got a

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bad grade, they were beaten. If he hadn't died, things would definitively be different now." (interview, Barnabás, male, 19)

As Barnabás explains, the lack of an authority figure caused his problems. Without a strong-handed father, who could have confronted him and punished him if needed, he lost control over his behaviour, which caused him difficulties at school.

Similarly to new types of family problems, young people face some new challenges in school as well. The basic type of challenge mentioned by several young people is the lack of mutual understanding with teachers.

"Q: Why didn't you want to go to school? Because of the classmates or the teachers?  
R: Both. I don't blame the teachers, because I understand they teach there for 25 years and I'm the 130<sup>th</sup> stupid kid they have to discipline, but they are fucking uninterested, that's for sure. And they didn't do anything to improve me or our relationship either. With one exception, teachers hated me. So I gradually became disinterested myself and started not to go to school." (interview, Barnabás, male, 19)

As Barnabás explains, mutual disinterest lead in his case to skipping classes and caused serious problems in his career. If not treated properly, the original lack of understanding may result in serious conflicts and even include physical violence. The growing reflectivity and autonomy of young people not only allows for a more critical perspective on the school, but also enables them to confront teacher authority vehemently.

"R: You know I could tell you some stories about my teachers. One of them was an alcoholic, the other was a psychopath. The third should have been locked up in a mental institution.

Q: Why?

R: Well, my literature teacher, that was brutal. At the beginning we had a good relationship, but later whenever I entered the class, he asked 'How is that you're still here?'. I laughed at first, but once he really got going against me. He started to say what a stupid family I have and how could my mother give birth to me and stuff like that. That was when I lost control. I stepped close to him and said: 'Just repeat what you said!' When he did, I pushed him over the table and threatened that if he ever said anything like that again, I would make him regret it. Then I left. Luckily he didn't report this to the police or anything like that." (interview, Nándi, male, 18)

As Nándi's example shows, young people do not take the authority of teachers for granted, but evaluate them in a very critical way. Also, if a conflict emerges they are ready to defend themselves and fight back. In this context, Nándi's aggression can be interpreted as a desperate attempt to stop and avenge the continuous verbal harassment. Obviously, such

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longstanding and escalating conflicts have a devastating effect on one's well-being, as they create an extremely stressful and inescapable social environment.

Besides family tensions and school problems, young people may face serious challenges originating from their peer relationships. Experiencing exclusion is among the most common difficulties mentioned.

“Q: How is your relationship with your classmates?

R: How should I say... We are OK, we can talk to each other and so on. But not as equal partners. How should I say, their emotional abilities are inferior to mine.

Q: What do you mean?

R: Well, I don't mean it... But for example I don't smoke or drink or go into these clubs or whatever. I see they say to each other 'Hey come and let's get drunk as shit!' and I say, I'd rather not. Or hiding the teacher's stuff... Well, I don't want to offend anyone, but I don't find these things amusing. They are rather childish. I wouldn't do it even if I were paid. Maybe I would laugh, but I would certainly not do it.”  
(interview, Dénes, male, 19)

As Dénes' example shows, exclusion may result from not being able or willing to participate in the ritual activities of the peer group. In many cases these activities include symbols of adult life, such as drinking, smoking or using drugs, while in other cases they include secret pranks as mutual rituals constituting group boundaries. Accordingly, if someone cannot identify with either this or that mutual action, they also unintentionally exclude themselves from the community. The rationalizing narratives show how Dénes tries to neutralize the negative sentiments originating from isolation and also express his wish to change the situation.

While isolation may result in difficulties, which can be handled over time, the experience of bullying results in serious psychological trauma.

“Q: So there were conflicts with your classmates that made you want to avoid school?

R: Yes. When I started that school, there were those three girls. First we were in a bad relationship, but then the mother of one of them died and somehow we started to spend time together. She also started to smoke weed and I told her not to do it, it isn't worth it. She also had a Rastafari boyfriend that started to get into contact with me more and more. That's how our conflict started, when she realized that we were chatting. She didn't even let me explain that there was nothing between us, so she started to attack me with her friends. They stole my stuff, threw them around when I wasn't in the classroom and smiled when I returned.

