Co-funded by
the European Union

European
Lead by Nature Network

ELNN
YOUTH REPORT

Work Package 3
Network Development & EU Presence

ELNN Research Stage 2 Report

October, 2024

Table of Contents

Disclaimer

The contents of the final report and its annexes do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency. The views and opinions expressed are only reflect those of the author(s). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Introduction

The European Lead by Nature Network (ELNN) is a platform bringing together organizations with expertise in youth work, research, education, higher education, and the private sector with a focus on cooperation towards bringing value and fulfillment in the lives of young people across Europe and beyond. The platform creates an interdisciplinary ecosystem to generate innovative solutions, making a meaningful impact on youth and communities alike. This ecosystem contributes to the EU policies regarding youth empowerment, connection, and engagement for building sustainable communities where active participation, inclusion, quality learning, and personal and professional growth are enforced. In this context, ELNN addresses the evolving needs of youth and youth workers and strives to co-create the necessary resources to answer them.

ELNN Project has several work packages like youth actions, dissemination, and network development & EU presence to achieve its objectives. Among the project's work packages, WP3: Network Development & The EU Presence work package aims to enhance network organizations, develop cooperation, and support the growth of the members by engaging with youth and empowering them to become leaders within their communities. Within this aim, the work package includes engaging with the youth listening to their needs and wants to create activities or projects, accordingly, encouraging youth to participate in them, sharing the responsibility with them in leading activities for youth communities, in discussions with policymakers, and leading transformation. ELNN Research activity of the work package is a vital component of this engagement.

This report is part of the "Research and Youth Report" task within Work Package 3 Network Development and EU Presence. The task consists of three stages, each focusing on specific issues to produce a report contributing to the Youth Report upon project completion. This report presents the second stage of the task, which centers on the EU Youth Goals as a continuation of research Stage I. The first stage was completed in 2023 and the ELNN Research Stage 1 Report was released in December 2023. The first stage was the initial phase of the ELNN Research covering the research design, research model development, and testing of the model with pilot research along with introducing the research strategy to the partners. Thus, the Stage II report also includes a summary of Stage I to clarify the ELNN research process and the relationship between the stages.

Background

The European Lead by Nature Network (ELNN) is a Civil Society Cooperation in the field of Youth, funded by the European Union contributing to projects under Erasmus+, EU Solidarity Corps, and Aid Volunteers programs. This cooperation comprises 20 partner organizations from 13 countries, established to enhance the lives of young people in Europe and beyond. The network was conceived during a networking event in Bran, Romania, in October 2022 with a need for a long-term community of organizations united by shared values of trust and sustainability at the social and environmental levels. The long-term community of organizations was essential for building a future of young leaders who are authentic, accountable, reliable, and prepared to bring sustainable change in their communities that the partners of the network want. In this perspective, the ELNN project was launched in March 2023 embracing innovation, sustainability, empowerment, awareness, inclusion, and cooperation as its values.

Around its values, the network ensures access to quality learning and inclusion opportunities for youth, develops new learning methodologies for engaging youth in policymaking, raises awareness of European opportunities, empowers youth by guiding them into taking the initiative toward creating sustainable solutions and transforming their communities, and facilitates cooperation between EU and international organizations involved in youth work, and among youth for all these. The cooperation facilitates ELNN in attaining its objectives and enhancing the operational and management capabilities of the network members. The youth organizations' cooperation answers the needs of youth and youth workers by creating innovative contexts that boost curiosity, learning, and sustainability which are at the core of their activities. This helps the betterment of young people across Europe.

The ELNN was organized by principles of Sociocracy 3.0 fostering a motivating and autonomous environment. Thus, the network believes in effectiveness, consent, empiricism, continuous improvement, equivalence, transparency, and accountability. It seeks consent for decision-making and embraces experimentation to address complexity. Continuous improvement is key, with regular reviews to enhance effectiveness. The network ensures equality by involving members in decisions, promoting engagement and accountability, maintaining transparency, and timely responding to commitments.

Aims & Objectives of the Research

The ELNN Research is the component of the Work Package 3 Network Development and EU Presence “Research and Youth Report" task with three stages. This task aims to create the ELNN Youth Report at the end of the project to make young people's voices be heard and gain support from civil society organizations to increase their impact and engagement in the communities, through ELNN Research. The primary objectives of ELNN Research are to conduct ethnographic research, and gain insights into the youth communities' needs and wants through descriptive questioning techniques on specific topics. Within this, another key objective involves engaging young people in online surveys, and focus groups regarding the defined themes, and supporting the youth to move forward.

The ELNN Research has completed its second stage, focusing on the EU Youth Goals, specifically Youth Goal #5: Mental Health & Well-being, and Youth Goal #8: Quality Learning. In Stage I, the research centered on the themes of 'Future' and 'Engagement,' where mental health and quality learning were identified as key dimensions of these foundational themes. The ELNN Research Stage II aims to reveal youth communities' experiences and perceptions of the research topics. Thus, the objective of Research Stage II is to analyze the following considering the definitions and sub-goals of the relevant youth goals.

Mental Health &Well-being:

- How young people perceive mental health and well-being
- What young people need for good mental health
- The knowledge and skills required to protect mental health
- Conditions that negatively impact young people's mental health
- The influence of world events and social changes on young people's mental health

Quality Learning:

- What young people believe about when learning begins and ends in life
- Whom and what young people need in the learning process
- The biggest obstacles to learning, as identified by young people
- Conditions that motivate young people to learn
- How young people perceive 'open-mindedness' in learning
- The skills young people consider important to acquire or develop today

Methodology

The ELNN Research has adopted an applied anthropology perspective and employed a model designed in Research Stage I within this perspective. Applied anthropology addresses real-world challenges by utilizing anthropological insights and methodologies. It focuses on practical problem-solving engaging directly with communities and bridging academic research with the practical needs of communities. The ELNN research model has adopted a distinctive, unique approach in this context. A conventional research framework for an organization is set up based on a tripartite ground of research, target group, and the organization. However, in ELNN various organizations from different countries directly or indirectly engage with youth communities as various target groups. In this diversity, a research model was designed based on partners, communities, and one central research organ coordinating the efforts of partners and their communities.

Figure 1. ELNN Research Model

The unique structure of the model enhances ELNN's research landscape, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities encountered by young people in various contexts. It also encompasses a wide range of ethnographic research methods allowing for flexibility across different target groups and providing space for partners' implementation. All stages of the ELNN Research have embraced this approach and model.

Online Ethnography & Rapid Ethnography

The ELNN Research draws on various ethnographic research methods owing to the adopted applied anthropology approach. Ethnography is a social research approach used in applied anthropology focusing

on people's behaviors, social structures, and cultural practices. It provides the data and depth of understanding that applied anthropology needs for practical problem-solving and engaging directly with communities and issues. In this context, ethnography may exist in many forms such as online or rapid ethnography.

Ethnographic research can be conducted in various types of communities, including formal and informal organizations as well as social media [4]. The rise of online communities through social media and digital platforms has created novel opportunities for conducting ethnographic research. This novel way of ethnographic research focusing on online communities revealed online ethnography. Online ethnography involves applying ethnographic principles, perspectives, and methods to virtual or digital settings [15]. It is about the qualitative approach in virtual communities such as online observation or online interviews [23].

The ELNN Project introduced Discord as the medium for the online community in Work Package 2 focusing on building a dynamic community of over 1000 engaged youth members, and the initial research plan was for an online ethnography/netnography accordingly. However, due to encountering some challenges with engaging members on Discord and the challenge of the project's initial concept, which was more focused on community building than research within an existing community, the research plan was reconsidered. Thus, research focused on using digital tools rather than studying the online ELNN community itself.

The ELNN Discord platform continues to be a primary channel for engagement and gathering insights on various research subjects, even though the main focus of ELNN Research is not on studying the online community. In Research Stage II, an online focus group event was held on ELNN Discord, featuring engaged youth members from different ELNN partners. This event was part of the ELNN Research Stage II study, aimed at exploring how youth perceive 'quality learning' and 'mental health,' the two key research topics. Details and results from the ELNN Discord online focus group event are discussed in the Teams, Groups, Communities, and Localization section of this document.

Traditional ethnography is very time-intensive thus in some cases it is impossible to spend weeks or even months in the field gathering data, and a similar amount of time understanding the field data [17]. In this case, condensing traditional ethnographic methods into a shorter time frame and delivering the findings over shorter periods are informed by rapid ethnography. Rapid ethnography is ethnographic research

carried out over a short, compressed, or intensive time where data are collected from multiple sources and triangulated during analysis [27]. Rapid ethnography quickly gathers insights through applying several strategies such as narrowing the research scope to specific questions or issues, employing an iterative research process, or utilizing digital tools.

In Research Stage II, the study was time-limited, leading to the adoption of a rapid ethnography approach to gain insights within this constraint. The research scope was narrowed by specifying an age limit for the target group and focusing on particular topics. Digital tools were central to this approach, utilizing digital platforms for surveys (such as online questionnaires on Google Docs) and AI for data analysis. An iterative process was employed, allowing for data analysis and adjustments to methods or focus areas as the research progressed, including the conduction of an online focus group on ELNN Discord following initial data analysis.

ELNN Research Topics & Data Collection Methods

Research Stage I

ELNN Research Stage I was the initial phase of the ELNN Research, a key component of Work Package 3: Network Development & EU. Its aim was to enhance the development of network organizations, foster collaboration, and support member growth while actively engaging their youth communities. This initial stage focused on designing a research model, testing it, and equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge in ELNN research methodology. The research was approached from an applied anthropology perspective, emphasizing direct community engagement and ethnographic methods to develop practical solutions for positive social change. A research model was created that encompassed a variety of ethnographic methods, allowing for partner implementation and flexibility across target groups.

The research was coordinated by PUHU Research Türkiye, a network member actively involved in both qualitative and quantitative studies, employing diverse data collection methods and providing consultancy based on research findings. PUHU also conducted a full-day training for ELNN partners to equip them with essential qualitative research skills, particularly focusing on ethnographic research within the ELNN initiative's context. Following the training, PUHU identified two foundational topics (Future and Engagement), formulated research questions, and provided tools to test the model.

This research stage focused on three target groups: youth under 18 years of age, young people aged 18 to 35, and youth workers. For the first group (under 18), the digital tool www.menti.com was used, while online questionnaires with open-ended questions were developed for the second and third groups.

The research was conducted on online platforms, with participating countries including Romania, Türkiye, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, France, Georgia, and Bulgaria. Each partner conducted research in their respective countries and created national reports based on their findings. To ensure consistency in data interpretation, partners were provided with a template for concise analysis of the collected information. All responses were anonymous, and identities were strictly protected. At the end of Research Stage I, a report was compiled based on the partners' findings, covering all theoretical aspects of the research, including methodology, research design, and model development. This report has been released on the ELNN website.

Foundational Topics: Future and Engagement

The ELNN Project Work Package 3: Network Development & EU Presence aims to advance the development of network organizations, foster collaboration, and support member growth while actively engaging and empowering youth within their communities through youth-empowered programs. The research activity of this work package is designed to meet these requirements by listening to the needs and desires of youth, tailoring activities and projects accordingly, and encouraging active youth participation in community initiatives, policy discussions, and transformative endeavors.

Given the research focus on young people and the importance of their engagement in activities, the foundational themes of the research emerged organically from the collaborative experiences and insights shared by researchers and team members. These themes were unanimously adopted. PUHU defined research topics and corresponding research questions based on these themes. In Research Stage I, the themes of "Future" and "Engagement" were examined at various levels and dimensions through the identified research topics. The following examinations were conducted in this context:

- How young people perceive and conceptualize the future from psychological, cognitive, individual, and social perspectives.
- How young people define and experience engagement and motivation, including the factors that contribute to or hinder their sense of motivation and engagement across personal, social, and contextual dimensions.

Online Questionnaires

Online questionnaires were the first data collection method of the research in stage I. The questionnaires were a set of two forms applied to young people over 18 years of age and focused on the research topics "future" and "engagement." The questions were created from an ethnographic interview perspective, where the question-answer sequence is considered an integrated element of human cognition. They were open-ended, thus enabling participants to share their opinions, experiences, wishes, and concerns.

The questionnaires for the research's second target group (youth over 18) aimed to gain insights into young people's perspectives on the future, their involvement in current events, relationships, and influences from their social and family circles, among other factors. The research tried to understand what motivates youths' choices and engagement, and what type of activities and social groups they frequent. This intent was the same for the form applied to the youth workers as the third target group of the research. The youth workers questionnaire aimed to understand youth from the perspective of youth workers rather than the youth themselves.

The questionnaires were created in English to ensure consistency across the diverse partner organizations but partners were actively involved in the translation, cultural adaptation, and dissemination process. They were encouraged to distribute questionnaires to young people through personal and professional networks or within their NGO communities.

The research embraced an inclusive and versatile approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences of young people, by recognizing the diversity of disadvantaged groups. Therefore, even though the research questions were transferred to Google Forms as online surveys, partners were encouraged to modify them for utilization in face-to-face or online one-on-one interviews if needed.

Mentimeter

Mentimeter is an online platform providing real-time polls, quizzes, surveys, and audience engagement tools. Users can collect responses from participants through various questions (e.g., multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, ranking questions) created on Mentimeter. Participants can respond through any device such as a laptop or smartphone. This fosters engagement and participation, making it

ideal for educational settings, training sessions, corporate meetings, and events. The platform creates visual representations of the collected data, such as live graphs and infographics, making it easier to understand the gathered information. Users can track engagement levels and gather valuable insights from audience feedback. Mentimeter offers a user-friendly interface, making it accessible for individuals with varying technical skills.

In Research Stage I, youth under 18 years old were addressed as one of the target groups. This created a critical and ethical consideration relevant to consent and GDPR issues for minors. The Mentimeter platform's feature of only requiring answers to specific questions without collecting any personal data makes it a suitable online tool for conducting research without any issues related to consent and GDPR. Thus, in Research Stage I, Mentimeter was used as a research method for a particular target group. The Mentimeter questions focused on two emotions related to the future and asked young people to describe the future in two words. The questions were created in English like all research materials that PUHU provided before the fieldwork of the research but each partner translated the questions into local languages before dissemination.

Research Stage II

The ELNN contributes to the EU policies regarding the empowerment, connection, and engagement of youth, and supports the EU Youth Strategy. The EU Youth Strategy is the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. It embraces the EU Youth Goals while focusing on three core action areas, around the words: Engage, Connect, and Empower [13]. In this context, the consortium aimed to conduct the second stage of the research on quality learning and mental health & well-being topics regarding EU Youth Goals, and considering their previous experiences relevant to these topics. The second stage of the research embraced an online questionnaire and focus group methods to conduct field research to address the research topics. The Research Stage II aimed to conduct this field research to gain insights into the youth communities' needs and wants on the research topics through ethnographic research. Research Stage II targeted **youth** in line with its research objectives. Youth can be defined in different contexts concerning age. In Research Stage II, **the age between 18-30** is accepted for the target group. The research was coordinated by PUHU Research Türkiye, a network member specializing in research.

The research team comprised members from six participating organizations across six partner countries: Innovation Education Lab (Romania), Roes Cooperativa and Hopeland (Greece), Efektas Group (Lithuania), AMC (Portugal), INspire, z. s. (Czech Republic), and PUHU Research (Türkiye). PUHU provided a research procedure and guidelines to ensure proper implementation and consistency across the diverse partner organizations. The team conducted Research Stage II simultaneously in their respective countries, following the guidelines. Partners analyzed the gathered data and created national reports to contribute to the final Research Stage II Report. To facilitate uniformity in data interpretation, PUHU supplied a report template for a concise interpretation of the collected information. Throughout the data analysis, all forms were anonymous, and identities were never disclosed.

The research environment included both online and onsite components, utilizing various channels and dissemination strategies to enhance questionnaire responses and achieve focus group targets. Key points for all partners in tracking the dissemination strategy included:

- Monitoring the dissemination process and gathering evidence (screenshots, links, etc.) for each channel used for reporting and monitoring purposes.
- Tracking the number of responses received from each channel to evaluate the effectiveness of dissemination efforts.
- Engaging key informants and partner representatives to distribute the online questionnaires.

Research Stage II was conducted between July and September 2024. During this summer period, some research partners engaged in mobilities and Train of Trainers (ToT) activities, providing opportunities for face-to-face focus groups and the distribution of questionnaires. The online research environment included various platforms such as the ELNN Discord Channel, social media, WhatsApp, and relevant online communities and forums. Each partner utilized their social media channels and WhatsApp groups to share online questionnaires and recruit appropriate participants for the online focus groups. The ELNN Discord Channel also facilitated an online focus group event as part of the research and dissemination activities.

Youth Goals

The Youth Goals are the outcome of the EU Youth Dialogue process with over 50.000 young people representing the views of young people from all over Europe [30]. The Youth Dialogue was established after the invitation of the European Union Council Resolution to the European Commission and the Member States to develop a Structured Dialogue with young people and youth organizations, experts on youth issues, and public decision-makers in 2005, with the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) that recognizes young people as an important resource and key actors in society adopted in 2009 through the Council Resolution [9]. The EU Youth Dialogue (previously called the Structured Dialogue) is an instrument to create a dialogue between young people and youth organizations with policy and decision-makers, as well as experts, researchers, and other members of civil society [10]. It is organized into 18-month work cycles, each focusing on a different thematic priority (set by the Council of Youth Ministers). This 18-month process consists of three six-month-long presidencies and three European Youth Conferences. During each 18-month work cycle, every EU country conducts a national consultation of young people and youth organizations. National working groups organize the participatory process in each country through representatives of youth ministries, national youth councils, youth organizations, youth workers, researchers, and youth from all backgrounds [11]. In the sixth cycle (1 July 2017 – 30 December 2018) focusing on the theme "Youth in Europe: What's next?", European Youth Goals was established and adopted as an Annex to the EU Youth Strategy [14]. Firstly, the thematic reports were created based on the conclusion of the consultation processes conducted by the NWG (National Working Group) and EWG (European Working Group of international non-governmental youth organizations) with the questions and tools (survey for young people, questions for consultation, and guidance) created by the researchers, acting on behalf of the Structured Dialogue European Steering Committee [21]. Then based on these thematic reports, 11 Youth Goals, summarizing the issues that affect young people in Europe and the political priorities that are important to them were formulated with concrete sub-goals under scientific supervision. These 11 Youth Goals show in which areas change still has to happen so that youth in Europe can use their full potential [30]. The following 11 Youth Goals aim to contribute to composing the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 with their sub-goals [12,30]:

#1 Connecting EU with Youth: Foster the sense of youth belonging to the European project and build a bridge between the EU and young people to regain trust and increase participation

#2 Equality of All Genders: Ensure equality of all genders and gender-sensitive approaches in all areas of life of a young person.

#3 Inclusive Societies: Enable and ensure the inclusion of all young people in society.

#4 Information & Constructive Dialogue: Ensure young people have better access to reliable information, support their ability to evaluate information critically, and engage in participatory and constructive dialogue.

#5 Mental Health & Wellbeing: Achieve better mental well-being and end stigmatization of mental health issues, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people.

#6 Moving Rural Youth Forward: Create conditions that enable young people to fulfill their potential in rural areas.

#7 Quality Employment for All: Guarantee an accessible labor market with opportunities that lead to quality jobs for all young people.