Q: I see.

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R: And she also gossiped about me, saying to others how bad-looking I was and stuff like that. So it was really bad to go to school that time. The last thing I remember was when my mother took me to school and I said I couldn't enter. First she didn't understand it, but later one of her colleagues told her a similar story and she started to believe me. It was so stressful after a while that I had to go to psychological treatment for a year." (interview, Orsolya, female, 19)

"R: There were these typical overaged – I'm not a racist, but – Gypsy kids and they picked me. If I had a short hair it was a problem, if I had a long hair that was the problem.

Q: I see.

R: They wanted me to give them cigarettes and stuff. So I started to become afraid. It's true that I was also a pothead at the time, so I was like a zombie. That's why I didn't give a shit about them. I went home, smoked a joint and thought that everything was OK. That was my life, so I didn't give a shit." (interview, Barnabás, male, 19)

These two excerpts exemplify various reactions to the traumatizing experience of being bullied. While Orsolya had to turn to a therapist, Barnabás escaped to the painkilling effect of marijuana. However, both of these strategies express how hopeless the situation feels for victims of bullying and how deeply it affects their well-being.

Health-related aspects of well-being were mentioned in several contexts. Some young people described physical symptoms of psychological stress.

"Q: So you say you were anxious at that time?

R: Yeah. I was vomiting a lot at that time. And I also started to skip school.

Q: When did this start?

R: As I think back now, it already started in elementary school. Even though I wasn't big enough to realize the reason." (interview, Áron, male, 17)

"I was also depressed for let's say a year. I used to cut myself. The last thing was that I wanted to commit suicide, so I spent a few month in mental institution." (interview, Kinga, female, 18)

As Áron says, unhandled stress caused by school in his case resulted in serious somatic symptoms. As Kinga describes, she felt so hopeless because of various problems appearing in her life that she even tried to end her own existence. Even though such serious mental or physical health problems are not typical, they indicate the susceptibility of young people, who may react even more vehemently to stress or trauma than children.

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## Happiness

Similarly to children, young people also mentioned friendship as a key factor of their happiness.

“Q: According to you, what is needed to make you feel good?

R: Well, obviously, or at least for me it’s obvious that I need friends. Not that I feel bad if I’m alone, it’s just somehow uncomfortable for me. I don’t necessarily need money to have fun. If I’m with my friends, I can still enjoy myself.” (interview, Aladár, male, 18)

“Q: What do you usually talking about with your friends?

R: If I’m with friends who I trust, we discuss anything. If I’m with my buddies, we focus on having fun. We don’t talk about problems, instead we go drinking and party.” (interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

As these excerpts indicate, friendships may serve various goals. In Aladár’s case they are necessarily conditions of existence that make life meaningful. In Frigyes’s case, friends are on one hand used as intimate others, partners for constructing reality by discussing problems and doubts, and partners for having fun on the other hand. These activities outline central channels of social criteria of happiness referring to moments of identity construction and enjoying oneself.

Beside friendships, intimate relationships become the most important source of happiness. Concerning partnership, three typical narrative patterns appear: those who have yet to find a partner give disappointed explanations, those who already have one express a reflective opinion while those who are hurt by others have a traumatized point of view.

“Q: What about girls?

R: I’ll tell you honestly that girls today are tragic. 80% of girls are interested only in physical satisfaction. They don’t need more than that anymore; it’s not the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the perspective of growing old together in a nice home.

Q: You’d prefer this?

R: No, but that would be normal.

Q: Why, what do girls desire nowadays?

R: Go to party, seduce a random guy, go to bed with him, get rid of him the next day. And repeat this every week. Maybe it’s not kind of me to say that, but that’s how I see it.” (interview, Béla, male, 17)

Béla seriously criticises girls his own age in order to express his disappointment caused by his failures. His futile wish for a relationship results in the frustrated rationalization of the

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problem by blaming the opposite sex and the age he is living, which indicates the negative consequences of not having a partner for happiness.