#8 Quality Learning: Integrate and improve different forms of learning, equipping young people for the challenges of an ever-changing life in the 21st century.

#9 Space and Participation for All: Strengthen young people's democratic participation and autonomy as well as provide dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society.

#10 Sustainable Green Europe: Achieve a society in which all young people are environmentally active, educated, and able to make a difference in their everyday lifes.

#11 Youth Organizations & European Programmes: Ensure equal access for all young people to youth organizations and European youth programs, building a society based on European values and identity.

In Research Stage II, the youth goals of quality learning and mental health & well-being got specific attention regarding several points. In the research stage I, the research focused on the foundational themes as future and engagement topics and tried to understand how young people perceive and conceptualize

the future across psychological, cognitive, individual, and social levels; how young people define and experience engagement and motivation across personal, social, and contextual dimensions, and the factors relevant to them. The stage I research demonstrated that education and mental health are some dimensions that affect the youth's future perception and conceptualization of the future, and their engagement. The results of research stage I revealed education, financial independence, technology skills, mental health support, and social inclusion are crucial areas for policy focus thus the Innovation Education Lab drafted policy recommendations for youth based on the research stage I results [7]. According to these recommendations, non-formal education that can be considered with quality learning, and mental health support should be prioritized to enhance youth readiness for the future and increase youth engagement. Social inclusion and financial independence are also relevant to mental health while technological skills can be considered in non-formal education. They are also considered in The Youth Progress Index (YPI) dimensions, a biennially produced youth progress index by the European Youth Forum in partnership with the Social Progress Imperative. The Youth Progress Index measures the well-being of young people globally focusing on three main dimensions: Basic Human Needs (including indicators like nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter, and personal safety), Foundations of Well-being **(**covers access to knowledge, information, health, and environmental quality, Opportunity (focuses on personal rights, freedom, inclusiveness, and advanced education) [33]. The Youth Progress Index 2023 considers social factors in youth mental health such as social inclusion, financial hardships, and accessibility to the Internet and technology as well as education [22]. Thus, ELNN research focused on mental health & well-being, and quality learning in detail in the Research Stage II.

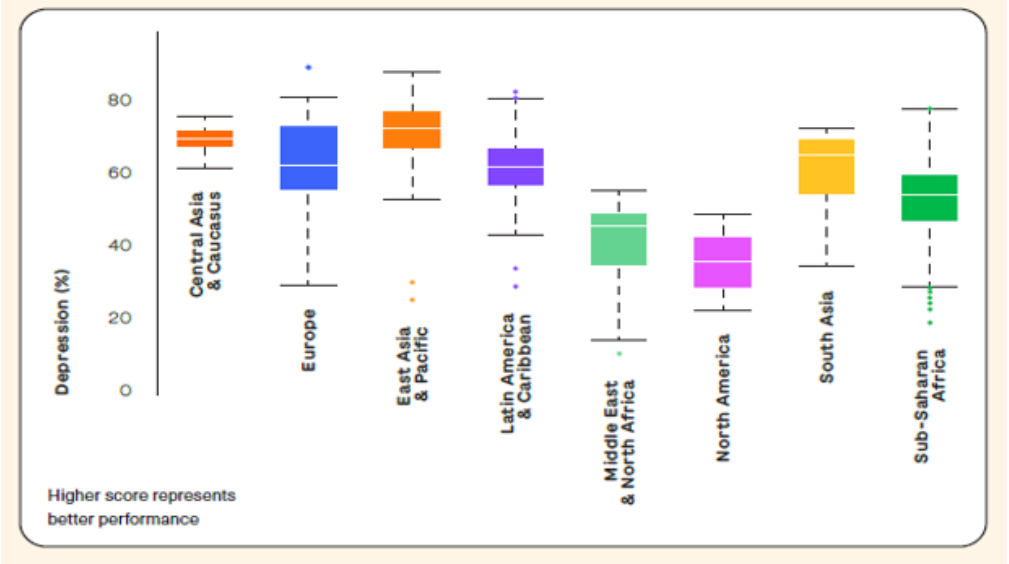
Mental Health & Well-being

Young people cite the immense societal pressures they face today and express a need for better youth mental health provision [31]. The thematic report on Mental Health & Wellbeing created in the VI Cycle of the Youth Dialogue that shaped the youth goal demonstrated the challenges young people are facing and the mental problems they encounter due to these challenges. According to the report, the media servicing the “perfect lives” and standards of happiness or perfection make them feel unsuccessful in comparison, and formal education focuses on performance and competition between students creating a high-pressure environment and very high expectations of career success. [20]. When young people fail to meet these expectations, they face mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Therefore, a significant and increasing number of young people across Europe are expressing their

concern at the prevalence of mental health issues such as high stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses amongst their peers [31].

The Young Progress Index (YPI) Report of Exploring Social Factors in Youth Mental Wellbeing produced in 2023 by the European Youth Forum and Social Progress Imperative demonstrated the global analysis of the depression. The European countries exhibited a wide range of scores in the study, with Greece having the lowest score in the region (34.18). The report emphasizes that although it is important to examine mental health & well-being holistically and comprehensively, analyzing the prevalence of depression offers valuable insights into the global landscape of mental health [22]. The report already shows results that social factors affect mental health while analyzing depression.

Figure 2. The Distribution of depression rates per region in 2022



Source: The Youth Progress Index Exploring Social Factors in Youth Mental Health, 2023

The YPI Report of Exploring Social Factors in Youth Mental Health highlights the important connection between societal factors and mental well-being, emphasizing the crucial role of inclusive social environments in promoting positive mental health outcomes [22]. The report says this connection is significant for understanding the impact of mental health risk factors (e.g., job insecurity) and protective factors (e.g., strong social supports). In this context, it can be noted that the YPI Report of Exploring Social Factors in Youth Mental Well-being and the ELNN Policy Recommendations For Youth overlap and complete each other. ELNN Recommendation emphasizes fostering social inclusion by creating

policies that address barriers related to financial dependence and diverse social networks, during the YPI report results show a strong correlation between social inclusion and depression in young people. While the YPI report emphasizes the outcome, the ELNN Recommendation points to the process to prevent this outcome. This indicates that social inclusion is both a process and an outcome, as adopted by the YPI report. In addition, studies have shown that being active in the community and having an opportunity to be involved in decision-making positively affect the youth's mental health [22]. However, young people experiencing mental health issues struggle to be active in the community due to social exclusion, stigma, and decreased social connections. Thus, while social inclusion positively affects mental well-being, not having mental well-being negatively affects social inclusion. Therefore, Youth Goal #5 Mental Health and Well-being targets to achieve better mental well-being and end the stigmatization of mental health issues, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people with the following sub-goals [31]:

- *Encourage the development of self-awareness and less competitive mindsets by fostering appreciation for individual skills and strengths.*
- *Safeguard the rights to work and to study of people with mental health issues both during and after illness to ensure their ability to pursue their own ambitions.*
- *Develop an inclusive intersectional approach to mental health provision for all, especially marginalized groups.*
- *Provide all professionals working with young people as well as family and friends with quality mental health first aid training.*
- *Provide inclusive, respectful, and well-funded treatment by incorporating high-quality mental health provision across all medical institutions.*
- *Focus on prevention measures that ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for better mental wellbeing.*
- *Fight stigma about mental health issues by developing awareness programmes.*

The document of EuroHealthNet's[1] input on the interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, emphasizes the importance of health and well-being as foundational for youth empowerment and engagement by focusing on the target of Youth Goal #5 Mental Health and Well-being. In this document, EuroHealthNet pays attention to the connection between mental health and education to achieve the target of Youth Goal #5 Mental Health and Well-being. It says educational systems are the critical factors that

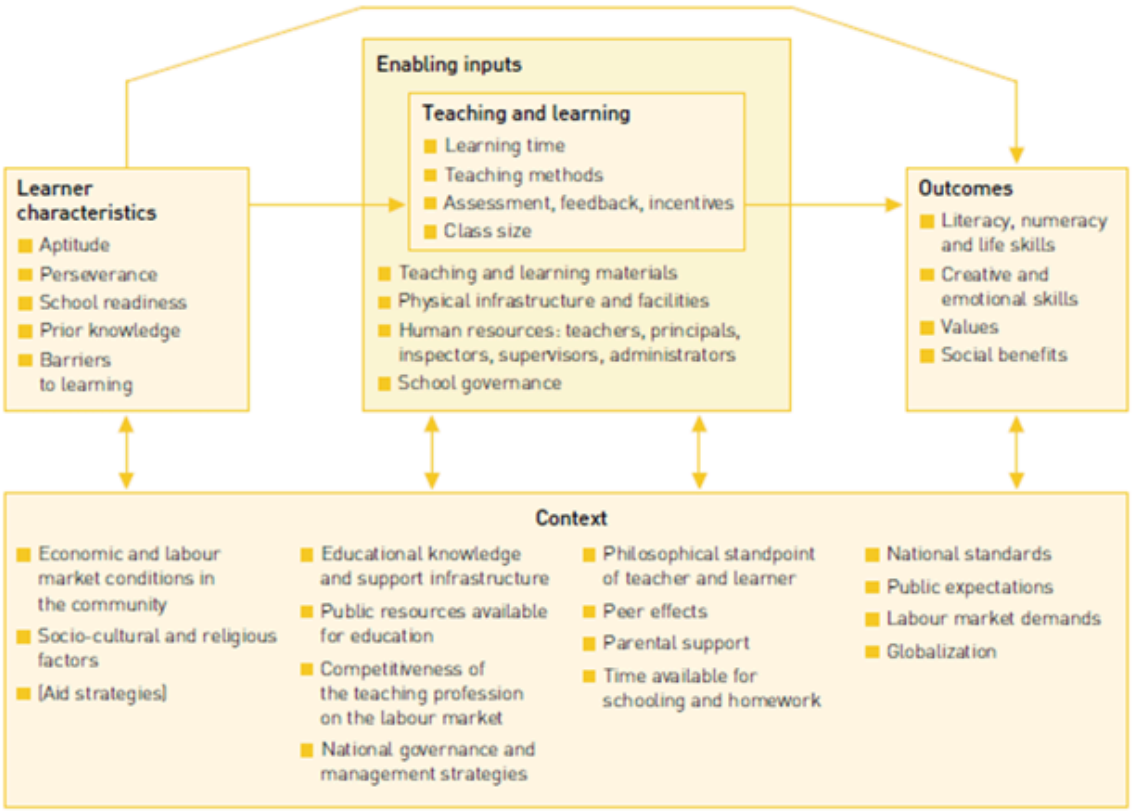
[1] https://eurohealthnet.eu/

influence youth's health and well-being and, play a vital role in shaping youth's physical, mental, and social development, with lasting impacts across their life course. Thus, EuroHealthNet advocates that a health-promoting approach to education is fundamental for mental health & well-being by referencing the idea of health-promoting schools articulated by WHO, UNESCO, and UNICEF [5]. According to this idea: "*No education system can be effective unless it promotes the health and well-being of its students, staff and community*" [28]. In this idea, the culture and structure of educational settings enable young students to learn important skill sets (e.g. socioemotional learning, critical thinking, health literacy) and develop healthy habits around physical and mental health, nutrition, and prevention [5]. This relationship between mental health and education also supports the point that the YPI report indicates about the multiple interrelated factors influencing mental health thus mental health should not be looked at in isolation.

Quality Learning

"Quality education" is among The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a global call to action. Ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading by 2030, SDG4 (Quality Education) aims to provide equal access for all women and men, for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in a vulnerable situation to quality technical, vocational and tertiary education [26]. The concept of quality creates the foundation of this sustainable development goal. Different countries, organizations, and institutions define quality in several terms, however, the need for relevance, equity of access and outcome, and the proper observance of individual rights is agreed upon [24]. In this context, UNESCO created a framework for understanding education quality where teaching & learning are at the core of the framework and are about the impact of curriculum, teacher methods, learners' motivation to participate, and their learning how to learn.

Figure 3. A Framework for Understanding Education Quality



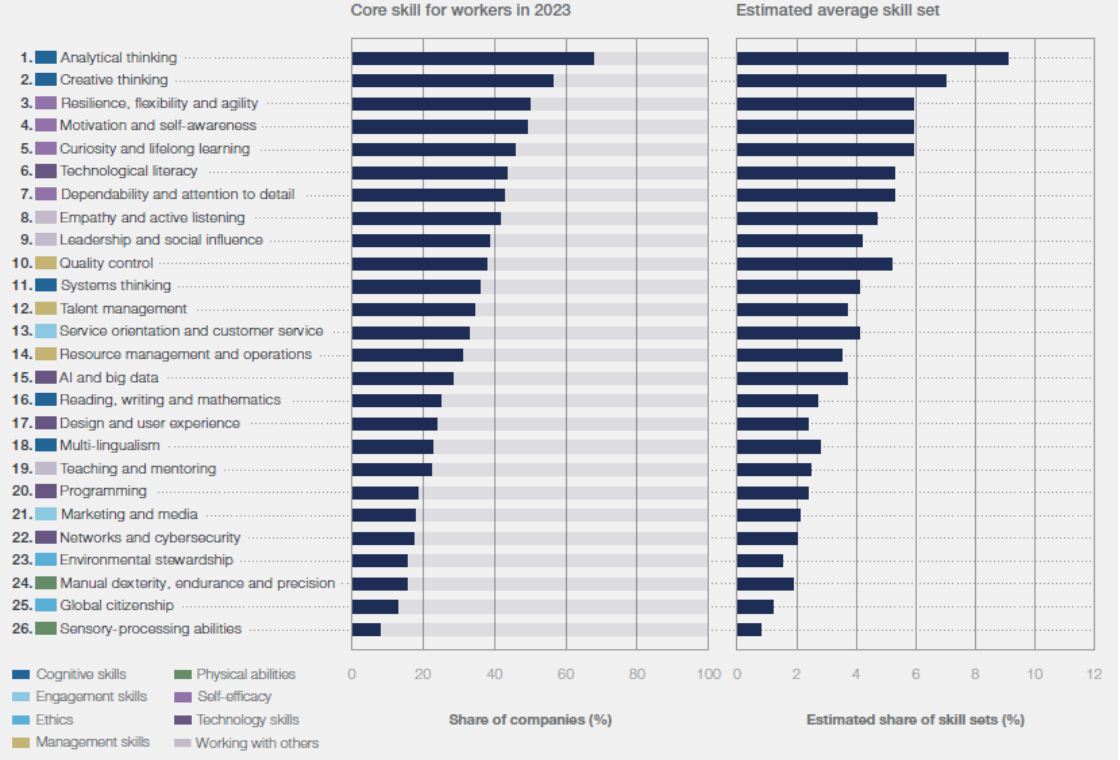
Source: UNESCO, Education for All THE QUALITY IMPERATIVE, 2004

According to UNESCO's framework, teaching and learning support outcomes and are interrelated with the context. The outcome refers to the learners' academic, social, or economic achievements such as labor market success, while the context is about the interrelationship between society and education. In the long term, education can help change society by improving and strengthening skills, values, and communications however in the short-term education usually reflects society rather strongly [25]. This creates an interrelationship between outcome and context, as well.

Considering the UNESCO framework especially from the perspective of the interrelationship between society changes by improved and strengthened skills through education, and learners' social and economic achievements, it is obvious that quality learning needs to be focused on. It is about enlarging the vision of education for the 21st century, focusing more on transferable skills, student-centered learning, and non-formal education [32]. The Future of Jobs Report 2023 of the World Economic Forum demonstrates employers estimate that 44% of workers' skills will be disrupted in the next five years thus

businesses are designing and scaling up their training programs [29]. In the same report, analytical thinking and creative thinking remain the most important skills for workers.

Figure 4. Core Skills in 2023



Source: World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report, 2023

The report shows the top 5 core skills workers are required today are cognitive and soft skills such as creative thinking, resilience, flexibility and agility, motivation and self-awareness, and curiosity and lifelong learning. While employers request them, young people face challenges that the current education systems don't focus enough on the 21st-century requirements. The thematic report of Quality Learning created in the VI Cycle of the Youth Dialogue that shaped the youth goal demonstrates the challenges young people face and their vision for the future. According to this thematic report, "*Young people feel the current education system needs modernization and change in focus*". They believe even if it is effective at providing basic knowledge such as maths and literacy, it does not focus enough on transferable skills and competencies such as critical thinking and communication skills, practical life skills, that enable young people to live independently such as managing money, health education and knowledge of the political system, and technical competencies for the future labor market [19].

The main consequences of both reports, the thematic report and the future of the jobs report are the significance of the non-formal and quality education. Thus Youth Goal #8 Quality Learning targets to achieve truly equal and universal access to quality learning by focusing more on transferable skills, student-centered learning, and non-formal education with the following sub-goals [32]:

- *Guarantee universal and equal access to quality education and life-long learning.*
- *Ensure that all young people have access to adequately funded non-formal education at all levels, that is recognised and validated.*
- *Promote open-mindedness and support the development of interpersonal and intercultural skills.*
- *Create and implement more personalised, participative, and cooperative learner-centered methods in every step of the education process.*
- *Guarantee that education equips all young people with life skills such as money management and health education including sexual and reproductive health.*
- *Incorporate methods within formal and non-formal education settings that enable the learner to develop personal skills including critical and analytical thinking, creativity and learning.*
- *Ensure that young people have access to citizenship education to provide them with solid knowledge on political systems, democracy and human rights, attained also through community-based experiences in order to promote active civil participation.*

Non-formal education refers to purposeful and planned activities or courses led by professional facilitators or volunteers [2]. In this context, Vocational education and training (VET) as a non-formal education take a critical place, especially, in those countries with rising youth unemployment to prepare young people for the labor market and upskill them with the market's expectations. VET focuses on the skills and knowledge for a particular job. On the other hand, the need for the learner to develop personal and life skills that the Youth Goal # Quality Learning targets, another key concept is associated with non-formal education, youth work. The European Union defines youth work as a broad term that includes a wide range of social, cultural, educational, and political activities carried out by, with, and for young people [3]. EU refers to the EU Council Resolution 2009 for this definition and explains youth work as specific leisure time activities within the scope of “out-of-school” education, managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders, and based on non-formal learning processes and voluntary participation [6]. Youth work provides varied benefits to young people such as empowering them to participate actively in society and politics; equipping them with essential life and labor market skills;

encouraging them for critical thinking; and helping them acquire and develop life skills [3]. However, there is a key challenge policy in the non-formal education recognition and validation of non-formal learning in both VET and youth work. The Youth Partnership, a long-term cooperation program between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the youth field, put forward four diverse kinds of recognition for non-formal learning: formal, political, social, and self-recognition [2]. Their details are as follows:

- Formal recognition means the 'validation' of learning outcomes and the 'certification' of a learning process and/or these outcomes by issuing certificates or diplomas which formally recognize the achievements of an individual
- Political recognition means the recognition of non-formal education in legislation and/or the inclusion of non-formal learning/education in political strategies and the involvement of non-formal learning providers in these strategies
- Social recognition means that social players acknowledge the value of competencies acquired in non-formal settings and the work done within these activities, including the value of the organizations providing this work
- Self-recognition means the assessment by the individual of learning outcomes and the ability to use these learning outcomes in other fields.