“R1: You know there is this taboo of hooking up with your friend’s ex-boyfriend. Now we’ve broken this taboo, because we’re such close friends that even this is unimportant. I’d probably die without my friend, or I don’t know.

R2: You’re right, this whole issue of ‘ex-’ is just overemphasized. Because take my best friend, she hooked up with three of my ex-boyfriends and it never bothered me. I could give advice to her, what to avoid.

R1: Exactly, I don’t get it, why people are nervous about this. If you are not happy together anymore, then why don’t you let the one you love to be happy with whomever they want?

R2: You’re right, I like your opinion! Respect.”(Focus Group, Edina, female, 16; Imola, female, 18)

As the participants of the focus group explain, based on their experiences, love relationships come and go, so the wisest move is to not stick to them. The values of generosity and wisdom are expressed by these young people, indicating their reflective approach to the matter.

“Q: You mentioned that she was important for you.

R: Yes, I really loved her. We went out for three months, but she cheated on me. So as revenge I also slept with other girls. But honestly I loved her so much, that it made me feel miserable that she didn’t return my feelings. This disappointment changed me as well. Since then I don’t want to fall in love. I go to parties and if the girl looks hot I try to sleep with her.”(interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

In Frigyes’ case, the disappointment resulted in a long-term loss of trust and temporary incapability of getting involved into an intimate relationship. These experiences not only ruined his happiness, but also damaged his well-being in the long run.

Even if their importance seems to be secondary compared to social relationships, free time activities are the key for many young people’s happiness. Unlike children however, these activities are not mere hobbies. Instead, they can be characterized as identity projects orienting broader life plans.

“R: I’ve played floor ball in my free time for 6 years. I participate in every training session and game, while also trying to help the child team as a second coach. I’d like to become a referee as well later.

Q: How did you start floor ball?

R: First I tried it and the coach told me that I have talent, so I should practice it more seriously.” (interview, Nándi, male, 18)

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“R: I’m really interested in art. And also plants. These are my two passions.

Q: Interesting.

R: With my friends we’re visiting a lot of exhibitions. Last time we were in the Architects House... I really respect other people’s creations.” (interview, Dénes, male, 19)

Nándi and Dénes choose different areas of interest, yet they are both very conscious about their choices. They not only enjoy it causally, but try to become as involved as possible. This reflective relation transforms hobbies of children into identity projects capable of providing stabilized frames of satisfying desires.

### **Life satisfaction**

While few children are aware of the broader context of their family’s material reproduction, most young people reflect on these issues.

“Well, those who live in Budapest certainly have more opportunities than us here in Nyíregyháza. Even though I’m lucky, because my family gives me everything I need. So what I know about Budapest life is just rumour.” (interview, Károly, male, 16)

“Well, we’ve had a lot of discussions with Mom about whether it was more difficult to be young in her time or more difficult now. If I think about my opportunities for studying at the age of 22, well I think I can also do whatever I want, however I want... My mother didn’t have this. She has had to work since she was 16.” (interview, Aladár, male, 22)

As they compare their situation either to other members of their generation living in different conditions or to their parents’ lives, Károly and Aladár both perceive the potentials and difficulties of their own lives resulting in a complex sense of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Similarly to children, family relationships play a central role in young people’s satisfaction as well. However, the content differs in many ways.

“I think that family is the most important thing, so we have a good relationship. For example, my brother is 7 years old, but I spend a lot of time with him and we can have fun despite the age difference.” (interview, Jolán, female, 16)

“Well, we are supporting my grandmother a lot now that my grandfather has died. Our family really holds together. We have a weekend house not far from Budapest

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and we take her out by car, collect the leaves in the autumn and make small repairs around the house.” (interview, Nándi, male, 18)

“I have a really good relationship with Mom. We always did, but since summer it has reached a new level. Some friends of hers came over to celebrate my sister's birthday and they brought a lot of booze. And it was just a whole new experience to see my mom laugh and vomit at the same time, being completely drunk. It was just really intimate for me. Since then we are on really good terms. I always bring up this story, how sweet she was.” (interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

While children seemed to be more dependent of family relationships, young people actively shape them. This may mean taking quasi-parental responsibilities as in the case of Jolán, a supporting role as in the case of Nándi, or the role of a friend as in the case of Frigyes. In these situations, the original child-parent role setting is transcended and a new type of intimacy and new responsibilities may emerge, providing opportunity for redefining family ties.