Despite various definitions and initiatives, young people still face numerous challenges in accessing non-formal education. In particular, young people with marginalized backgrounds have less access to non-formal education and have lower educational attainment [2].

Research Stage II Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Online Questionnaires

Online questionnaires are the first data collection method of the research on quality learning and mental health & well-being topics in stage II. The online questionnaires create a platform for participants to share their opinions, experiences, wishes, and concerns through the open-ended questions. In most interviewing contexts, questions and answers are treated as separate entities, with the interviewer posing questions and the respondent providing answers from their cultural perspective. However, ethnographic interviewing challenges this separation by viewing the question-answer sequence as an integrated

element of human cognition. In ethnography, both questions and answers are seen as culturally embedded, requiring discovery from informants themselves.

Considering the ethnographic approach online questionnaires specifically crafted to delve into youth communities' experiences and perceptions of the research topics are prepared. In addition, learning lessons from stage I research the questions were specially designed to be brief, yet capable of measuring the intended factors effectively. Thus, the online questionnaires were set up with six questions except the demographic ones (e.g. gender, age, highest level of education). The questions considering the definitions and sub-goals of the relevant youth goals are the following:

Mental Health &Well-being:

1. What does "mental health & wellbeing" mean to you?
2. What do you need to be mentally healthy?
3. What knowledge and skills do you need to protect your mental health?
4. What are the conditions that negatively affect your mental health?
5. How do current world events or social changes affect your mental health?
6. How do you overcome high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems?

Quality Learning:

1. When do you think learning starts in a person's life, and when does it end?
2. Who and what do you need in the learning process?
3. What is the biggest obstacle to learning for you?
4. What conditions motivate you to learn?"
5. What comes to mind when you think of 'open-mindedness' in learning?
6. Which skills do you think are important for you to acquire or develop today?

A critical aspect of ethnographic research is establishing rapport with informants. This entails building a trusting and comfortable relationship that encourages informants to open up about their culture, values, norms, and practices. Language is the key at that point. Therefore, in Research Stage II, firstly **local languages are preferred** while **English** is a common language for disseminating the questionnaires or on-site group discussions **in international mobilities.** ELNN Research Team partner PUHU designed the

questionnaires in English. The partners translated the questionnaires into their languages if they didn't conduct them in an international mobility or a ToT activity.

Focus Groups

Focus group was the second data collection method of the research on quality learning and mental health & well-being topics in stage II. A Focus group is a group discussion where the group is focused on some kind of collective activity like debating a set of questions [16]. It is a traditional qualitative research method that distinguishes itself from other qualitative research methods due to its participatory aspect. This participatory aspect comes from group interaction. In a focus group, a moderator responsible for the group and the topics to be discussed introduces a topic, and the group members talk about the topic with each other in addition to the moderator [1]. The moderator encourages them to comment on each others' experiences and points of view [16]. This creates a group interaction and reveals invaluable insights that could be hard to gain without this interaction. It also provides a platform for directly exploring similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences [16]. Therefore, in Research Stage II, two focus groups are planned to reveal insights into the research topics that could not be gained through only online questionnaires in line with the research objectives.

The online questionnaires include open-ended questions where participants can freely share their opinions, experiences, wishes, and concerns. While researchers can see some similarities and differences between the responses, it is impossible to gain the insights as in a focus group where participants comment on each other's points of view. To create this group interaction and gain insights, it is advised to set up a group of between 6-10 people and take a session in 45-90 minutes. Recording and transcription are also other key points of the focus group sessions. All the setting details were explained in the research procedure and guideline document prepared by the research lead partner PUHU and shared with the partners at the beginning of the research.

In Research Stage II, at least one focus group was conducted by partners for each research topic, quality learning, and mental health & well- being. Some partners conducted more than one focus group session for a topic. Questions prepared for the online questionnaires of the quality learning, and mental health & well-being were utilized in focus groups. The language aspect was the same as the online questionnaires. Firstly local languages are preferred while English is a common language for on-site group discussions in international mobilities. The focus group environment was online and onsite. It was up to the partners to

conduct a focus group session online or face-to-face. Thus, some partners conducted focus groups online and some face-to-face.

Partner Organizations

Czech Republic

ELNN Partner from The Czech Republic INspire, z. s., is a non-governmental organization that has been operational for five years. The organization is dedicated to working in the domains of Non-formal Education, Inclusion, and Mental Health and Well-being. The target group for INspire includes individuals facing various challenges, particularly those residing in rural areas and experiencing economic and social disadvantages. The organization extends its support to the socially disadvantaged, specifically those identifying with the LGBT+ community, as well as individuals dealing with mental health challenges. INspire focuses on attracting people who may feel "lost in life," individuals navigating difficult life journeys, and those seeking guidance to correct their course or discover a more meaningful path.

On an annual basis, INspire reaches approximately 230 youngsters offline and 1000 online, providing them with the necessary support and resources across its specified domains. The target group is between 18-30 years old from Czech Republic (primarily Brno), any gender and any education. In terms of networks, INspire is a part of MVKomunity (Czech media grammar community), and the New Group, which was previously associated with the Synergy network. This group consists of organizations with experience in the Synergy method and is actively involved in promoting it further. Additionally, INspire is represented in the Czech group of pedagogues and educators known as "Mediální gramotnost," focusing on the crucial topic of media literacy. These networks allow INspire to collaborate, share experiences, and contribute to the advancement of methodologies and issues central to its mission.

Greece

ELNN Partner from Greece, Roes Cooperativa KOIN.SE.P is a dynamic Social Enterprise with a five-year history. Operating across diverse domains, the organization is actively engaged in Informal and Non-formal Education, Creativity and Innovation, Sustainability, and Social Inclusion. The target group encompasses individuals of varied backgrounds, abilities, and ages, including children, youth, adults

(organizational staff, youth workers, educators), and seniors. Additionally, Roes Cooperativa supports and enhances the work and capacity building of institutes, especially NGOs, Social Cooperatives, Schools, and Companies.

Annually, the organization impacts a significant number of participants, with members completing 14,491 training hours during EVS/ESC programs and Erasmus+ KA1 Youth as learners. Their innovative approaches have benefited 9,760 individuals from Erasmus+ KA1 Youth & Staff and Erasmus+ KA2 Youth, School & Cross-Sectoral projects across Europe. Notably, Roes Cooperativa has been a certified Quality Label for Humanitarian Aid Volunteering organizations since 2023.

The cooperative actively participates in various networks, emphasizing cooperation among cooperatives and third-sector entities. It has established a robust network of local, regional, national, and international stakeholders, partners, and associates. As a founding entity of the Connect Community Center, Roes Cooperativa contributes to creating synergies among non-profit initiatives. Furthermore, since 2023, the organization has been a proud member of the European Lead by Nature Network (ELNN), fostering collaborations with partners from 13 different countries.

Lithuania

ELNN Partner from Lithuania is Efektas Group is a 8-year-old SME in Lithuania operates education & training, innovation, entrepreneurship, EU funded projects implementation, personal/professional development. Its target group is young people 18+ years old, university students, youth workers, educators in Lithuania. The average total number of trainees/participants/beneficiaries the partner reaches during the year is 140. The partner is represented in Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, ELNN, EUCIN, garagErasmus4cities, Starfish Academy Inner Circle along with its domains. The partner reaches out youth communities through social media (Linkedin, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube), Newsletter, HEIs (Kaunas, Vilnius), schools and youth open spaces. Educators, youthworkers, volunteers are the key informants or individuals that the partner reaches out to within the youth community.

Romania

ELNN Partner and Coordinator from Romania, Innovation Education Lab is a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a founding year of 2019. The organization focuses on non-formal education for

youth development and well-being, as well as providing training for youth workers. Targeting a demographic range, their programs cater to youth aged 14 to 25 and youth workers aged 23 to 35. Physical activities are conducted at their office in Brasov, while online engagements predominantly occur on the Discord server, centered around the ELNN community.

The participant demographic reflects urban, middle-class, and ethnically diverse youth, while the majority of youth workers share an urban and middle-class background. In the year 2023, Innovation Education Lab successfully engaged 600 participants through 45 physical events in Brasov, additionally forming a cohort of 30 trained youth workers. Notably, the organization plays a pivotal role as the founding entity behind the Lead by Nature Network and actively participates in various informal networks at the local, regional, and national levels, further amplifying its impact and reach.

Portugal

ELNN Partner from Portugal is AVENTURA MARÃO CLUBE, a 30-year-old NGO. The organization operates across various domains, including promoting healthy lifestyles, fair trade, volunteering, social entrepreneurship, democratic life, and the promotion of art and culture. Their target group spans from 5 years old to individuals aged 18 and above, with a commitment to working collaboratively with the local community, particularly those facing fewer opportunities and those with special needs. On average, the organization reaches over 300 beneficiaries annually.

AVENTURA MARÃO CLUBE is actively involved in official and unofficial networks such as GET THE NET, ELNN, IGnetwork, and the Rede Portuguesa da Fundação Ana Lindh. The reach-out to the target group, including minors, involved leveraging personal connections, engaging representatives from specific associations or institutions such as schools, and utilizing communication platforms like WhatsApp.

Türkiye

PUHU, a 6-year-old SME in Türkiye, operates at the confluence of social sciences and technology, offering a versatile array of services across various domains. The organization is actively involved in research, conducting both qualitative and quantitative studies, utilizing diverse data collection methods, and providing consultancy based on research findings. Their training programs encompass cultural

competence, bias-free communication, emotional intelligence, and coaching. PUHU also specializes in consultancy services for companies, emphasizing sustainable research and development, new project development, and executive advisory services.

The organization actively engages with a diverse target group, including individuals, communities, companies, institutions, educators, trainers, and youth. PUHU tailors its activities to address a wide range of societal needs, focusing on unique challenges faced by different groups such as children, women, vulnerable populations, migrants, and individuals undergoing cognitive, social, and cultural transitions. PUHU's commitment extends to community development initiatives, empowering various demographic groups. The organization also collaborates with academic institutions, contributing to the broader literature through qualitative and quantitative research and academic paper presentations.

The average annual reach of PUHU's training programs is between 20 and 50 participants. The organization is actively represented in official networks related to academic and social innovation collaborations, as well as unofficial networks focused on community Engagement, education, and youth empowerment. Regarding youth reach-out, PUHU employs a comprehensive strategy utilizing social media platforms, collaborations with youth organizations, and direct Engagement with schools and community centers.

The organization collaborates with educators, trainers, and students from partner institutions, implementing targeted sampling methods to gather valuable insights. The use of online platforms and social media ensures broader youth participation in surveys, capturing diverse perspectives. In essence, PUHU's multifaceted approach, spanning research, training, consultancy, and youth Engagement, reflects a commitment to addressing diverse societal needs across different age groups, communities, businesses, and educational institutions.

Czech Republic

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The target group was reached through personal connections, social media and Facebook groups with youth (scout groups, etc.). The questionnaire, consent and inform form was translated into Czech language.

Demographic Overview:

The surveyed group consisted of 37 participants, predominantly from the Czech Republic (94.6%), with one individual from Slovakia (2.7%). The group included 15 males and 21 females, spanning a diverse age range, with 23 years being the most represented age (18.9%), followed by 20 years (13.5%) and 26 years (8.1%). Regarding educational attainment, the participants exhibited a diverse academic background. Nearly half (45.9%) had completed secondary school, while 32.4% held a bachelor's degree, and 16.2% had attained a master's degree, reflecting a significant proportion of individuals with higher education qualifications. A smaller portion (5.4%) represented those with informal or non-official education, and none reported having only completed primary school. This demographic distribution highlights a relatively young, gender-balanced, and predominantly well-educated participant pool.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

All respondents shared a unanimous perspective, stating that learning 'starts with being born and ends with death.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

Respondents highlighted two key themes that motivate their learning: personal abilities and the support of others. Fourteen participants emphasized the importance of self-driven factors, such as determination, peace of mind, and the ability to embrace new information and adapt to change. They also noted the value of having time, space, and the freedom to make mistakes as part of the learning process, coupled with understanding, patience, and respect. Meanwhile, 21 respondents underscored the role of external support, such as guidance from teachers, mentors, or inspiring individuals. They stressed the importance

of free access to quality information, a willingness to learn, and the encouragement of a supportive environment where mistakes are seen as integral to growth. Additionally, they acknowledged the possibility of learning independently through reliable resources, literature, or personal experiences.

Obstacles to Learning:

Obstacles to learning within the Czech community, based on gathered data and participant feedback, reveal both individual and systemic challenges. Women reported facing barriers such as low self-esteem, fear of failure, and mental health struggles, while men identified procrastination as a major issue. Shared obstacles included laziness, discouragement, and prejudice from others, financial insecurity, and difficulties engaging with subjects of interest, such as those encountered at grammar school. Participants also highlighted systemic issues, such as the inadequacy of the Czech educational system, particularly the lack of instruction on effective study techniques, which they felt left them unprepared for academic success.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Motivating conditions for learning, as gathered from the Czech community, emphasize a combination of environmental, social, and intrinsic factors. A supportive space is identified as essential, where learners value adaptability, interactivity, and opportunities for dialogue while preferring reduced reliance on traditional frontal lectures. The role of people is also highlighted, with participants noting the importance of an inspiring environment and being surrounded by enthusiastic individuals who share a passion for learning.

Additionally, participants emphasize the synergy of these conditions with intrinsic motivation. They describe the ideal learning environment as one where they enjoy the process, are inspired by others who excel in it and feel motivated by their own desire to improve and achieve a vision for their future. Together, these factors—supportive spaces, encouraging social environments, and internal drive—form the foundation for creating optimal conditions for learning.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Data from participants in the Czech community highlight key aspects of open-mindedness as a crucial component of effective learning. Openness to new information emerged as a dominant theme, with ten

responses emphasizing the importance of being receptive to new ideas and exploring diverse directions in knowledge acquisition. Additionally, continuous learning was mentioned in seven responses, portraying education as a lifelong process through phrases like "learning that is not definitive" and "constant learning through dialogue with teachers and students." Five responses underscored the role of critical thinking and a non-judgmental attitude, focusing on the ability to process information without bias or premature judgment. Lastly, flexibility in learning methods was reflected in four responses, advocating for the use of diverse, non-traditional approaches and appreciating programs like Erasmus that broaden educational perspectives.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The data highlights several categories of essential skills emphasized by participants in the Czech community. Soft skills, such as communication, empathy, teamwork, and non-violent communication, are frequently mentioned as critical for effective interpersonal relationships. Participants also emphasize critical thinking and mental health, focusing on analytical abilities, staying mentally stable, and maintaining awareness of world events. Self-awareness and personal development are another significant areas, with responses highlighting self-love, self-sufficiency, self-discipline, and interpersonal and physical skills.

In the realm of modern needs, digital and modern skills are prominent, including digital literacy, media literacy, and learning through science-focused content like podcasts. Practical applications are also valued, with an emphasis on practical and survival skills such as fixing things, growing food, and developing manual skills. Concerns about the environment are reflected in a focus on sustainability and environmental awareness, with mentions of being environmentally friendly and promoting societal sustainability. Finally, adaptability and independence are seen as vital, with participants noting the importance of resilience, pursuing personal dreams, and developing strong communication and argumentation skills.

Conclusion:

The findings highlight a shared belief among respondents that learning is a lifelong process, beginning at birth and ending at death. This perspective emphasizes that learning is not confined to formal education or specific stages of life but is a continuous journey shaped by personal experiences and environmental

changes. Two critical elements in the learning process emerged: the individual's self-awareness, determination, and adaptability, and the supportive role of others, such as mentors, teachers, and peers. These elements underscore the importance of both internal motivation and external encouragement in fostering effective learning.

Barriers to learning differ by gender, with lack of interest and motivation being common to both, while women reported additional challenges such as fear of failure, lack of confidence, and financial obstacles. Motivating conditions for learning were identified as supportive spaces, meaningful and engaging subjects, and opportunities for self-development. Open-mindedness also emerged as a key attribute, encompassing openness to new information, critical thinking, and flexibility in learning methods. Additionally, the skills deemed essential for today's learners, including soft skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, practical skills, and sustainability, reflect the need for a holistic approach to education that addresses the complexities of the modern world.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning)

The focus group was conducted on-site during a free-time kayaking activity. Participants were gathered in this setting, and an iPhone microphone was used for recording. The device also served as a speaking object, ensuring high audio quality and facilitating an organized discussion by preventing interruptions. The session lasted 65 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes allocated for completing consent forms, providing information, and addressing participant questions.

The discussion was conducted in Czech and included seven participants, three female and four male, aged between 23 and 34 years. All participants were Czech nationals with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The focus group was moderated by one individual responsible for informing participants about consent, providing additional information, and posing both prepared and follow-up questions to encourage detailed responses. The moderator also ensured that all participants had the opportunity to share their opinions.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

During the discussion, participants generally supported one another's viewpoints, adding their unique perspectives to reflect their individual experiences. While their views were not entirely different, they enriched the discussion by acknowledging diverse experiences and insights. When discussing learning

needs and motivating conditions, participants recognized and acknowledged some contradictory preferences. For example, while one participant found listening to epic music soundtracks helpful for learning, another participant, a musician, opposed this strategy, explaining that such music would feel overwhelming and hinder their ability to focus. This highlighted that effective strategies vary among individuals and are influenced by personal contexts and preferences.

The group interaction observation:

Participants appeared to enjoy discussing the topic, with the conversation gradually fostering a sense of collaboration as they explored ideas together. Throughout the discussion, a wide range of emotions emerged, including feelings of hopelessness, anger, mutual understanding, support, and empathy. Participants demonstrated supportive and encouraging communication, frequently appreciating and building on one another's contributions.

They actively engaged with each other's responses, ensuring that important points were not overlooked. Unexpectedly, the topic of artificial intelligence was brought up during the discussion. Additionally, it was revealed that participants often used learning as a tool for procrastination, highlighting an interesting dynamic in their approach to education.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

Participants viewed learning as a lifelong journey, starting from the moment sensory perception begins and continuing throughout life. They highlighted learning to cope with challenges, such as dealing with loss, as a key aspect of this journey. Participants acknowledged that learning is a continuous process, evolving with life experiences, and never truly ends.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

Participants identified several essential elements for effective learning. A common theme was the importance of making progress by dividing tasks into manageable steps. Understanding the purpose behind learning (the "why") was considered crucial for maintaining motivation. Experiential learning and interaction with mentors or peers were preferred over passive learning methods. The value of reflection, time, and feedback in supporting the learning process was also emphasized. Both intrinsic motivation

(personal drive) and extrinsic motivation (support from others) were seen as key factors, with role models and inspiring teachers frequently mentioned as powerful influences.

Obstacles to Learning:

Participants highlighted several obstacles to learning, including laziness, procrastination, and distractions that often result in superficial learning or avoidance. Monotony and a lack of variety in tools or methods were perceived as demotivating, along with stress, low self-esteem, and pressure from external expectations. Participants also noted that even effective tools, if overused, could become obstacles by limiting further growth. Additionally, poor teaching and mismatched expectations were identified as significant barriers to effective learning.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Participants emphasized the importance of a supportive environment, characterized by calmness and flexibility, as a key factor for motivation. Intrinsic motivation was driven by curiosity and a sense of purpose, while learning alongside buddies or coworkers and engaging in dialogue helped sustain focus. Inspiring individuals and collaboration were also highlighted as significant motivators. Additionally, individual preferences, such as one person benefiting from epic music while others found it unhelpful, underscored the personalized nature of motivation in the learning process.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Open-mindedness was identified as a crucial component of a positive learning experience. Participants emphasized the importance of respecting individual learning processes, recognizing that mistakes and varied learning paces are integral to growth. They criticized traditional schooling for its perceived lack of open-mindedness, calling for more flexible and compassionate approaches that prioritize the well-being of both students and teachers. The discussion highlighted a strong desire for openness to new ideas and an understanding of learning as a diverse and inclusive process.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

Participants identified several essential skills for modern learners, including critical thinking, the ability to gather and validate information, and social interaction skills such as conflict resolution and empathy. Key traits for personal growth included self-awareness, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.

Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of presentation skills, logical reasoning, and applying a scientific approach through hypothesis testing. Humbleness and curiosity were highlighted as vital attributes for lifelong learners, fostering continuous personal and intellectual development.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group revealed key themes about learning as a lifelong journey, starting with sensory perception and continuing through life experiences. Participants emphasized the importance of effective learning elements, such as breaking tasks into manageable steps, understanding the purpose behind learning, and engaging in experiential methods supported by reflection and feedback. Motivation was linked to a supportive environment, curiosity, collaboration, and personalized approaches, though barriers like procrastination, distractions, monotony, and mismatched teaching methods were noted. Open-mindedness was seen as crucial, with participants criticizing traditional schooling for its rigidity and advocating for flexible, inclusive approaches. Modern learners were highlighted as needing critical thinking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and practical skills, underpinned by humility and curiosity for continuous development.

Greece

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The research sample consisted of Greek citizens aged 18 to 30 years, aligning with the target group for this study. Participants included individuals residing in Greece, irrespective of their nationality, ensuring inclusivity within the demographic scope. A random sampling method was employed for the online survey and one of the two focus groups. Recruitment relied on social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook) managed by Roes and Hopeland, complemented by a WhatsApp community outreach. Additionally, convenience sampling was utilized for a youth mobility activity, although logistical challenges hindered response collection.

The second focus group relied on convenience sampling, specifically involving learners undertaking internships at Roes and Hopeland. This approach ensured accessibility to participants and facilitated deeper discussions within the research scope. The age restriction and inclusive nationality approach contributed to a representative sample that reflects the broader youth population in Greece, enabling the study to explore perceptions of ‘Quality Learning’ in this context effectively.

Demographic Overview:

The study sample consisted of 15 participants with diverse demographic characteristics, providing a broad representation of perspectives on 'Quality Learning.' Of the participants, 11 identified as female and 4 as male, with ages ranging from 20 to 42 years. While the majority fell within the targeted 18–30 age group, two participants were above this range, offering additional insights beyond the core demographic focus. Nationalities represented included Greek (6 participants), French (3 participants), Italian (2 participants), and one participant each from Ukraine, Lithuania, Germany, and Cyprus, reflecting a diverse mix of cultural backgrounds. In terms of educational attainment, most participants held a bachelor's degree (9), followed by 3 with master's degrees and 3 with a high school diploma. This demographic diversity, particularly in educational and cultural backgrounds, adds depth to the study's exploration of 'Quality Learning' within and beyond the Greek context.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that learning begins at birth and continues throughout life. Specifically, 4 out of 5 respondents emphasized that learning has no definitive end, describing it as a continuous process that persists as long as individuals engage with new experiences and acquire knowledge. A few participants suggested that learning could cease if an individual chooses to stop seeking knowledge. One respondent distinguished between "learning" and "real and effective learning" but did not elaborate further on the elements defining these categories or their duration over a lifetime. Overall, the concept of lifelong learning was unanimously supported by all participants.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

A significant portion of respondents (70%) highlighted the importance of knowledgeable and passionate educators for effective learning. Additionally, about 60% emphasized the value of a supportive and stimulating learning environment. Other frequently mentioned factors included peers, such as friends (50%), and hands-on resources (40%), both of which were seen as critical for enhancing the learning experience.

The presence of an engaging teacher or mentor was repeatedly identified as a key driver of successful learning. Respondents also underscored the need for learning environments that encourage collaboration and active participation rather than passive absorption of information. Interestingly, only one participant

noted internal factors, such as personality, as influential in the learning process. This highlights a general focus on external elements, particularly the role of educators, peers, and the environment, as pivotal in shaping effective learning experiences.

Obstacles to Learning:

The most commonly reported obstacles to learning included a lack of motivation (50%), difficulty focusing (40%), and the overwhelming volume of information (30%). Additionally, in contrast to the motivating factors identified in subsequent responses, 20% of participants highlighted external barriers, such as poor teaching methods or insufficient support, as significant impediments to learning. Some respondents also noted systemic challenges within educational institutions, particularly formal settings. These environments were described as failing to align with personal learning preferences, making it difficult for individuals to stay motivated.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Respondents identified several factors that motivate them to learn, including engaging and interactive environments (60%), clear personal goals (50%), and the opportunity to apply learning in real-world contexts (40%). This aligns with the earlier insight from one participant who noted that applicable, real-life scenarios enable a smoother learning process. Additionally, 30% of respondents emphasized the importance of a positive and encouraging learning environment, while 20% highlighted the influence of "role models" or "mentors." The data suggests that motivation is closely linked to the relevance and application of what is being learned. Respondents are more likely to engage in learning when it is meaningful and directly applicable to their lives, future aspirations, or can be drawn from past experiences as learning examples.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

The concept of open-mindedness was described by 70% of respondents as the willingness to consider new ideas, approaches, and perspectives. About 50% emphasized the importance of challenging one's own beliefs and embracing diverse learning methods. Additionally, 30% of respondents associated open-mindedness with creativity and innovation in the learning process. Overall, open-mindedness is viewed as a crucial component of learning, enabling individuals to adapt and thrive in any educational

environment. Respondents believe that being open to new ideas not only enhances personal growth but also enriches the overall learning experience.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The key skills identified by respondents include problem-solving (60%), time management (50%), adaptability (40%), and language proficiency (30%). Other important skills mentioned were developing a healthy work-life balance (20%) and ethical behavior (20%). Respondents recognize the importance of skills that help them navigate the complexities of modern life, both professionally and personally. The emphasis on problem-solving and adaptability reflects the challenges of a rapidly changing world, where these skills are crucial for success.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the results of the online questionnaire procedure highlight that participants, aged 18 to 30 from diverse backgrounds, view learning as a lifelong process, emphasizing its continuous nature. Key factors for effective learning include engaging educators, supportive environments, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. Motivation is driven by clear personal goals and interactive learning settings, while obstacles like lack of motivation and difficulty focusing were commonly reported. Open-mindedness was highlighted as essential for personal growth, with participants valuing the ability to embrace new ideas and challenge existing beliefs. Key skills identified include problem-solving, time management, adaptability, and language proficiency, essential for success in today's fast-changing world. The findings underscore the importance of both personal and external factors in fostering a quality learning experience.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning):

Two online Focus Groups were conducted within a 2-day interval, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. The sessions were conducted in English and involved staff members, learners, and young people associated with Roes and Hopeland, either formally or informally. The format of the focus group questions was aligned with the online survey, with flexibility for modifications based on the participants' responses, allowing for a deeper exploration of relevant themes. This flexibility was especially evident in the first focus group, where the question structure was adapted to encourage a smoother flow of conversation.

During the data analysis, the responses from both focus groups were categorized according to the corresponding survey questions. A summarization of the findings was then produced, with a thorough examination of key themes emerging across both focus groups. The analysis focuses on how these findings complement and expand upon the insights gathered from the online survey.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

In the focus groups, participants shared both common and divergent views across various topics. Common points of view included the recognition of learning as a lifelong process, the importance of personal motivation and goals, and the necessity of a supportive environment (e.g., mentors, and peers). Both groups identified technology literacy and soft skills (e.g., communication and time management) as crucial for today's learners. Differences arose mainly in terms of specific preferences: Group 1, consisting of individuals with higher education and more work experience, emphasized hard skills, such as technological proficiency and management abilities, while Group 2, with younger, less experienced participants, focused more on soft skills, including organizational skills and adaptability. These differences reflect the participants' varying life stages and experiences, which influenced their perspectives on learning priorities and challenges.

The group interaction observation:

The group interactions showed varying engagement levels. In Focus Group 1, with more educated and professional participants, discussions were structured, focused on practical learning applications, and participants built on each other’s comments. Focus Group 2, consisting of younger participants, had more varied engagement, with some being reticent and others more eager to share, leading to a dynamic but less cohesive conversation. The online format limited non-verbal cues, causing pauses and delays. Homogeneity within the groups reduced the diversity of perspectives. These factors, along with the limitations, highlight how group dynamics and research format influenced the interaction quality.

Perceptions of when learning starts and ends:

Both focus groups agreed that learning is a lifelong process, starting at birth and continuing throughout life. However, nuances emerged in the discussions. In Focus Group 1, one participant noted that health issues could affect learning in later stages of life, while another emphasized that the ability to learn is always present, but engaging in learning is a personal choice. Focus Group 2 highlighted the importance

of having a supportive network of peers, such as "study buddies," and access to resources like technology and mentorship, which were seen as critical for lifelong learning. Overall, both groups recognized the lifelong nature of learning, with additional emphasis on factors like personal choice, health, and external support, which were not as prominently featured in the survey responses.

Necessary elements in the learning process:

Both focus groups highlighted the significance of personalization in the learning process. In Focus Group 1, participants emphasized the value of personalized learning approaches, with A. stressing the importance of knowledgeable mentors and adapting techniques to various learning styles. M. favored hands-on learning and teaching others, while V. preferred visual elements and practical applications. In Focus Group 2, participants pointed to the necessity of social support from peers and access to resources like technology and mentorship, which were seen as essential for creating an effective learning environment. Overall, both groups agreed that mentorship, resources, and adapting learning methods to individual styles are key elements for successful learning.

Obstacles to learning:

Both focus groups identified common obstacles to learning. In Focus Group 1, participants pointed to challenges such as lack of time and energy (M), difficulty concentrating on boring or difficult topics (F), and fear of making mistakes (V). Focus Group 2 participants discussed issues like distractions (O), lack of focus (O.N, A.F), procrastination, and feeling overwhelmed by the vast amount of information (N.M). Overall, the main obstacles across both groups were lack of time, focus, and energy, alongside external factors like information overload.

Motivating conditions for learning:

Both focus groups emphasized the importance of clear goals, a structured approach, and a supportive environment as key motivators for learning. In Focus Group 1, participants noted that having a clear understanding of learning goals (Z.A.) and an engaging environment (M.A.) was crucial. V. also mentioned that challenging material sparking curiosity motivated her to learn. Focus Group 2 participants highlighted the significance of clear goals, purpose, and a supportive environment, with discipline (S.N.) emphasized as essential for maintaining consistency and achieving long-term learning goals. Both groups acknowledged discipline as vital for sustaining motivation over time. Interestingly, there was less

emphasis on external influences, such as the learning environment, compared to the responses from the online survey.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Both focus groups connected open-mindedness to curiosity, inclusivity, and the willingness to engage with diverse perspectives. In Focus Group 1, participants were somewhat uncertain about the meaning of "open-mindedness" in learning. A.P. linked it to inclusivity and adapting techniques to individual needs, while Z.A. suggested it involved challenging preconceived notions by considering alternative perspectives. In Focus Group 2, open-mindedness was more clearly defined as embracing curiosity and suspending judgment when approaching unfamiliar concepts (A.F., N.M.). The group emphasized the importance of respecting different perspectives and engaging with opposing ideas constructively. This group provided a more detailed discussion on suspending judgment and fostering respectful dialogue. The differences in the depth of the discussion may be related to the demographics of the two groups: Group 1 consisted of individuals with higher education levels (undergraduate and master's degrees) in their late 20s, while Group 2 included younger participants, mostly in their early 20s and currently or recently graduated from undergraduate courses. These demographic differences could reflect the groups' associations with learning environments closer to secondary education (high school).

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

Both focus groups identified a broad set of essential skills for today's learners. In Focus Group 1, participants emphasized technology literacy, resilience, multitasking, communication skills, self-awareness, cooperation, and social skills as crucial for thriving in the modern world. Focus Group 2 highlighted the importance of adapting to AI, mastering languages, effective time management, and maintaining a healthy balance between work, study, and personal life. Discipline and the ability to disconnect from technology were also mentioned. Both groups stressed the importance of resilience and discipline in navigating contemporary challenges. While both recognized the necessity for a mix of soft and hard skills, Group 2 provided more specific examples, such as focusing on AI adaptation rather than general technology literacy, and language proficiency over communication skills.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group discussions highlighted that learning is a lifelong process, influenced by both internal factors like personal motivation and external factors such as educators and peers. Participants identified key obstacles to learning, including lack of motivation, distractions, and time constraints. Motivation was often linked to personal goals and the impact of learning. Open-mindedness was seen as embracing new ideas, although some noted challenges in being open to different perspectives. Essential skills mentioned ranged from hard skills like digital literacy to soft skills such as communication and time management, with variations between age groups and education levels.

Lithuania

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The target group was reached through social media, stakeholders, schools.

Demographic Overview:

The participants primarily consisted of females (27), with males (9) making up the minority. They represented a diverse range of nationalities, including countries from Europe as well as India, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine, Italy, and Portugal. The most common age group among participants was 18-23 years old.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

Most participants agree that learning begins as early as infancy, with some suggesting it could even start before birth, as the human brain begins processing information from its environment. This reflects a common understanding that learning is not confined to formal education but encompasses a broader range of experiences, including those acquired through daily life, personal growth, and adaptation to challenges. Several respondents highlighted the continuity of learning, emphasizing that it extends beyond childhood and formal education, continuing throughout one's life. They recognize that learning takes place not just in structured environments like schools but also in informal settings such as through personal experiences, relationships, and life challenges. This perspective aligns with modern educational theories that view learning as a dynamic, lifelong process that evolves with personal and social development. A few participants mentioned the significance of certain life stages, such as early childhood and young adulthood, as particularly critical periods for learning. They suggest that the most intense and

foundational learning occurs in the early years, laying the groundwork for future development. However, even these individuals agree that learning does not stop after these formative years but continues in various forms throughout life.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

In the learning process, individuals highlight the need for both internal and external factors. Many responses emphasize the importance of personal motivation, curiosity, and discipline as core elements. This indicates that self-driven attitudes and internal willpower are critical for effective learning. These internal traits help learners stay focused and persist through challenges, regardless of the subject or environment. Externally, guidance from mentors, teachers, and supportive figures such as family members is frequently mentioned. Respondents view these figures as crucial for offering direction, feedback, and encouragement. Whether through formal education or informal settings, having someone knowledgeable to explain concepts or clarify doubts enhances the learning process. Additionally, access to resources—whether books, technology, or learning environments—is seen as equally important. Structure and planning also emerge as significant factors. Some respondents note the need for a clear framework, schedule, or goals to keep their learning organized and purposeful. A calm atmosphere or conducive environment is also mentioned as essential for focus and concentration. Creating the right setting allows learners to engage deeply with the material without unnecessary distractions.

Obstacles to Learning:

The biggest obstacles to learning, as highlighted by respondents, generally fall into two categories: internal and external factors. A common internal barrier is a lack of motivation, with many expressing difficulties in staying focused and engaged, particularly when learning material feels dry, irrelevant, or overwhelming. Distractions, especially from social media and digital devices, were cited frequently as a major issue. Procrastination, laziness, and fear of failure further exacerbate the problem, making it hard for learners to stay on track and maintain momentum. Another recurring theme is the challenge of time management. Many learners struggle to balance their responsibilities, often feeling like they don't have enough time to dedicate to learning. This issue is compounded by a sense of overwhelm when trying to prioritize tasks or decide what to focus on. As a result, the learning process becomes fragmented or inefficient, which in turn can lead to frustration and a loss of motivation. External factors, such as uninspiring or poor teaching methods, also serve as significant obstacles. Several respondents mentioned

that lectures that are unengaging or not personalized to their learning styles make it difficult to absorb and retain information. In some cases, unsupportive or demotivating teachers can further hinder progress, although many recognize that overcoming such external barriers requires personal resilience and self-directed learning efforts.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

The responses indicate that various conditions can serve as strong motivators for learning, primarily revolving around personal interest, external incentives, and supportive environments. A key factor in motivation is relevance—many respondents stated they are most motivated when the material they are learning is applicable to their lives or aligned with their personal goals. Learning something that can improve their career prospects, enhance productivity, or offer financial rewards often pushes individuals to stay committed. Practical application and the opportunity to see tangible results also drive the desire to learn. Curiosity and genuine interest in a topic play a significant role in learning motivation. When learners find a subject intriguing or aligned with their passions, they are naturally more engaged and motivated to explore it further. Additionally, having clear objectives and understanding how the knowledge will benefit them in the future is essential for staying focused and driven. For some, the pressure of deadlines or achieving something specific also acts as a motivator, pushing them to concentrate more intensely on their studies. The influence of external factors, such as a supportive environment, also stands out. Encouragement from teachers, peers, or family members can boost learners' confidence and willingness to continue learning. A calm and stress-free environment is another critical factor, as it allows learners to focus and absorb information better. Moreover, opportunities for growth, both personal and professional, create a sense of purpose that inspires individuals to pursue learning actively. Lastly, the desire for self-improvement and ambition frequently appeared as motivators. Many individuals mentioned their internal drive to be better, whether it’s through mastering a subject, gaining new skills, or achieving personal growth. This inner motivation, fueled by curiosity, ambition, and the support of others, forms the foundation of a productive learning experience.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

The concept of open-mindedness in learning, as reflected in the responses, is strongly associated with the ability to embrace new ideas and perspectives without prejudice. Many respondents emphasized that being open-minded means accepting diverse viewpoints and remaining curious about the world. This

attitude enables learners to explore unfamiliar concepts, engage with various opinions, and reconsider their own beliefs when faced with new evidence. Open-mindedness is seen as a gateway to personal and intellectual growth. Additionally, the respondents noted the importance of being adaptable and flexible in learning. Being open to experiences, even those that may be challenging or unfamiliar, fosters a broader understanding and enhances the learning process. A willingness to explore new subjects, accept different perspectives, and maintain a mindset of continuous learning were key elements that surfaced in the answers. This adaptability also includes being receptive to feedback and using it to grow and evolve. Moreover, several respondents highlighted the role of emotional intelligence and mental health in fostering open-mindedness. A supportive environment that encourages open dialogue and exploration of diverse viewpoints was seen as essential. Being able to listen without bias and consider all possibilities were noted as critical components of an open-minded learning approach.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The responses indicate a strong emphasis on both hard and soft skills that are essential for success today. Digital literacy and language skills were frequently highlighted as critical, reflecting the increasing importance of technology and communication in the globalized world. Many respondents also acknowledged the value of learning multiple languages and keeping pace with technological advancements, especially in areas like artificial intelligence. Soft skills, including emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, and teamwork, were also considered vital. These skills enable individuals to navigate changing environments, solve problems creatively, and collaborate effectively. Time management and self-discipline were identified as important personal attributes that help manage workloads and maintain productivity. Moreover, communication skills, both in terms of public speaking and effective interpersonal communication, were seen as key to professional and personal growth. Respondents also highlighted the importance of initiative, creativity, and leadership skills in staying competitive and innovative in today's rapidly evolving landscape.