Compared to children, young people gradually take responsibility for their school performance as well.

“Q: What affects your grades the most?

R: Well, certainly my efforts, so if I work a lot for them and good grades are my goal, then I can certainly make them happen. I really enjoy setting and reaching goals.” (interview, Jolán, female, 16)

Young people do not consider grades to be judgments from authority figures, but as the consequence of their efforts. Accordingly, they insert them in the context of their career goals and identity. On one hand, such transformation makes school performance in the relevant subjects more stressful, as it has consequences for identity and life prospects; on the other hand it makes grades less important in general, as they are disconnected from relations of authority.

Such disconnectedness result in a more critical relation to school, which however does not lead to any sort of civic action, because of inappropriate institutional culture.

“Q: What do you mean by hushing up?

R1: Well when someone does something wrong, but it won't have any consequence.

Q: And this happens at school?

R1: Yeah.

R2: It happens often.

Q: So why don't you raise your voice?

R1: Because then it will be a problem that we are resisting.

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R2: We can pretend to be a freedom fighter, but we won't be able to accomplish anything.

R1: A student is always inferior compared to a teacher." (Focus Group, Edina, female, 16; Janó, male, 18)

As these students explain, even if they are aware of injustice in their school, they do not feel they have a chance to do anything about it. Such an experience of powerlessness is an important factor of the potential threats of satisfaction as it indicates long-term institutional expectations.

A new dimension of life satisfaction also appears in case of young people that is connected to the broader social and political reality. Satisfaction with the direction in which society is heading definitely affects young people's personal prospects, as they are aware of the dependence of the latter on the former.

"Q: What do you think about the conditions of life satisfaction you mentioned? How will they change in the future?

R: It's crucial for me that the social situation in Hungary improves. I would like to live in a country similar to Western Europe, where people generally feel socially secure. However, such transformations have yet to begin. Right now in Hungary you find different potentials. (...) Hungary still belongs to the Balkans a bit, so this should be overcome first." (interview, Áron, male, 17)

"Q: What are the main inequalities you see around yourself?

R: We're not equals concerning the material aspect and definitely the biological aspect as well. Those who live in cities definitely have more opportunities and better life chances compared to those who live in the villages. (...) If I will become an engineer as I plan, I will certainly improve society. Also I would like to help those in need, or organisations that support poor people." (interview, Felicia, female, 18)

"Q: How do you feel in Nyíregyháza?

R: Well, it's a small city, but not calm at all. So I don't know. It's kind of strange, but actually I don't like it at all. I'd prefer to live in a bigger city.

Q: So that is your plan?

R: Well, I'd like to go to university in the UK or in Sweden, as a psychologist, psychiatrist or something like that." (Focus Group, Edina, female, 16)

As the excerpts show, young people are generally critical and dissatisfied with the broader social context around themselves. However, they react to the perceived problems in different ways. Áron expresses one of the most typical forms of dissatisfaction, which is based on interpreting Hungarian problems as the inevitable destiny of the nation and results in a passive, hopeless political culture. Felicia represents another reaction, which is based on

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the belief in social development and solidarity. Edina introduces a third potential strategy complementing 'voice' and 'loyalty': namely 'exit', which means planning migration. (Hirschmann 1970).

### **Psychological well-being**

Similarly to children, young people's psychological well-being depends on the traumas experienced in family, school and the peer group. Yet unlike children, young people are not stressed by merely grades, but by the potential of irreversible failure or non-repairable damage.

"R: My half-sisters always mocked me because of my bad grades, because they always had good grades. They told me I'm not a real member of the family, how can I be so lazy and other humiliations. Well, I started to get bad grades in 7<sup>th</sup> class. I've got a lot of 2s (on a 5 scale grade) and also failing grades. So there were many hassles that time.

Q: I see.

R: For a while I wanted to be an actress or a model, because my sisters did it as well. But I think I couldn't do it, because of my anxiety issues.

Q: What do you mean?

R: I feel that my breast is tense and it's difficult to breathe. It's always like this when I meet new people or I have to do an exam. Instead I often flee because I think it makes no sense, since I will certainly fail."(interview, Orsolya, female, 19)

As Orsolya explains in previous excerpts, bad grades, which were the consequences of bullying and family violence at the same time, resulted in further isolation within her family. Together all these effects resulted in a hopeless state of mind, where family, school and peer groups were all allied against Orsolya. Such an experience of complete isolation and helplessness traumatized her seriously, resulting in psychological difficulties including anxiety and post-trauma stress that seriously damaged her life conditions.

"Q: You mentioned you missed a lot of classes. Why was this?

R: Because in the first year of high school, a panic disorder emerged. Probably because of the school, because it was unusual, it was too strict. I came from an elementary school where I was free. It was a religious high school, so I had to pray, greet the teachers in Latin and I saw that every child was somehow a poor, miserable, dominated loser. No wonder that three-quarters of the school used some drugs as a consequence of the terror.

Q: I see.

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R: I mean that school drove the students literally crazy. And somehow unconsciously I didn't like this at all. So all of these things, the school itself was also part of my panic syndrome.

Q: When you say panic syndrome, what do you mean by that?

R: When I went to school on the train once, that was the first time I had an episode. I started to see the crowd as a wall. And suddenly I couldn't breathe and I was panicking how I could escape. First it was only on the train. So I read about this phenomenon and slowly I learned to manage it.

Q: Interesting.

R: However, it restarted when the divorce madness started. This feeling that you go home and no one talks to each other. They wash the dishes, they watch TV and no one talks to each other. That was madness for me. That's how the panic came back.

Q: So it came back.

R: Yes. And I thought, it doesn't matter how many books I read, it won't help. And it wasn't only the train. I woke up in the morning prepared to leave, but I couldn't leave the house because I panicked. That's when I started to get tranquilizers.

Q: What do you mean by getting?

R: One of my friends had connections in a pharmacy, so they arranged it.

Q: I see. So you didn't consult any psychiatrists?

R: No, my parents didn't know about it at all. It was me alone who decided that this is the only solution. As a consequence, I don't have much memory from November to March. I spent the whole day completely doped.

Q: Sounds serious. Have you consulted any psychiatrists since then?

R: Yes, I did. One of my teachers helped me and contacted one." (interview, Frigyes, male, 17)

In Frigyes' case, the origin of psychological problems, as he explains in previous excerpts, is the experience of the divorce of his parents. When such an unbearable atmosphere was coupled with the stress of changing schools, he mentally collapsed. As his parents were busy with their own conflict, he had no one to turn to with his serious problem. By taking the matter into his own hands, he probably made the situation even worse, as the uncontrolled taking of tranquilizers caused him half a year of mental black out. It is also notable that his parents did not perceive these serious problems, which resulted not only in serious health risks, but also interrupted his studies and probably caused long-lasting trauma.

"Q: So why did you stop smoking marijuana?

R: Paranoia. I'm afraid of sudden death. I don't pretend to be a psychologist, but I participated once in therapy and I was told that people who are more sensitive to these things are affected by drugs in a negative way. And he may have been right, because it was really like that. When I got high, there were several times that...

Q: Yes?

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R: So I was like...

Q: How?

R: My heart started to beat faster and I was really frightened. This happened three or four times and I said to myself that I don't need this shit. Since that, I'm clean.  
“(interview, Barnabás, male, 19)

In Barnabás' case, several types of problems add up: the lack of a father figure, bullying in school and school failures strengthen each other and lead to the escape strategy of drug abuse. These factors, which could be interpreted as traumatic on their own, together create an atmosphere where paranoid disorder emerges, seriously affecting Barnabás' psychological well-being and overall life quality.