Conclusion:

The data reflects a universal understanding that learning begins at birth and continues until death. Respondents consistently identified learning as a lifelong process, extending from infancy through all stages of life. This perspective emphasizes that education is not confined to formal schooling but is an ongoing journey influenced by personal experiences, daily interactions, and continual adaptation to new

knowledge. The idea that learning starts at birth is underscored by the notion that even infants are absorbing information from their surroundings, forming the foundation for future cognitive development. The concept of learning never ending aligns with the view that as long as one remains alive, there is potential for growth and new knowledge acquisition. This perspective is supported by the notion that learning adapts and evolves with age, experiences, and changes in personal and professional contexts.

The responses highlight a blend of personal qualities, external support, and resources essential for effective learning. Curiosity and motivation were repeatedly mentioned as intrinsic factors crucial for engaging with new material. This aligns with educational theories that emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation in driving effective learning experiences. Externally, respondents identified the need for guidance from mentors, teachers, and supportive individuals. Access to resources such as books, technology, and practical opportunities was also deemed important. This reflects the view that while personal drive is critical, structured support and available resources significantly enhance the learning process. The diversity in responses also indicates that different individuals have unique needs and preferences in their learning processes. While some respondents emphasized the need for a structured approach and time management, others focused on the importance of a supportive environment and effective teaching methods. This variability suggests that personalized approaches to learning, which cater to individual needs and learning styles, are essential for optimizing educational outcomes.

The data reveals several common obstacles to learning, including distractions, lack of motivation, and time management issues. Distractions, particularly from digital sources such as social media, emerged as a significant barrier, highlighting the challenge of maintaining focus in an age of information overload. Lack of motivation and procrastination were also frequently cited as obstacles. These issues can hinder engagement with learning material and delay progress. Effective time management and overcoming procrastination are crucial for creating a conducive learning environment. Additionally, the quality of teaching and the alignment of educational content with personal interests and goals were noted as potential obstacles. Respondents indicated that uninspiring or irrelevant content could diminish motivation and impede the learning process. This underscores the importance of engaging, relevant, and well-delivered instruction in facilitating effective learning.

Respondents identified several conditions that enhance motivation to learn. Personal interest and relevance of the material were highlighted as key factors. When learners find the subject matter engaging and applicable to their goals or interests, they are more likely to be motivated and committed to learning.

A supportive environment, including encouragement from others and a stress-free setting, was also mentioned as a significant motivator. This aligns with research on the role of emotional and environmental factors in fostering motivation and effective learning. Clear objectives and the perceived benefits of learning, such as career advancement or personal growth, further contribute to motivation. The opportunity for hands-on experiences and practical applications of knowledge also enhances engagement and motivation.

The concept of open-mindedness in learning was widely associated with the willingness to explore new ideas, perspectives, and experiences. Respondents emphasized the importance of flexibility, curiosity, and the ability to reconsider one's views. Open-minded learners are seen as those who embrace diverse viewpoints and are receptive to feedback, which enriches their learning process. Effective open-minded learning involves not only accepting new information but also integrating it into existing knowledge frameworks. The ability to think critically, explore various solutions, and adapt based on new insights are crucial aspects of open-minded learning. This approach facilitates deeper understanding and personal growth, making learning a more dynamic and inclusive process.

The responses indicate a strong focus on developing both technical and soft skills. Digital literacy and language skills were frequently cited as essential in a globalized, technology-driven world. Proficiency in these areas is crucial for accessing information, communicating effectively, and staying competitive in various fields. Soft skills, including emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, and communication, were also emphasized. These skills are vital for navigating complex environments, collaborating with others, and responding to evolving challenges. The emphasis on critical thinking and adaptability reflects the need to engage with a rapidly changing world and solve problems creatively.

In summary, the collected data highlights the multifaceted nature of learning, emphasizing the importance of continuous, personalized education. Successful learning is influenced by intrinsic factors such as motivation and curiosity, as well as external elements including supportive environments and access to resources. Addressing obstacles such as distractions and lack of motivation, and fostering open-mindedness, are essential for optimizing learning experiences. Developing a balanced skill set that includes both technical and soft skills is crucial for personal and professional growth in today's dynamic world.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning)

The session was conducted online using the Zoom platform and lasted 1 hour and 17 minutes. Transcription was carried out via the Fathom meeting recording plugin. The discussion was held in English and included 10 participants from Poland, Ukraine, and Latvia, with one moderator facilitating the session.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

The focus group revealed both common and divergent perspectives on learning. Participants shared a strong consensus that learning is a lifelong process, beginning at birth and extending beyond formal education into various life experiences. They emphasized the importance of a supportive environment, personal attributes like curiosity and self-motivation, and the value of digital literacy and adaptability to technological changes. Practical application of knowledge and skills was consistently recognized as a significant motivator for learning. However, differences emerged in several areas. While common obstacles like distractions were acknowledged, participants varied in highlighting external challenges, such as unsupportive teachers, versus internal ones like procrastination. Motivational factors also differed, with some prioritizing personal interest and others valuing external recognition or clear goals. Skills priorities ranged from technical abilities like digital literacy to soft skills such as communication and emotional intelligence. Similarly, interpretations of open-mindedness varied, with some focusing on receptiveness to new ideas and others on the willingness to challenge personal beliefs. Opinions on essential learning resources also differed, with some emphasizing knowledgeable teachers and others highlighting quality materials or peer learning. These variations underscore the personal nature of learning and the diverse factors shaping individual learning experiences.

The group interaction observation:

The focus group discussion revealed a collaborative and open environment where participants freely shared their personal experiences and perspectives on learning, creating a comfortable and supportive group dynamic. The group demonstrated diverse viewpoints, reflecting the varied backgrounds and experiences of its members, while maintaining a respectful tone during disagreements, particularly on topics such as learning obstacles and motivational factors. Participants actively built on each other's ideas, especially when discussing effective learning elements and open-mindedness, highlighting active

listening and engagement. Shared concerns emerged on key issues, such as the importance of a supportive environment and challenges like maintaining focus in the digital age, suggesting common ground among participants. The depth of responses, particularly on personal obstacles and motivations, indicated thoughtful self-reflection, and the group displayed a forward-thinking attitude, especially when discussing the skills needed to navigate changing societal and technological trends. These observations suggest that the interaction was productive, fostering a rich exploration of learning from multiple perspectives.

Perceptions of when learning starts and ends:

There is consensus among participants that learning is a lifelong process, beginning at birth and continuing throughout one's entire life. As one participant articulated, "Learning starts from the very beginning of our life and it never really ends." This perspective was reinforced by others, with another adding, "Every day we just study something new and gain information until we die." Participants emphasized the importance of early childhood and adolescence in the learning journey, with one noting, "The most important period of education is exactly just from the beginning of life, during your childhood and teenagehood.". While formal education was acknowledged as a significant phase of learning, participants highlighted that the acquisition of knowledge and skills extends far beyond traditional academic settings. One participant observed, "We are learning all the time of our life because we meet new people and can learn something new from them." This sentiment underscores the diverse sources of learning experiences, including interpersonal interactions and everyday life events. An intriguing perspective on the potential end of learning was offered by a participant who suggested that learning ceases "when you stop asking questions and you stop questioning things." This insight highlights the crucial role of curiosity and open-mindedness in sustaining the learning process throughout life. The group's discussion emphasized that as long as individuals remain inquisitive and receptive to new ideas and experiences, the potential for learning remains boundless, regardless of age or formal educational attainment.

Necessary elements in the learning process:

Resources, both human and material, were highlighted as crucial components of the learning process. Participants emphasized the importance of having access to knowledgeable teachers or mentors who can provide guidance and support. Additionally, they stressed the need for quality educational materials and

tools that facilitate learning. Time was identified as a critical factor in the learning process. One participant noted, "The most needed thing is time. Because if you don't have time, you won't learn." This sentiment was echoed by others who emphasized the value of uninterrupted, focused time for effective learning. The group also highlighted the importance of a supportive learning environment, with one participant stating, "What we need is a good environment. Because when you are in a stressful environment or when you are around people who want to motivate you, they will pull you away from learning.". Personal attributes were also recognized as vital to the learning process. Curiosity and openness to new ideas were identified as key traits that facilitate learning. Participants discussed the importance of self-motivation and discipline, particularly when engaging in self-directed learning. The ability to discern reliable sources of information was also mentioned as a crucial skill in today's information-rich world. Overall, the group's responses painted a picture of learning as a multifaceted process that requires a combination of external resources, personal qualities, and supportive conditions to be truly effective.

Obstacles to learning:

The participants identified significant obstacles to learning, with distractions and lack of focus emerging as primary concerns. One participant highlighted the challenge of staying concentrated on studying or practicing, noting that finding a quiet place and setting clear goals can help overcome this obstacle. The pervasive influence of social media was also mentioned as a major distraction, with participants acknowledging how easy it is to lose focus by scrolling through apps instead of engaging in learning activities. External pressures and environmental factors were also cited as substantial barriers to learning. Several participants mentioned the stress associated with school pressure and the overwhelming amount of material they are expected to learn. The impact of unsupportive or demotivating teachers was discussed, with some participants sharing experiences of educators who were resistant to new information or teaching methods. Additionally, the group touched on the issue of relevance, with one participant expressing difficulty in finding motivation to learn subjects they perceive as irrelevant to their current life stage. Procrastination emerged as a significant internal obstacle to learning. One participant described it as a "great issue" they have always battled, explaining how the tendency to postpone tasks can interfere with learning, especially for subjects or skills without strict deadlines. The group also discussed how preconceived notions and prejudices can hinder learning, emphasizing the importance of open-mindedness in overcoming these barriers.

Motivating conditions for learning:

The focus group participants identified several key conditions that motivate them to learn. Personal interest and passion for a subject emerged as a primary motivator. Many participants expressed that when they find a topic genuinely interesting or see its relevance to their lives, they are naturally more inclined to engage in learning. One participant noted, "When I'm interested in something, I can spend hours learning about it without even realizing how much time has passed.". A supportive and encouraging environment was also highlighted as a significant motivational factor. Participants emphasized the importance of having teachers, mentors, or peers who inspire and challenge them to grow. The presence of like-minded individuals who share similar learning goals was seen as particularly motivating, creating a sense of community and healthy competition. Additionally, the group discussed how clear goals and visible progress can boost motivation. One participant shared, "Seeing my improvement over time, even in small steps, really pushes me to keep going and learn more.". Practical application and real-world relevance were identified as strong motivators for learning. Participants expressed increased enthusiasm for learning when they could see how the knowledge or skills would be useful in their careers or daily lives. The opportunity for hands-on experience or project-based learning was particularly valued. Lastly, the group touched on the role of external rewards and recognition, such as good grades or professional advancement, as motivational factors, though many agreed that intrinsic motivation ultimately leads to more sustained and enjoyable learning experiences.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Participants emphasized the importance of being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, even when they challenge existing beliefs or knowledge. One participant described open-mindedness as "the willingness to consider different viewpoints without immediately dismissing them, even if they seem unconventional at first." Curiosity and a genuine desire to explore unfamiliar territories were also closely linked to open-mindedness in learning. The group highlighted how an open-minded approach involves actively seeking out diverse sources of information and being willing to engage with ideas that may be outside one's comfort zone. A participant noted, "Open-mindedness means being eager to learn from anyone and anything, recognizing that valuable insights can come from unexpected places.". The discussion also touched on the role of humility in open-minded learning. Participants agreed that acknowledging one's own limitations and being open to correction or refinement of ideas is crucial. They stressed the importance of viewing learning as a continuous process rather than a destination, with one participant

stating, "Being open-minded means understanding that there's always more to learn, and that our current knowledge is never complete or perfect."

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The focus group participants identified a range of skills they believe are important to acquire or develop in today's world. Digital literacy emerged as a crucial skill, with participants recognizing the need to navigate and utilize various digital platforms and technologies effectively. They emphasized the importance of staying updated with technological advancements and being able to adapt to new digital tools and environments. Communication skills were also highlighted as essential, particularly in the context of remote work and global interactions. Participants stressed the value of being able to express ideas clearly, collaborate effectively with diverse teams, and maintain professional relationships in virtual settings. Additionally, the group discussed the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, noting that the ability to analyze information, make informed decisions, and find innovative solutions is increasingly valuable in many professions. Soft skills such as adaptability, emotional intelligence, and time management were also mentioned as crucial for personal and professional development. Participants recognized that in a rapidly changing world, the ability to learn quickly, manage stress, and maintain a work-life balance is essential. Some participants also highlighted the importance of developing skills related to sustainability and environmental awareness, reflecting a growing concern for global issues.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group discussions revealed several important themes and insights about the nature of learning and the factors that influence it. A central theme that emerged was the concept of learning as a lifelong journey. Participants strongly agreed that learning is a continuous process that begins at birth and extends throughout one's entire life. They emphasized that learning occurs not only in formal educational settings but also through everyday experiences, interactions with others, and exposure to new situations. This perspective highlights the importance of remaining open to new knowledge and experiences at every stage of life.

The group identified several essential elements for effective learning. Access to quality resources, including knowledgeable teachers, mentors, and educational materials, was deemed crucial. Participants also stressed the importance of having dedicated, uninterrupted time for focused learning. A supportive and motivating environment was seen as vital in encouraging and sustaining the learning process.

Personal attributes such as curiosity, openness to new ideas, self-motivation, and discipline were recognized as important traits for successful learners. Additionally, in today's information-rich world, the ability to discern reliable sources of information was noted as a critical skill. Participants also discussed various obstacles that can hinder effective learning. Distractions and lack of focus were highlighted as significant challenges, particularly in the face of digital distractions like social media. External pressures, such as stress from academic or professional expectations and overwhelming amounts of material to learn, were cited as barriers. Unsupportive learning environments, including demotivating teachers or resistant attitudes towards new information, were mentioned as potential obstacles. Procrastination was recognized as a significant internal barrier to learning, especially for subjects or skills without strict deadlines. The group also acknowledged that preconceived notions and existing biases could hinder the learning of new concepts or perspectives.

The focus group identified several conditions that enhance motivation to learn. Personal interest and passion for a subject emerged as primary motivators for engaging in learning. A supportive and encouraging environment, including inspiring teachers, mentors, or peers, was highlighted as a significant motivational factor. Clear goals and visible progress were noted as strong motivators, with participants expressing that seeing improvement over time encourages continued learning. The practical application and real-world relevance of the material being learned were seen as highly motivating factors. Opportunities for hands-on experience and project-based learning were particularly valued by the participants.

Open-mindedness in learning was another key theme discussed by the group. Participants associated open-mindedness with being receptive to new ideas and perspectives, even when they challenge existing beliefs. They emphasized the importance of curiosity and a willingness to explore unfamiliar territories. The group highlighted how an open-minded approach involves actively seeking out diverse sources of information and engaging with ideas outside one's comfort zone. Humility was also linked to open-mindedness, with participants agreeing that acknowledging one's own limitations and being open to correction or refinement of ideas is crucial for effective learning.

Finally, the focus group identified several skills they believe are crucial to develop in today's world. Digital literacy emerged as a key skill, with participants recognizing the need to navigate and utilize various digital platforms and technologies effectively. Communication skills were highlighted as essential, particularly in the context of remote work and global interactions. Critical thinking and

problem-solving abilities were seen as increasingly valuable across various professions. Soft skills such as adaptability, emotional intelligence, and time management were also mentioned as crucial for personal and professional development. Some participants also emphasized the importance of developing skills related to sustainability and environmental awareness, reflecting a growing concern for global issues.

These insights from the focus group highlight the multifaceted nature of learning in today's world. They emphasize the importance of cultivating a lifelong learning mindset, overcoming various obstacles, and developing a diverse set of skills to navigate an ever-changing landscape. The discussion underscores the need for both personal attributes like curiosity and discipline, as well as supportive external factors such as quality resources and encouraging environments.

Romania

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The target group was reached through social media, personal connections and discord channel.

Demographic Overview:

The participants included 33 individuals, comprising 11 males, 21 females, and 1 non-binary individual. They represented a diverse range of nationalities, including Romanian (4), Spanish (3), Maltese (1), Slovakian (2), Italian (4), Portuguese (2), Greek/Hellenic (4), Ukrainian (3), Polish (3), Egyptian (1), and Sudanese (1). The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 31 years, with an average age of 25. In terms of education, 13 participants held a master's degree, 9 had a bachelor's degree, 10 had completed a high school diploma, and 2 had vocational training or no formal education.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

The majority of respondents agreed that learning begins at birth and continues throughout life. Some participants suggested that learning might even start during pregnancy, while others noted that it occurs unconsciously in early childhood, becoming more conscious around the age of three. Many emphasized that learning is a continuous process with no definitive endpoint, with one participant remarking that it ends only when an individual chooses to stop. This reflects a shared belief that learning is an ongoing journey intertwined with life experiences, extending far beyond formal education or specific life stages.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

Participants identified several essential elements for effective learning. The presence of good mentors or educators was highlighted as critical, with passionate, patient, and knowledgeable teachers playing a key role in guiding the learning process. A supportive environment, whether at home or in social settings, was also seen as vital for fostering learning. Personal motivation, including curiosity and self-drive, was repeatedly emphasized, with participants viewing learning as a personal journey that requires interest and commitment. Additionally, access to learning materials and tools, such as books, technology, and other resources, was noted as necessary for acquiring knowledge. These findings suggest that learning is most effective when driven by a combination of motivated educators, supportive environments, and the learner's own dedication and mindset.

Obstacles to Learning:

The responses highlighted several common obstacles to learning. Formal education structures were criticized for their rigidity and failure to accommodate different learning styles, with heavy reliance on memorization and one-way communication seen as barriers by some participants. Self-doubt and insecurities emerged as significant personal obstacles, with respondents citing confidence issues and fear of failure as hindrances to effective learning. Time and financial constraints were frequently mentioned, as many participants struggled to balance learning with work or personal responsibilities. Additionally, information overload in today's digital age was identified as a challenge, making it difficult to focus or prioritize what to learn. These findings indicate that barriers to learning encompass both external factors, such as time and resources, and deeply personal challenges, including emotional and psychological factors.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Several conditions were identified as key motivators for learning. Personal interest and curiosity emerged as primary drivers, with respondents feeling most motivated when engaged with subjects they were passionate about or sought to improve upon. A supportive and safe environment, free from judgment and negativity, was also emphasized as critical. Many participants highlighted the effectiveness of group or community settings, where collaboration and shared goals enhanced their motivation. Additionally, having clear objectives and understanding the practical applications of what they were learning helped

sustain their drive. These findings underscore the importance of personal passion, a conducive environment, and social interaction in fostering effective learning.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Open-mindedness was identified as a critical component of effective learning. Participants described it as the willingness to embrace new and unconventional methods of education, moving beyond traditional approaches. Cultural and experiential openness was also emphasized, with many highlighting the importance of learning from diverse experiences and engaging with topics outside one's comfort zone or existing knowledge base. Additionally, open-mindedness was associated with a non-judgmental attitude, accepting and valuing different perspectives. This reflects a progressive understanding of learning that extends beyond formal education, fostering a broader exploration of new ideas and diverse viewpoints.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

Participants highlighted several key skills essential for modern learners. Effective communication was emphasized as critical for expressing oneself and navigating a globalized and diverse world. Emotional intelligence, including the ability to manage emotions and build strong interpersonal relationships, was also recognized as equally important as technical knowledge. Critical thinking was seen as vital for analyzing information and forming opinions based on evidence and logic. Additionally, adaptability and flexibility were frequently mentioned as crucial skills for responding to the rapid changes in environments, situations, and technologies. These findings reflect the necessity of both interpersonal and cognitive skills for success in today's dynamic world.

Conclusion:

This questionnaire highlights the deep and personal connection that individuals have with the learning process. Participants view learning as a lifelong journey, starting from birth and continuing until death. There is a strong sense that learning is not confined to formal education but is something that happens continuously through experiences, interactions, and personal curiosity. The responses show that learning is a complex interplay of personal motivation, external support, and internal confidence.

Many respondents view the traditional education system as rigid and not always conducive to true learning. There is a desire for a more flexible, inclusive, and personalized approach to learning, one that

embraces curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. This highlights a potential gap between the current education systems and what learners feel they need to thrive in today's world.

The biggest obstacles to learning are often personal, with insecurities, lack of motivation, and time constraints being common barriers. However, supportive environments and passionate educators can help overcome these challenges. Open-mindedness, seen as crucial to learning, requires both humility and a willingness to engage with diverse perspectives and unconventional methods. Today's learners value emotional intelligence, communication, and adaptability as key skills for navigating both personal and professional life.

In conclusion, the data reflects a progressive understanding of learning. Participants recognize the importance of lifelong learning, the need for a supportive and adaptable learning environment, and the essential skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world. This broad and flexible view of education highlights the evolving nature of learning in the 21st century, where personal growth, open-mindedness, and emotional resilience are just as important as academic or professional achievements.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning)

The focus group was conducted onsite during the TrippyCaPeVremuri non-formal education caravan in Romania from September 1 to 9. The session lasted one hour and was conducted in English. It included five participants, all Romanian high school students aged 18 to 21, with four females and one male. Two moderators facilitated the discussion.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

All participants shared the belief that learning begins at birth and continues throughout life, viewing it as a lifelong process shaped by personal experiences. The group agreed that motivation, personal interest, and achieving goals are critical drivers of learning. However, differences emerged regarding key learning factors; some participants prioritized external conditions, such as good professors and resources, while others emphasized intrinsic factors like self-motivation and curiosity.

The group interaction observation:

The group demonstrates a shared respect for the idea of lifelong learning and values both intrinsic motivation and external support. There is an evident focus on personal growth and the desire to become a better version of oneself through education. Each participant's responses reflect a balance between self-directed learning and relying on external structures such as teachers or educational tools.

Perceptions of when learning starts and ends:

All participants believe that learning starts at birth and continues until death. They view learning as a process that extends beyond formal education and into daily life experiences. Some participants even suggest that learning starts in the womb, reflecting a broader understanding of learning as an innate human process.

Necessary elements in the learning process:

The participants mentioned the need for a supportive environment, access to good teachers or mentors, and sufficient time to focus on learning. Motivation and interest were consistently cited as necessary elements for successful learning. External resources such as professors, learning materials, and technology were also mentioned, but personal drive was seen as a key factor.

Obstacles to learning:

Common obstacles include procrastination, stress, anxiety, and the lack of time or focus. Participants struggle with maintaining concentration and overcoming feelings of being overwhelmed by new challenges or unfamiliar subjects. Routine and comfort zones were also seen as barriers that prevent learners from expanding their knowledge.

Motivating conditions for learning:

Participants are motivated by personal goals, the desire to achieve success, and the encouragement they receive from others. Achieving their personal best and feeling supported by friends, family, or mentors play a significant role in maintaining their motivation to learn.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

The participants view open-mindedness as the ability to approach new concepts and ideas without prejudice or bias. It involves being willing to question one's beliefs and engage with different

perspectives, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Patience and perseverance were also mentioned as necessary for learning new things.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The group highlighted the importance of communication, emotional intelligence, patience, and digital skills. These soft skills, combined with the ability to stay focused and adaptable, were seen as essential in today's fast-paced learning environment.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group highlighted the critical role of lifelong learning, with participants agreeing that learning starts at birth and continues throughout life. This understanding reflects a holistic view of education, one that extends beyond the boundaries of formal schooling. The participants emphasized personal motivation, curiosity, and the desire to improve as key drivers of learning. Interestingly, there was a shared recognition that external factors, such as the support of teachers and access to educational resources, are essential but secondary to the learner's own drive and mindset.

Obstacles to learning were primarily related to internal factors such as procrastination, anxiety, and self-doubt. Several participants expressed that they often feel overwhelmed by the amount of information or the complexity of new subjects. There was a recurring theme of battling comfort zones, where participants recognized that staying within familiar routines can hinder learning. The group's responses indicate that overcoming these obstacles requires both self-awareness and the support of a conducive learning environment.

Open-mindedness was seen as essential to the learning process, with participants stressing the importance of approaching new topics with curiosity and a willingness to question preconceived notions. This suggests that today's learners value flexibility and adaptability in their education, recognizing that learning often involves confronting unfamiliar or challenging ideas.

The focus group also highlighted the importance of soft skills such as communication, emotional intelligence, and patience. These skills are seen as critical not just for personal development but also for navigating the increasingly complex social and technological landscape. Participants placed a strong emphasis on the role of digital literacy and social skills, underscoring the need for modern learners to be both technologically adept and emotionally aware.

Overall, the focus group revealed that today's learners view education as a dynamic, lifelong process driven by personal curiosity, external support, and the ability to adapt to new challenges. The group's responses emphasize the importance of balancing motivation, external resources, and the willingness to engage with diverse perspectives in achieving effective learning.

Portugal

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The target group was approached using a variety of direct and informal methods to ensure accessibility and engagement. Key outreach channels included WhatsApp, Instagram stories, and in-person interactions through staff members. Additionally, young interns from the association and representatives from local schools played a role in reaching out, leveraging their networks for a more personal connection with potential participants. No adjustments were made to the questionnaire, including the consent and information form, maintaining consistency in the materials provided to all participants.

Demographic Overview:

The participants in this survey consist of 10 females and 5 males, all of whom are Portuguese nationals. Age-wise, they range from 18 to 30 years old, with the most common age being 18 (6 participants), followed by 30 (3 participants). The distribution includes smaller numbers at other ages: 20 years old (2 participants), and one participant each at ages 19, 23, 26, and 29. In terms of educational background, participants most frequently reported holding either a high school diploma (6 participants) or a bachelor's degree (5 participants), with a few indicating vocational training (2 participants), a master's degree (1 participant), and one reporting no formal education. This demographic profile provides a snapshot of a relatively young, well-educated group, with high school and bachelor's level education being the most prevalent qualifications.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

Participants consistently expressed that learning is a lifelong journey, with responses often emphasizing its continuity from "birth to death" and beyond. Many highlighted that learning begins "on day one of life" and "never really ends, only when we die." This shared perspective underscores a strong consensus among participants that learning is an enduring process, deeply integrated into every stage of life.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

Participants highlighted a range of factors essential to the learning process, including both personal qualities and supportive resources. While some emphasized individual attributes like focus, resilience, and self-discipline, others pointed to the importance of external motivation and encouragement from family, friends, and teachers. Effective tools, such as good books and mentorship, were frequently mentioned as necessary for guided growth. Additionally, many underscored the role of experience—learning from mistakes and benefiting from the wisdom of others—as well as the value of a rich, supportive environment and genuine interest in others' knowledge. As one participant put it, "You learn as you grow, with mistakes and with people that are older, wiser, and have made those mistakes too." This collective view reflects the significance of both internal commitment and external support for meaningful learning.

Obstacles to Learning:

Participants identified both personal and external barriers to learning, with procrastination and lack of interest emerging as prominent challenges. Many noted that disinterest in the subject or difficulty concentrating can significantly impact their learning experience. Personal traits such as stubbornness were also seen as obstacles, with some acknowledging that the desire to always be right or a reluctance to accept new perspectives can hinder growth. As one participant stated, "The biggest obstacle to learning for me is that I always want to be right," while another shared, "Sometimes my stubbornness can be an obstacle in my learning journey." Additionally, external factors like financial difficulties, referred to simply as "money," were highlighted as challenges, reflecting the impact of resource limitations on learning access. These insights reveal how both internal mindset and external pressures can complicate the learning journey.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Participants identified a range of motivating conditions that enhance their learning experience, from an engaging environment and supportive atmosphere to interesting subjects and even small details like using vibrant colors in note-taking. Personal aspirations, such as career goals and the pursuit of a "better quality of life," were significant motivators for many, as was the drive to understand the world better and secure a brighter future. Some participants found motivation in specific achievements or the satisfaction of

completing tasks, highlighting both immediate incentives and long-term aspirations as key drivers in their learning journeys.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Participants viewed open-mindedness in learning as the willingness to set aside preconceived notions and embrace new perspectives. They expressed the importance of "leaving any preconceptions about the subject" and being "open to learning anything without judging the way others perceive the world." Many also highlighted the belief that learning is a lifelong journey, reflecting a desire to "not think we know everything" and to continuously seek knowledge. In essence, open-mindedness was seen as both a positive quality and a means to "understand other points of view," fostering flexibility and growth by recognizing the value of diverse perspectives shaped by unique experiences.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

When discussing essential skills for today's learning, participants emphasized a blend of interpersonal abilities, self-management, and creativity. Time management and social skills, such as engaging in "emotionally intelligent conversations" and the ability to "rationalize with everyone," were frequently noted as critical. Digital literacy, teamwork, and communication skills were also highlighted, with participants recognizing the importance of understanding others, fostering tolerance, and effectively conveying ideas. Additionally, learning new languages, connecting with diverse cultures, and nurturing creativity were viewed as essential for both personal and professional growth. This array of priorities underscores the value participants place on both soft skills and dedication to continuous development.

Conclusion:

The findings from the survey indicate that learning is universally perceived as a lifelong journey, beginning from birth and continuing throughout life. Participants emphasized the importance of both personal qualities, such as focus and resilience, and external factors, like support from family, mentors, and peers, in fostering effective learning. While obstacles such as procrastination, lack of interest, and stubbornness were acknowledged, the motivation to learn was driven by aspirations for personal growth, career success, and the desire to understand the world better. Participants also highlighted the importance of open-mindedness and a willingness to embrace new perspectives as essential for continuous learning and personal development.

The survey participants identified a wide range of skills necessary for today's learners, including time management, social skills, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy. These competencies, along with creativity and the ability to work collaboratively, were seen as crucial for navigating both personal and professional challenges. The emphasis on both soft skills and a commitment to lifelong learning underscores the participants' recognition of the evolving nature of education in a dynamic world. Overall, these insights provide valuable perspectives on how individuals perceive the learning process and the conditions that support their ongoing educational journey.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning)

The focus group took place onsite at a youth center with five ESC volunteers from Ukraine, Italy, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Poland. The session lasted approximately 35 minutes and was conducted in English. Participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from middle school to university degrees, and were aged between 20 and 28. One moderator facilitated the session, ensuring smooth discussion flow. The session was recorded using a camera, with notes taken for transcription purposes.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

Participants shared a common belief that learning begins at birth and continues throughout life, emphasizing motivation, a positive environment, and personal interest as critical drivers for effective learning. Practical and non-formal approaches, centered on creativity and hands-on experiences, were widely preferred over traditional theoretical methods. However, perspectives differed on certain aspects of learning. Some participants prioritized external factors, such as good mentorship and resources, while others highlighted intrinsic elements like self-motivation and curiosity. Similarly, views on obstacles varied, with some focusing on external challenges, like financial constraints, and others pointing to internal barriers, such as lack of concentration.

The group interaction observation:

Participants engaged in open and collaborative dialogue, actively listening and building on each other's ideas. The group demonstrated respect for diverse perspectives, fostering a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. Discussions were reflective, with participants sharing personal experiences, such as difficulties in traditional schooling and the importance of mentorship. Despite varied backgrounds, the group maintained a positive and productive dynamic, enriching the discussion with their insights.

Perception of Learning:

Participants widely agreed that learning begins at birth, or even during pregnancy, and continues throughout life. It evolves with different life stages and personal experiences. Some emphasized that learning may stop when individuals choose to stop being open to new knowledge. They recognized that learning extends beyond formal education and includes both conscious and unconscious processes.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

Participants identified several key elements essential for learning, including good mentorship, a positive and supportive environment, and personal motivation driven by curiosity and interest. Access to resources like technology and practical tools was also highlighted. Flexibility in teaching approaches and adapting methods to individual needs were seen as crucial. Practical applications of knowledge and non-institutional learning approaches were preferred over theoretical and book-based methods.

Obstacles to Learning:

Participants cited distractions, lack of concentration, and feeling forced to learn as significant barriers. Financial constraints were frequently mentioned, especially regarding access to learning opportunities like language courses. Stress from studying for exams and the pressure to learn were noted as demotivating factors. External challenges, such as wars and poor-quality teaching, were also highlighted, along with the time commitment required for long-term educational pursuits.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

Curiosity and personal interest were identified as key motivators for learning. A supportive and safe environment, free from judgment, was emphasized as essential. Learning alongside others with similar goals, engaging in collaborative discussions, and being inspired by role models were also seen as motivating factors. Participants valued flexibility in learning methods and recognized the importance of seeing practical applications in what they were learning.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

Open-mindedness was described as the willingness to embrace new methods, engage with diverse experiences, and step outside one's comfort zone. Participants emphasized the importance of being

non-judgmental and accepting different perspectives. They recognized that learning often occurs unintentionally when individuals remain open to new ideas and experiences.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

Participants highlighted communication, adaptability, and emotional intelligence as critical skills for modern learners. They stressed the importance of developing soft skills, such as flexibility, curiosity, empathy, active listening, and patience. Language skills, particularly in English, were seen as essential due to the abundance of resources available in English. Professional skills, including collaboration and daily interpersonal interactions, were also emphasized.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group highlighted the perception of learning as a lifelong journey shaped by personal and environmental factors. Participants valued motivation, a supportive atmosphere, and practical learning approaches while recognizing the barriers posed by financial constraints, stress, and poor-quality teaching. Open-mindedness and adaptability were seen as essential traits, enabling learners to embrace diverse perspectives and methods. The importance of soft skills, digital literacy, and communication in today's dynamic world was consistently emphasized. These insights underscore the need for flexible, inclusive, and engaging approaches to learning that address both individual and societal challenges.

Türkiye

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Quality Learning)

The target groups were reached through personal connections, ELNN Türkiye youth community WhatsApp Group, representatives of specific youth associations such as Istanbul Akatlar Leo Club. The questionnaire, consent and inform form was translated into Turkish language.

Demographic Overview:

The focus group participants consisted of 15 men and 17 women, ranging in age from 18 to 28. The age distribution peaked at 21 and 22, with the majority of participants falling within this range. In terms of educational background, 1 participant was a high school student, 18 had completed high school, 12 held

bachelor's degrees, and 1 participant had a master's degree. This diverse demographic provided a range of perspectives for the discussion.

Perceptions of When Learning Starts and Ends:

The findings reveal that youth perceive learning as a continuous, lifelong process, with varied perspectives on when it begins. Some participants believe learning starts at birth, while others consider childhood or adolescence as the starting point. A unique view suggests that learning begins in the womb. Despite these differing opinions, all participants agreed that learning continues throughout life and ends with death. However, there were varying perspectives on whether learning occurs without interruption. One view focuses on the cognitive aspect, suggesting that learning starts when the brain perceives new information and ends upon achieving the correct result. Another perspective ties learning to interest, starting when curiosity arises and ending when that interest fades. Those who believe learning begins in the womb perceive it as an uninterrupted journey lasting until death. The key themes include lifelong learning, the continuity of the learning process, its progression through life stages, the role of curiosity and motivation, and the cognitive development associated with learning.

Necessary Elements in the Learning Process:

The findings highlight the need for diverse resources and support systems to enable effective learning among youth. These include both human support, such as family, teachers, and mentors, and non-human resources like technology and the physical environment. Participants emphasized the psychological aspects of learning, including motivation, curiosity, and interest, as key drivers. Human support was seen as crucial for observing and interpreting actions, benefiting from a supportive social environment, and receiving guidance and feedback from knowledgeable individuals. Non-human support focused on the role of the internet and technology, along with the value of visual, auditory, and hands-on learning materials. The key themes emerging from these findings include learning enablers, learning resources, motivators, interactions, and the importance of autonomy in the learning process.

Obstacles to Learning:

The findings indicate that the primary barriers to learning among youth arise from a combination of personal and environmental factors. Personal obstacles include overconfidence in one’s existing knowledge, procrastination, stress, self-doubt, and a lack of curiosity, all of which hinder the desire and

ability to engage with new information. Additionally, being overly influenced by others' opinions further limits learning potential. Environmental constraints, such as financial difficulties and unsupportive social circles, also act as significant obstacles. Key themes identified include a lack of curiosity, overconfidence in knowledge, self-imposed barriers, environmental hindrances, motivational challenges, and distractions and stress, all of which disrupt focus and impede effective learning.

Motivating Conditions for Learning:

The findings suggest that motivation for learning among youth is more closely tied to the learning process itself rather than specific conditions. Participants highlighted factors such as enjoyment and satisfaction in the learning journey, a supportive environment, positive feedback, the relevance and usefulness of knowledge, practical application, and a sense of purpose or achievement. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were identified within this process. Intrinsic factors included personal interest and the joy of learning, while extrinsic factors encompassed recognition, access to resources, and alignment with personal values and aspirations. Key themes that emerged include intrinsic motivation, curiosity and exploration, practical application of knowledge, social influences, and individual learning preferences that shape effective engagement.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

The findings reveal that youth perceive open-mindedness as a crucial attribute for effective learning. This includes being receptive to diverse perspectives, suspending judgment, and evaluating information objectively rather than rigidly adhering to existing beliefs. Participants emphasized the importance of avoiding dogmatism, challenging assumptions, and exploring alternative viewpoints, with a focus on adapting one's thinking as needed. They believe this flexible mindset enhances the acquisition of knowledge and prevents narrow or prejudiced thinking. Key themes identified include objectivity, adaptability, cognitive flexibility, epistemic curiosity, and a commitment to lifelong learning as integral components of open-mindedness.

Skills Important for Today's Learners:

The findings suggest that youth consider a broad set of skills essential for today's learners, encompassing technical, social, and cognitive abilities. Technical skills such as software development, programming, and digital literacy are highlighted as critical, alongside social and cognitive skills like communication,

problem-solving, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Language skills, particularly foreign language acquisition, are also seen as valuable. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of effective time management, learning how to learn, and fostering a broad cultural and historical understanding. The key themes identified include technological awareness, mastery of soft skills, holistic competence through a well-rounded skill set, adaptability to changing circumstances, and critical thinking for analytical reasoning and problem-solving.

Conclusion:

Youths perceive learning as a lifelong journey. In this journey, they need the support of both human and non-human resources such as technology while also being aware of the psychological aspects of the issue. The psychological aspect is also relevant to the obstacles to learning. Youths think personal factors are the main barrier to learning stems. Thus, it can be asserted effective learning occurs when youth can engage in a meaningful, rewarding, and supportive process of acquiring new knowledge and skills. The findings also indicate that the youth consider open-mindedness as essential for learning. They are aware that open-mindedness enables transformative learning by empowering individuals to transcend the limitations of their prior experiences and preconceptions. The results revealed the youths need to balance technical expertise with interpersonal and cognitive skills to thrive in today's technology-driven world while maintaining empathy, understanding, and a commitment to continuous personal and professional development.