### *3.3 Remarks on the definition and operationalization of 'well-being' in the fieldwork*

According to the interviews, it seems that a fruitful approach to asking children and young people about their perception of well-being is to embed the questions in the context of their family, school or peer group experiences. On the substantive level, these experiences include references to goals, wishes, obstacles and failures as well. Together, these components outline the phenomenological horizon of well-being that expresses the balance of needs and satisfaction.

In cases where such an experience-centred approach was taken less into consideration, the participants had difficulties differentiating between various aspects of well-being. Children and young people could not separately understand questions like: 'What does well-being mean for you?', 'In life, are there things that are more related than others with being well?', 'Could you tell me what is "great" and what is "rubbish" about being young today?', 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?' or 'To what extent do you think that things you do in your life are worthwhile?'. It was clear that they had certain desires and problems in their life that organized the narratives of all these dimensions of well-being, so they gave similar answers to these different questions based on the key issues that occupied their mind. Therefore, it seems more plausible in a newly elaborated project to approach from the perspective of central issues that organize subjective well-being.

From a sociological point of view, it also proved to be important to focus on intersubjective aspects of well-being. For such an approach, a network theoretical basis seems to be a potential direction for renewing existing practices of well-being research. By mapping the social network of young people, plus the structure and the quality of the ties, a new path of conceptualization can be created. One of the most important advantages of such an approach is that it also enables the aforementioned phenomenological embedding that is

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the attachment of questions concerning subjective well-being to experiences of children and young people. Obviously, such conceptual tools should not replace the existing measures, but should complement them.

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

Several smaller differences appeared according to gender (girls tended to emphasize social factors of well-being over material ones), location (children and young people living in the countryside tended to emphasize the material aspect of well-being) or activism (activists tended to have a more reflective relation to well-being). However these were not as characteristic as the age differences, so they need further observation. In our understanding the most characteristic differences appeared in the comparison of children's and young people's patterns of well-being, which is summarized by the following table.

**Table 2. Differences of children' and young people' well-being**

	<b>children</b>	<b>young people</b>
family material well-being	experience of difficulties of consumption	reflection on the causes of poverty, participation in family economics
family emotional atmosphere	helplessly suffering from family tensions, limited struggles for autonomy	reacting to family tensions (e.g. escaping from home), participating in family conflicts and escalating them, helping to resolve conflicts
family communication	honest communication as key to satisfaction	equal communication as key to satisfaction
school performance	grades as unquestioned indicators of performance	performance is embedded in the context of career goals
school atmosphere	limited communication with teachers, lack of mutual understanding	critical relationship with teachers,
peer group atmosphere	helplessly suffering from isolation or bullying	reflection on isolation, attempts of overcoming it
health	limited reflection on health issues	reflection on health issues
factors of happiness	friends, hobbies, satisfying desires	intimate relationships, friends, hobbies enabling identity construction
public issues	not connected to well-being	secure social and political environment is an element of satisfaction

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stress	school performance as primary source of anxiety	peer group relationships as primary source of anxiety
traumas	unresolved family conflicts	parallel unresolved family and peer conflicts

In general, we may conclude that the perception of well-being is greatly transformed as children become young people. While children's phenomenological perspective can be characterized as a 'natural attitude' in a Schützian sense, young people's perspective showed the signs of 'reflective attitudes' (Schütz 1974). This means that children tend to take their family, school or peer environment for granted, which has several consequences. As they identify more easily with their parents' and teachers' perspective, family tensions or institutional injustices have a direct effect on the quality of their well-being. They are mostly helpless when facing difficulties, which may result in anxiety caused by school pressure or traumas caused by family tensions. On the other hand, positive feedback from parents or teachers also has a direct influence on their happiness and satisfaction. Thirdly, children seem to have less elaborated sphere autonomy. Free time activities that satisfy their desires are not linked to the process of identity construction, but remain merely instruments for having fun.