Results for the focus group procedure (Quality Learning)

The focus group session was conducted online via the Zoom platform and was recorded using Zoom's recording feature. The focus group session took 1 hour and 15 minutes. It was conducted in Turkish. There were 8 participants and 2 moderators in the session. The focus group had 2 moderators. All moderators are for managing the session, and one is for technical issues such as opening the session, getting a recording and transcription, etc. 7 participants were university students, and 1 was a new graduate. Their age was between 22-28 ages. 3 of them are women and 5 of them are men. The Zoom's platform's recording option was utilized for recording. After the session, the audio record was transcripted using the MS Office 365 program dictate property. The questions of the quality learning online questionnaire were used.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

The participants share common views that learning is a lifelong journey, whether it starts with birth or in the womb. They also agreed on the view that mandatory and curiosity is the essential learning needs. Besides, they share the common view that an award and a goal are the best motivators for learning. On the other hand, the group had different points of view on the obstacles to learning, the important skills to acquire or develop today, and the perception of 'open-mindedness' in learning.

The group interaction observation:

The observation of the group interaction is that they were participatory and supported each other's opinions by adding a new perspective. They seemed focused and thinking about various aspects of the topic because they asked some questions to moderators relevant to the discussed questions. At the end of the session, one of the moderators asked the group what they would remember after this session. The replies to this question revealed the participants gained inner insights from this session.

Perceptions of when learning starts and ends:

Some participants believe that learning begins at birth, while others think it starts in the womb before birth. In general, learning was evaluated from a broad perspective. The common feature of this general evaluation is that learning is a lifelong process. However, within this general perspective, a participant considered the issue from a narrower perspective like learning a specific subject. According to her, learning starts with the first moment of the encounter with the subject and covers the point where it can be explained to someone else.

Necessary elements in the learning process:

The group generally focused on the concepts of necessity and curiosity. Some emphasized the importance of curiosity and the effort to seek cause-effect relationships. According to some participants, there must be a state of necessity for learning to occur. On the other side, some participants thought curiosity and effort were factors that exist in infancy and childhood and enable learning. In addition, culture and cultural incentives were also discussed through group interaction. It was observed that social needs (appreciation, reminder, competition) and intrinsic motivations were needed for learning.

Obstacles to learning:

Some participants considered the person oneself as the biggest obstacle to learning. Another participant drew attention to opportunities and stated that the lack of opportunities was also an obstacle to learning. It was discussed within the group that the issue was related to the person's learning process. It was adopted that every person's learning process is unique, and the person should find what supports and motivates his/her learning process. In addition, one participant stated that accessing information easily and quickly as a technological development consequence, is also an obstacle. According to him, this speed obtains dopamine very easily causing a loss of motivation after a while.

Motivating conditions for learning:

Most of the participants stated that reward and the presence of a goal were motivating factors for learning. The group generally considered these factors to be dopamine releasers that activate them. When participants were asked what conditions motivate the process in a situation where there is a reward or a goal, recognition, reminder of the motivation for starting, progress, competition, and search for meaning were the prominent factors in the group. One participant stated that being open-minded in learning means not fooling oneself and not assuming oneself. Another participant emphasized that it means to be respectful of different opinions. Other participants supported this opinion also. On the other hand, one participant considered the issue from a learning method perspective and evaluated it as, being open to different learning methods.

Open-Mindedness in Learning:

The group had various opinions on this issue. One participant stated that being open-minded in learning means not fooling oneself and not assuming oneself to know. Another participant emphasized that it means to be respectful of different opinions. Other participants supported this opinion also. On the other hand, one participant considered the issue from a learning method perspective and evaluated it as, being open to different learning methods. The other opinions were to be open to closed-minded, be able to think in every aspect, set ego aside, and not be prejudiced. In addition, one participant considered open-mindedness as the first step of learning.

Skills important for today's learners:

The group has various opinions about the issue. One participant talked about the importance of learning the research, One participant explained the importance of being aware of oneself. Another participant

emphasized that a person should discover how he/she learned and focus on labor rather than the easy way. Another participant put forward the technology and the ability to use it. Concerning technology, another participant emphasized that the ability to learn in short periods could be important due to the shortening of the educational content and teaching something with seconds-long videos. In addition to these, one participant mentioned the importance of the ability to adapt to the changing world.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

Youth perceive learning as a lifelong journey that begins at birth or even in the womb, driven by necessity and curiosity as fundamental needs. They view learning broadly as a personal, unstructured, and limitless process, in contrast to education, which they see as narrow, planned, and system-based. This highlights a distinction in how youth perceive the scope of learning versus formal education.

Participants identified the individual self as both the greatest motivator and the biggest obstacle to learning, emphasizing the importance of internal drive and mindset. They also noted that having a clear goal and receiving awards can enhance motivation but stressed the need for consistent appreciation, progress, and reminders of initial motivations to sustain engagement.

While the absence of opportunities presents a significant barrier, the ease of accessing information anytime was also considered an obstacle, reflecting a paradox in modern learning conditions. Additionally, youth recognized the importance of acquiring soft skills and developing self-awareness as essential competencies for today's learners.

Youth Goals & Research Procedure Testing Topics: Mental Health

Czech Republic

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

The target group was recruited using a combination of personal connections, social media platforms, and Facebook groups, including those focused on youth activities such as scout groups.

Demographic Overview:

The demographic overview of the Czech community reveals a group of 37 participants, including 15 males and 21 females, with the majority residing in the Czech Republic and one participant from Slovakia. The age distribution ranged from 18 to 46 years, with a notable concentration around the ages of 20 and 23. In terms of education, 48.6% of the participants had completed university studies (bachelor's or master's degrees), while 46% had finished high school. A smaller portion of the group reported non-formal or alternative educational backgrounds. This diverse demographic provided valuable insights into the perspectives of the Czech youth.

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

Mental well-being is viewed as a state of wellness that stems from feeling good both mentally and emotionally. Participants described it as a prerequisite for a normal life, serving as a baseline for overall wellness and representing just one part of a larger whole. Key terms associated with mental well-being include ease, balance, and importance. Possible definitions provided by participants include the ability to handle everyday life situations, a state of mental and psychological well-being, and the way one processes events and experiences in their surroundings.

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

To maintain mental health, participants identified several key needs, including supportive relationships with friends, family, and therapists, as well as access to a safe and understanding community. Having space and time for oneself was emphasized, alongside maintaining physical health through activities like yoga, dance, and other forms of movement. Essential skills such as self-awareness, self-care, meditation, and stress management were also highlighted as crucial for mental well-being. A sense of meaning in life and the ability to manage and overcome stress were seen as integral components.

Gender differences were noted in the responses. Women emphasized the importance of having a supportive and safe space, as well as dedicating more time for themselves. In contrast, men more frequently mentioned the value of regularity and maintaining a healthy daily routine. These insights underline the diverse factors and approaches needed to support mental health across different individuals.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

To protect mental health, participants identified essential knowledge and skills that focus on self-care, understanding brain functions, recognizing personal boundaries, and practicing psycho-hygiene and basic psychological principles. Key skills include self-reflection, self-awareness, discipline, and effective stress management. Managing one's locus of control—distinguishing what can and cannot be controlled—was also highlighted as a critical aspect.

Participants emphasized the importance of growth through active interest and continuous learning. Concrete responses included embracing a balance of lightness while staying firm in personal values and dreams, building confidence and self-competence in psychological hygiene, and acquiring basic knowledge of psychological diagnoses. Understanding crisis intervention, including when and where to seek help, was considered vital, as was knowledge of nonviolent communication (NVC) for well-being and applying risk management theories to evaluate and mitigate potential challenges. These skills and knowledge areas were seen as foundational for maintaining and enhancing mental health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Stress emerges as a significant factor that negatively impacts mental health, closely followed by the effects of stressful relationships. Challenges within family dynamics and financial concerns also play a prominent role in affecting well-being. Pressures related to studies, work, and broader societal changes, such as shifts in the state of the world or significant life transitions, further contribute to mental health struggles. Feelings of dissatisfaction in relationships, boredom, and inner turmoil are also key contributors. Additionally, difficulties in setting boundaries, such as saying no, and the influence of being online, highlight the diverse range of external and internal conditions that can adversely affect mental health.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

Current world events and social changes affect mental health in diverse ways, as reflected in personal experiences. Some individuals actively choose not to pay attention to world events, as they find them highly distressing, while others express discomfort with the increasing anonymity and individualization of society. There are also those who avoid following such events to protect their emotional well-being, despite acknowledging the importance of staying informed. Emotional state plays a significant role in how these changes are perceived—when feeling low, individuals report that external events can

exacerbate their sense of despair, whereas during times of well-being, these events tend to have a much lesser impact. These reflections highlight the complex and personal ways in which global and societal changes can influence mental health, shaped by individual coping mechanisms and emotional resilience.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

To overcome high levels of stress and anxiety, individuals employ a variety of strategies tailored to their preferences and needs. Talking to empathetic people, such as friends, emerges as a widely favored approach, particularly among women, who tend to value social connection as a coping mechanism more often than men. Physical activity, such as exercise or movement, also plays a prominent role in stress management, appealing to both genders. Practices like meditation and breathing techniques are commonly used to cultivate calmness and mental clarity, with women slightly more inclined toward these methods.

Art and creative outlets provide an effective distraction for some, offering a channel to express emotions and find relief from stress. Professional support, such as consulting with psychotherapists or psychologists, is another significant avenue for those seeking structured guidance. Engaging with nature is also highlighted as a therapeutic option, enabling individuals to reconnect with their surroundings and reduce anxiety. Medical treatments are utilized by some as a necessary intervention, complementing these alternative methods. Each approach reflects diverse preferences in addressing the complex experience of stress and anxiety.

Conclusion:

The qualitative data reveals that mental health is widely perceived as a state of ease, balance, and emotional stability, essential for navigating daily life and maintaining overall well-being. Respondents emphasize the personal and subjective nature of mental health, shaped by interactions with their environment and internal coping mechanisms.

Key factors identified as essential for maintaining mental health include supportive relationships, personal space and time, physical activities, and skills such as self-awareness and stress management. Social connections, including family, friends, and community support, emerge as a foundational element, while personal time and reflective practices are highlighted, particularly by women. The interconnectedness of physical and mental health is evident, with activities like exercise and yoga playing

a crucial role. Furthermore, skills like mindfulness and an understanding of basic psychological concepts are seen as vital tools for self-management.

Negative influences on mental health include stress, stressful relationships, work and study pressures, financial concerns, and societal factors such as the state of the world and the effects of online interactions. These stressors highlight the interplay between personal, social, and broader societal challenges in shaping mental well-being.

Regarding world events and social changes, the responses illustrate varying levels of sensitivity, with some individuals significantly affected while others disengage as a coping strategy. Coping mechanisms commonly mentioned include seeking social support, engaging in physical activities, mindfulness practices, and, for some, professional help. These insights underscore the diversity of experiences and strategies individuals employ to maintain mental health amidst the challenges they face.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group was conducted offline in a café environment. The discussion was recorded using an iPhone microphone, which served both as a recording device and a speaking object to ensure clear audio quality and to maintain an orderly flow of conversation, preventing interruptions. The session lasted 67 minutes, including 20 minutes at the beginning to allow participants to settle and arrive, and 10 minutes for obtaining consent, distributing the information form, and addressing any questions.

The focus group was conducted in Czech and involved six participants, comprising four females and two males. Most participants were 23 years old, all Czech nationals with at least a bachelor's degree. The group included students of social pedagogy, with one participant being a recent psychology graduate.

The session was facilitated by one moderator, who was responsible for briefing participants on consent procedures and providing additional information. The moderator guided the discussion by asking prepared and follow-up questions to encourage detailed responses, while also ensuring that each participant had an opportunity to express their opinions.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

During the discussion, participants demonstrated a collaborative dynamic, with no significant divergence in viewpoints. Instead, they built upon each other's contributions, acknowledging and incorporating

different perspectives. This approach highlighted the unique experiences of each individual while fostering a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.

The group interaction observation:

The participants appeared to enjoy the discussion, particularly the opportunity to learn about and engage with the perspectives of others. Their communication was supportive, as they encouraged and valued each other's contributions. They actively responded to one another's inputs, ensuring that important points were acknowledged and not overlooked. This created an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration.

Perceptions of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

Participants expressed varying perceptions of mental health, often viewing it as a fluid, dynamic aspect of life. Stress management was highlighted as a critical component, with some viewing mental health as a constant battle or a companion. The participants acknowledged the importance of being able to function and cope using effective strategies. There was also an understanding that mental health could shift from being a supportive aspect of life to a challenging one, depending on circumstances and personal awareness. This fluidity reflects the complex and individual nature of mental health experiences.

Needs to be Mentally Healthy:

The group identified several needs for maintaining mental health. Key elements included social support, which should be reliable, trustworthy, and amble to emphatically listen, and the capacity for self-awareness. A balance between engaging with others and spending time alone was seen as vital. Practices such as setting boundaries, engaging in physical activities (like sports or yoga), enjoying nature, listening to music, and participating in therapy or coaching were noted. Spiritual practices and finding ways to be useful to others were also mentioned as essential for maintaining a sense of well-being.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

Participants emphasized the importance of self-knowledge, including understanding one’s behavior in different situations and towards others. They advocated for learning through experience and reflection to discover what supports their mental health. Skills such as self-acceptance, honesty, courage, and consistency were identified as crucial. Acknowledging weaknesses and practicing self-love, which involves being kind to oneself and recognizing areas for improvement, were also highlighted. A

supportive routine that incorporates activities benefiting mental health was deemed necessary, along with practical aspects like sufficient sleep and financial stability.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Several negative conditions affecting mental health were discussed. Financial difficulties, poor relationships, and performance pressure were common issues. The stigma around not being okay was noted as still prevalent, despite growing awareness. The negative impact of social media on attention and mental well-being was mentioned, as was the insecurity created by having too many options and uncertainties. A lack of physical closeness and genuine connection was also identified as a detriment to mental health.

Impact of Current World Events and Social Changes on Mental Health:

Participants discussed the impact of current world events, such as political polarization and the prevalence of propaganda. The necessity to pay for quality news and the challenge of discerning reliable information were highlighted. These factors led to feelings of confusion and avoidance of news. The group also noted the societal imbalance in the attention given to different topics, with some issues being overly focused on while others are neglected. Participants expressed feelings of anger, frustration, and a sense of helplessness in response to these issues.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, or Other Psychological Problems:

Various coping mechanisms were shared, including seeking social connections, sleeping, and physical activities. Some participants preferred to avoid medication, instead opting for therapy or finding solace in meaningful activities and relationships. Spending time with children, engaging in comforting activities reminiscent of childhood, and spiritual practices were mentioned as working coping strategies. Some individuals found relief in emotional eating, crying, or using substances like nicotine, illustrating the range of coping mechanisms people adopt based on their personal preferences and experiences.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group revealed key themes and insights about mental health and well-being. Participants highlighted the fluid nature of mental health, emphasizing its dynamic state and the need for adaptable strategies to manage its fluctuations effectively. The dual importance of social support and self-awareness

emerged as a central theme, with participants stressing the value of supportive relationships alongside the ability to independently understand and manage one's mental state. Self-knowledge and reflection were identified as critical tools for maintaining well-being, with participants pointing out a societal gap in fostering skills like self-reflection and self-awareness. Social media and societal expectations were seen as significant stressors, with the pressure of unrealistic comparisons and stigmas exacerbating mental health challenges. Similarly, global events and constant exposure to negative news were noted as sources of mental strain, underscoring the importance of media literacy and emotional resilience.

Participants shared a wide variety of coping mechanisms, including physical activities, creative outlets, spiritual practices, and engaging with nature, illustrating the personal and diverse approaches to managing mental health. They also identified several essential skills needed to support mental well-being, such as stress management, resilience, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and balancing social relationships with personal independence. Digital well-being and media literacy were highlighted as critical areas, with a focus on managing screen time, avoiding digital stressors, and finding reliable information. Additionally, participants emphasized the need to develop resilience to uncertainty and change, maintaining optimism and adaptability in a rapidly shifting world. Collectively, these insights emphasize the complexity of mental health and the need for multifaceted, personalized approaches to support and sustain well-being.

Greece

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

The target group was reached through several strategies: by directly engaging E+ Trainees and their networks, utilizing the organization's network through staff members, partners, and WhatsApp groups, and launching an online call for participation via Instagram stories posted on both HPL and Roes accounts. To streamline the process, adjustments were made to the questionnaire, including the creation of an external file with Terms and Conditions to reduce the length of the consent and information form.

Demographic Overview:

A total of 21 responses were collected, with two disqualified for exceeding the age limit of 30. Among the remaining respondents, all were between the ages of 20 and 29, with an average age of 26. The

sample included a diverse nationality mix, with 50% of respondents from Cyprus and Greece. In terms of education, half of the participants held a Bachelor's degree, followed by 6 with a Master's degree, 1 with a PhD, and 2 with a High School Diploma. The gender distribution showed that most participants were female (11 out of 21), and one identified as non-binary. A notable correlation was found between age and education level, as those in their early twenties predominantly held only a Bachelor's degree, with many pursuing further academic qualifications, such as a Master's degree, in their late twenties, reflecting common educational trends in Europe.

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

Mental health was generally perceived as the balance between physical and psychological well-being, with stability being a key defining factor among respondents. External elements, particularly a "supportive environment," were also highlighted as important. In summary, participants focused on the presence of positive factors, such as emotional stability, balance, and healthy environments, rather than the absence of negative influences like mental illnesses or psychological challenges (e.g., stress).

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

The most frequently mentioned need for mental health among participants was stability in various areas, including economic, occupational, physical, and environmental factors. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of dedicating time for personal activities, reflection, and self-care, highlighting an internal-driven need where individuals play a central role in maintaining their mental well-being.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

In this area, participants primarily focused on strategies for mitigating existing psychological stressors rather than proactive measures to prevent mental health decline. There was a consensus on the importance of coping mechanisms, such as stress management, accountability, and responsibility in handling challenging situations. Additionally, some respondents highlighted the role of "soft skills" in assessing and managing mental health issues, though this was not universally agreed upon by all participants.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

A diverse array of conditions were identified as negatively affecting mental health. Generally, respondents made specific associations or connotations in their answers. For instance, one participant identified work-life balance as a key factor, subsequently pointing to burnout, occupational exhaustion, and overwork as significant contributors. Similarly, a respondent (French, 23) mentioned political and environmental influences, specifying factors such as "global warming" and "war" as elements that impact mental health.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

Contrary to the previous section, participants were prompted to provide more specific responses to how current world events or social changes affect their mental health. This led to the identification of two main factors: political events, such as wars, and environmental challenges, such as "global warming." A smaller proportion of respondents mentioned micro and meso social influences, such as family and societal pressures, as well as work environment stressors. All of these factors were seen to contribute to feelings of "dissociation, stress, and anger."