In contrast, young people had a more reflective relation to their family, school or peer environment. As they had already developed some autonomy and an independent perspective, they evaluated their broader context, potentials and responsibilities and initiated actions oriented to resolve potential problems or realize goals. On one hand, this means that they are not as helpless when facing difficulties in the family, school or peer group, as they can rely on their emerging autonomy as a source of criticism or counteraction. On the other hand, new potential terrains of difficulties emerge. As the process of identity construction begins, it also becomes a source of problems as relationships and action spheres where it may proceed need to be established. This results in the augmented importance of actions oriented to realize individual goals and relationships with relevant others serving as a reference point in the process of creating an autonomous interpretation of the self and the world.

In sum, we may conclude that the phenomenological structure of subjective well-being changes greatly between childhood and adolescence. In a certain sense, as the birth of the subject is a process of parallel socialization and individuation, the horizon of subjective well-being is less relevant in childhood, as it emerges gradually in the process of the birth of the autonomous self (Mead 1934). Children more directly mediate the conditions of their family, institutional and social environment, which means that objective factors of well-being are more relevant. Young people however relate to these spheres from an independent point of view, while potentially shaping them as well, which means that subjective factors of well-being in their case start to become relevant.

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This conclusion has a few consequences for the MyWeb project. It reveals a phenomenological controversy: if the same questions are used in the survey of children and young people, which is necessary for direct comparison, then there is still serious doubt about comparability because of the different structures of the self and the consequent differences in the constitution of subjective well-being. Accordingly, it may have to be reconsidered if for children a greater emphasis on objective and intersubjective factors of well-being is required instead of subjective factors, as the latter have yet to emerge. Also, alternative solutions for the phenomenological controversy need to be taken into consideration, based on the conclusions of the previous section.

## 5. Having their voices heard and survey engagement

Firstly, it must be emphasized that the answers concerning interest in such research are heavily biased, as the participation was voluntary, which means that those who participated are already interested in these kinds of activities.

When asked about the chances to be heard by society, both children and young people were mainly trustful and emphasized the importance of getting information about public opinion in order to facilitate change.

“Q: Do you believe that sharing your opinion may have some impact on the world.

R: Well, I’m not sure about the details, but I heard that this is an EU project, so this must be something important. I also heard that many children are asked from all over Europe and I think that’s also a good thing. Because it’s not only my opinion but also other children’s. And if so many children’s opinion are asked and analyzed, that must be an important thing, because it must serve some purpose.” (interview, Péter, male, 13)

“Q: What do you think? Is it important to discuss the issues that we did?

R: Yes, it’s important to know how society thinks. I hear a lot of complaints and I think it’s important to know exactly what people think. Maybe that may result changes that could satisfy people. So I think it’s really important to know how different countries relate to these issues.” (interview, Tünde, female, 19)

When asked about the motivational basis of participation, some children emphasize the importance of anonymity and the potential gains.

“I think that if it’s completely anonymous that’s absolutely OK. It’s also important for many children that they can skip classes during the interview. For example skipping a math class, that’s a good deal.” (interview, Lajos, male, 13)

Some young people emphasized the importance of feedback about the overall results of the research.

“I think that it would motivate many young people if the results were properly presented or they were ensured that the results will be accessible in the future.”(interview, Aladár, male, 18)

Others argue that material incentives are the most effective.

“I would motivate young people with material incentives. For example money, job opportunities or some kind of reward. Because I think that’s what motivates young people: the money.” (interview, Tünde, female, 19)

Finally, some young people argued that the most important thing is to explain to young people that such research is in their best interest. Also, the way to reach young people could be chosen more appropriately by relying on media they prefer, such as the Internet.

“R: I think it should be explained that it’s for the sake of young people and that their opinion really matters. It’s not like going to vote every four years, but it’s really for them. Because if they are convinced that the research is for them, they will participate in it willingly.

Q: And what do you suggest? How should we do this?

R: With appropriate information, through the Internet.” (interview, Felicia, female, 18)

In sum, many children and young people are motivated to participate in the research if appropriate information and feedback are accessible. Material incentives could further increase this level.

## 6. Other recommendations informing the MYWEB project

There are no further recommendations for the project.

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