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

When it comes to overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological issues, professional support was the least-mentioned method. However, many participants emphasized the importance of environmental factors, such as spending time in nature, traveling, and "escaping" as effective ways to manage stress. Additionally, those who linked physical health to mental well-being highlighted activities and exercise as key solutions for alleviating or mitigating stress and anxiety. This further reinforces the recurring theme of the connection between physical and mental health across participants' responses.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the online questionnaire procedure revealed significant insights into the mental health perceptions and needs of the target group. The responses were shaped by a variety of factors, including demographic characteristics such as age, nationality, and education level, as well as participants' perceptions of mental health. Mental health was largely defined as a balance between physical and psychological well-being, with an emphasis on stability and a supportive environment. Participants identified the need for stability in economic, occupational, physical, and environmental aspects, alongside

personal time for self-care and reflection. While coping mechanisms like stress management were prioritized, there was less focus on proactive measures for mental health protection.

The conditions negatively affecting mental health were diverse, with work-life balance, burnout, and environmental and political factors cited as key contributors. Respondents identified current world events, including wars and global warming, as major stressors, alongside social pressures and work-related stress. When addressing high levels of stress or psychological issues, many participants highlighted environmental factors such as time in nature, travel, and exercise, rather than professional support, reinforcing the importance of physical health in maintaining mental well-being. Overall, the findings underscore the complex interplay between individual needs, external influences, and coping mechanisms in shaping mental health perceptions and responses.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group procedure involved two online sessions, each conducted via Google Meet. No adjustments were made to the consent and information form for these focus groups. Focus Group 1 comprised four participants from diverse nationalities (two French, one Ukrainian, and one Lithuanian), with an average age of 22, and a mix of educational backgrounds (three with Bachelor's degrees and one with a Master's). Focus Group 2 included six participants (five Greek and one Italian), with an average age of 27, and a similar educational profile (five holding Bachelor's degrees and one with a Master's).

Each focus group session lasted for 30 minutes, was conducted in English, and was facilitated by a single moderator. During the meetings, reminders were sent to participants, and AI tools such as Wudpecker.ai were utilized for note-taking, enabling the researcher to remain engaged in shaping the conversation. The transcription of the sessions was done using both hand-written notes and AI-generated data. These sessions provided valuable insights into participants' perceptions and discussions surrounding mental health.

The common and different point of view on the questions:

Participants were already familiar with the questions from the prior online survey, which allowed them to provide more detailed responses within the 30-minute focus group sessions. This prior knowledge helped those who had not completed the survey engage more easily by following the discussions of others. While most responses aligned, some differences were noted in the emphasis placed on certain factors. For

example, one participant highlighted political and environmental issues, like "global warming" and "war," as major stressors, which wasn't mentioned by others. Additionally, while many stressed the importance of physical activity and personal time for mental well-being, a few placed greater emphasis on professional support. Overall, there was a strong consensus on the importance of emotional stability, supportive environments, and balance.

The group interaction observation:

The focus group discussions were cooperative, with participants taking turns to speak and building on each other's responses. They actively listened, agreed, and expanded on points made by others, creating a collaborative atmosphere. The few differences in opinion were minor, with participants generally agreeing on core aspects of mental health, which helped validate the findings from the survey. The interaction was smooth, and the conversation was self-regulated, with minimal intervention needed from the moderator. This supportive group dynamic allowed for meaningful contributions from all participants, reinforcing the reliability and consistency of the responses across diverse backgrounds.

Perceptions of mental health & wellbeing

In Focus Group I, participants highlighted that mental health is a deeply personal experience, varying significantly from one individual to another. They emphasized that mental well-being is as vital as physical health, reflecting its integral role in overall wellness. Focus Group II defined mental health as a state of being stress-free, at peace with oneself, and capable of enjoying life. This group's perspective leaned toward the absence of negative elements, such as stress, as a defining characteristic of mental health, rather than focusing on addressing stress-inducing factors.

Needs to be mentally healthy:

Participants from Focus Group I strongly agreed on the importance of breaking societal stigmas around mental health, particularly regarding seeking professional help. They underscored the need for an open and accepting societal attitude to facilitate access to mental health resources. Focus Group II identified key elements for maintaining mental well-being, including a positive environment, structured routines, and engaging in hobbies. These components were viewed as essential for fostering a sense of stability, peace, and personal fulfillment.

Necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health:

In Focus Group I, participants identified time management, self-awareness, and effective communication as key skills necessary for protecting mental health. They emphasized the importance of learning how to adjust plans and communicate personal needs with peers and family, viewing these external entities as mediators between the external environment and their internal mental well-being. In Focus Group II, the focus shifted to stress management techniques, personal organization, and emotional regulation, particularly in managing irritability, as critical skills for maintaining mental health. Both groups acknowledged the importance of proactive strategies in protecting and maintaining mental well-being.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Overall, participants noted that external factors, including the global status quo—mainly ongoing wars and climate change—have had a negative impact on their mental health. Additional influences were related to their daily lives, such as work- and study-related stress, as well as stress stemming from personal relationships.

How the current world events or social changes affect mental health:

Participants noted an increasingly negative impact on their mental health over time. Initially, they reported that world events and social changes did not pose significant harm. However, they observed a rise in stress and anxiety as these external factors persisted. In contrast, a very limited number of participants (2 individuals) mentioned that they had started to build resilience to these stressors.

Overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems:

Participants predominantly highlighted the importance of devoting time to themselves for recharging, rethinking, and engaging in recreational activities, particularly physical exercises and music, as key methods for overcoming stressful situations.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus groups highlighted the deeply personal and dynamic nature of mental health, emphasizing its equal importance to physical health. Participants stressed the need for emotional stability, supportive environments, and balance as essential for well-being. Breaking societal stigmas around seeking

professional help and fostering positive routines and hobbies were identified as key needs for mental health maintenance.

Proactive strategies like stress management, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and effective communication were viewed as critical skills. Participants also acknowledged the negative impact of global issues, such as climate change and conflicts, as well as personal stressors from work, studies, and relationships. While prolonged exposure to these stressors has increased anxiety for many, a few reported developing resilience over time.

Coping strategies, including self-care activities like physical exercise and music, were widely endorsed. The collaborative discussions reinforced the reliability of the findings, highlighting the diverse challenges and approaches needed to maintain mental well-being.

Lithuania

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

The target group was reached through social media, stakeholders, schools.

Demographic Overview:

The participants represented a diverse group in terms of gender, nationality, and age. The majority were female (21), with a smaller number of males (6). Nationalities varied widely, including individuals from Europe and beyond, such as Colombia, India, Latvia, Lithuania, the Middle East, Poland, Turkey, and Ukraine. Age diversity was also notable, ranging from 16-17 years old (4 participants) to 30+ years old (3 participants), with the majority being 18, 19, and 20 years old.

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

The recurring themes emphasized emotional resilience, stress management, and self-awareness. Many respondents associated mental health with being able to cope with life's challenges, maintain balance, and recover quickly from stress. Words like "balance," "peace," and "resilience" frequently appeared, signifying that stability and adaptability are crucial components of mental wellbeing. Several participants also linked mental health to self-care and self-acceptance, focusing on personal fulfillment, positivity, and being at peace with oneself. Others expanded this to include relationships, suggesting that mental health

isn't just about individual emotions but also about being connected to others in a meaningful way. There was also a focus on physical health, with a few respondents highlighting the link between mental and physical wellbeing, suggesting that being mentally well contributes to feeling good in one's body and vice versa.

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

Key themes emerge around self-care, emotional support, and balance. Many participants emphasize the need for rest, adequate sleep, physical activity, and a healthy diet, reflecting a strong understanding of the relationship between physical and mental health. There was a recurrent focus on social connections, with several respondents highlighting the importance of supportive relationships—be it family, friends, or a broader social network. This aligns with the fact that mental health is nurtured through emotional support from others, fostering a sense of belonging and security. Many responses also point to the need for time management and stress reduction, particularly by creating routine, setting boundaries, and engaging in hobbies or leisure activities like reading, spending time outdoors, and listening to music. Participants express a desire for peaceful environments and freedom from external pressures—whether from parents, friends, or societal expectations—which can otherwise negatively impact their mental state. The need for purpose, self-discipline, and personal fulfillment is also mentioned frequently, suggesting that mental health is closely tied to having a sense of direction and control over one's life. Some respondents highlight mindfulness, coping skills, and emotional management as vital tools for sustaining mental wellness, especially when facing challenges.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

Stress management and emotional regulation stood out as two primary areas where skills are necessary. Respondents frequently mentioned the need to manage stress proactively through techniques like mindfulness, breathing exercises, and setting boundaries, all of which help in handling emotional strain before it escalates. Self-awareness is another key theme, with many participants emphasizing the importance of understanding one's own emotions, identifying stressors, and knowing when to seek support. Recognizing the signs of burnout, distress, and overwhelm is seen as crucial for maintaining mental health. This ability to understand personal emotional states allows individuals to respond with appropriate self-care strategies, whether that involves professional help, connecting with friends and family, or simply taking time to rest. Participants also frequently mentioned resilience—the ability to

bounce back from setbacks—as a crucial skill, alongside problem-solving and effective communication. These skills help individuals navigate challenges while maintaining a sense of balance and control. Time management skills also emerged as a significant factor, with respondents recognizing that managing time effectively contributes to reducing stress and making room for relaxation and hobbies. Assertiveness and setting boundaries were highlighted by some, indicating that protecting one's mental health often involves standing up for personal needs and learning to say "no" to excessive demands. Additionally, participants acknowledged the value of having access to mental health resources such as therapists and gaining basic psychological knowledge to better understand emotional health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

The responses to this question revealed a variety of external and internal factors that participants identify as harmful to their mental health. Stress emerges as the most frequently mentioned factor, particularly when it is related to situations beyond one's control or arises from chronic sources such as work, school, or relationships. Many respondents highlighted the role of toxic environments, including toxic relationships, social isolation, and aggressive behavior, as key contributors to mental distress. Lack of sleep, physical inactivity, and poor diet are also noted as conditions that exacerbate mental health challenges. Respondents further indicate that negative external environments, such as political instability, economic uncertainty, and war, can create significant anxiety, often leading to feelings of helplessness or fear. Social pressure, financial problems, and unrealistic expectations—whether from oneself or others—also surface as recurring themes, contributing to feelings of anxiety, depression, or burnout. Several participants mention emotional isolation or lack of support as detrimental conditions, with loneliness being a key factor that negatively affects their mental health. Unresolved trauma, conflict, and discrimination are additional stressors that significantly impact mental wellbeing.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

A significant portion of respondents express those current events, such as political instability, economic uncertainty, war, and climate change, contribute to heightened stress, anxiety, and even feelings of helplessness. Many participants highlight how constant exposure to negative news and social unrest overwhelms their mental resilience, leading to emotional exhaustion or a sense of being overburdened. For some, the fear of the unknown, particularly in light of war and social tensions, has a deep psychological impact, with respondents mentioning feelings of aggression, fear, or even social

withdrawal as coping mechanisms. Certain individuals have become more socially reserved or experience heightened stress due to increased responsibilities and a sense of insecurity. However, a few participants express that world events either do not significantly affect their mental health or have minimal impact. Some deliberately avoid consuming news to protect their emotional wellbeing, while others state that they do not let external events interfere with their personal lives. There are also instances where respondents find positivity or joy in global events, suggesting that their reactions are highly dependent on the nature of the events themselves. A small subset of respondents acknowledges the benefits of social change, such as feeling more open and connected with people, indicating that not all social transformations lead to negative emotions.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

The responses show a broad range of coping mechanisms that participants use to manage stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges. Physical activity is one of the most commonly mentioned strategies, with many respondents turning to exercise, sports, or simply going for a walk to alleviate their mental strain. Social support plays an equally important role. Many participants find comfort in talking to loved ones, such as family or close friends, to share their problems and seek emotional support. Some also mention the value of seeking professional help through therapy or support groups when needed, indicating a recognition of the importance of external guidance in managing severe mental health issues. Mindfulness practices like meditation, deep breathing, and journaling are frequently mentioned as effective tools for overcoming stress. In addition, self-care routines, such as sticking to a sleep schedule, eating healthy, and reducing screen time, are seen as essential for maintaining balance and preventing stress from escalating. Several respondents emphasize the need for alone time to reflect, reset, and manage their emotions. Whether through music, reading, or prayer, quiet moments of solitude help many people restore their mental wellbeing. Others focus on goal-setting and problem-solving, breaking down challenges into smaller tasks to feel more in control of their lives. Interestingly, some participants mentioned using positive thinking and focusing on self-improvement as a way to reframe difficult situations and find lessons in stressful events. This suggests a proactive, solution-oriented approach to mental health management, where individuals focus on growth and resilience. However, a few responses also indicate unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as overeating or fast driving, reflecting the challenges some people face in managing stress constructively.

Conclusion:

The survey responses provide a nuanced understanding of how young people perceive, manage, and protect their mental health. Participants view mental well-being as a holistic concept encompassing emotional balance, resilience, and adaptability, closely tied to physical health and supported by self-care and positive relationships. Key needs for maintaining mental health include supportive networks, personal time, and purposeful activities, alongside the development of essential skills such as stress management, emotional regulation, and mindfulness. Stress emerged as the most significant negative influence, amplified by factors like toxic relationships, unrealistic expectations, and global challenges such as political unrest and climate change. While some participants reported feeling overwhelmed by external pressures, others demonstrated resilience through coping mechanisms like exercise, mindfulness, and social support. Overall, the findings highlight a generation that is both highly aware of the importance of mental health and proactive in navigating its complexities.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group was conducted as part of the LTTA for the Erasmus+ KA2 project, Peditory. It lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes and was held in English. The group consisted of 10 participants aged between 20 and 30, representing Lithuania, Spain, Romania, Portugal, and Ukraine. The session was moderated by a representative from Efektas Group, one of the research organizations involved in the project. The discussion was recorded using a phone camera, and the transcription was generated through YouTube's auto-subtitles function after the recording was uploaded to the platform.

The common and different point of view on the questions:

Participants shared common views on the importance of setting personal boundaries, emotional intelligence, and the need for support systems in maintaining mental health. Many emphasized the significance of self-awareness, communication, and taking time for introspection or hobbies to recharge. Societal pressure, news, and global events like wars were commonly cited as sources of stress and anxiety, impacting mental health. Although, differences emerged in coping strategies and emotional responses to global events. Some participants dealt with stress by engaging in physical activities like sports, while others preferred quiet activities like reading or meditation. Additionally, participants from conflict-affected regions expressed a more intense emotional connection to global events compared to those less directly impacted. This shows a variation in how deeply external events influence personal mental health.

The group interaction observation:

The group interaction was dynamic, with participants gradually warming up to the topic. Initially hesitant, once the conversation gained momentum, they became more open and engaged in sharing personal experiences and those of others around them. There was a noticeable sense of empathy as members actively listened, often complementing one another's points with their own examples. This created a supportive environment where participants felt comfortable discussing the common mental health challenges they face. One key discovery was the shared recognition that mental health is a universal concern that should be prioritized, though it's not always easy to do so. The group unanimously agreed on the importance of self-care, boundaries, and support systems, even if achieving a balanced mental state is difficult due to external pressures and personal circumstances. Despite varied coping mechanisms, the interaction revealed a strong mutual understanding of the importance of addressing mental health proactively.

Perceptions of mental health & wellbeing

Participants view mental health as deeply tied to navigating the growing pressures of modern society, including the demands of workload, fast-paced living, and societal competition. University settings, in particular, amplify these pressures, with Italian students citing intense competition and limited future opportunities as significant stressors that can lead to frustration and depression. Mental health is described as a state of self-awareness and emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to handle societal and family expectations without compromising their inner peace. This understanding emphasizes the importance of self-analysis in making choices that align with personal satisfaction rather than succumbing to external pressures.

Needs to be mentally healthy:

Participants identified several key elements necessary for maintaining mental health, including strong support systems such as understanding partners, family, and friends. Healthy surroundings and engaging in enjoyable activities are seen as critical, alongside the avoidance of toxic environments or relationships. Maintaining balance through self-reflection, rest, and positive interactions is emphasized as essential. Continuous learning and emotional growth are also highlighted as important tools for effectively navigating life's pressures and sustaining mental well-being.

Necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health:

Participants emphasize several key knowledge areas and skills necessary to protect mental health, starting with the importance of understanding personal boundaries and respecting them. Being aware of where one's limits lie and communicating those limits clearly is seen as foundational to maintaining mental well-being. Equally important is the ability to communicate effectively, both with oneself through introspection and with others. Participants stress that open and honest communication allows individuals to express their needs and emotions, while also understanding and respecting others' perspectives. Learning to be comfortable with solitude and introspection is also highlighted as a critical skill for protecting mental health. Many participants note that disconnecting from the outside world, spending time alone, and engaging in activities they enjoy helps them to recharge and maintain balance. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of self-acceptance and not feeling pressured by societal expectations or judgments. Protecting mental health involves letting go of regrets and focusing on personal satisfaction. Consistency in daily routines, such as sleep, exercise, and taking care of physical health, is seen as essential. Participants mention the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including taking vitamins, managing stress levels, and keeping up with physical activities, to prevent burnout and exhaustion. Developing a disciplined routine helps to create a stable foundation that supports mental well-being. Also, participants stress the importance of forward-thinking and not overburdening oneself with hypothetical problems. Managing stress by focusing on the present and not worrying excessively about potential future challenges is viewed as a valuable skill for mental resilience. The ability to maintain this perspective can prevent unnecessary anxiety and contribute to a healthier state of mind.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Several factors are identified by participants as conditions that negatively affect mental health. One common theme is the influence of external pressures from society. Expectations to meet societal standards, such as achieving certain milestones in life, create stress and anxiety. This societal pressure to constantly perform and succeed can feel overwhelming, leading to feelings of inadequacy or failure. Additionally, financial stress and concerns about money also contribute significantly to negative mental states. The role of negative influences, whether from people or media, is also emphasized. Constant exposure to negative news, particularly about global issues such as wars, climate change, and other crises, exacerbates anxiety and frustration. Participants mention that while these global problems may not directly affect their daily lives, they still induce feelings of helplessness and worry, particularly about the

future of society and the next generation. Being overly empathetic to others' struggles and taking on their burdens also adds emotional strain. Unresolved conflicts, personal expectations, and ongoing stressors like exams or unfulfilled life goals also negatively impact mental health. Participants note that high expectations, either from themselves or others, often lead to disappointment and frustration when unmet. Similarly, unresolved conflicts or personal struggles create lingering mental tension, leading to anxiety or sleeplessness.

How the current world events or social changes affect mental health:

Current world events and social changes are seen as having a significant impact on mental health, with many participants highlighting the toll of global conflicts, like the war in Ukraine, as a primary source of anxiety and stress. The constant exposure to negative news about wars, political instability, and societal issues creates a sense of helplessness. For example, those with personal ties to conflict zones, such as Ukraine, express that while they understand they cannot control the situation, the proximity to it and the worry for loved ones causes emotional distress. This realization often leads to a coping mechanism of accepting what cannot be controlled, helping some individuals mitigate anxiety. To manage the psychological burden caused by such events, participants adopt various coping strategies. Friends, family, and social connections are frequently mentioned as key support systems. Simply talking to someone who listens can alleviate feelings of isolation and stress. Others turn to distractions, such as watching movies or engaging in hobbies, to momentarily escape from overwhelming world issues. Exercise, including sports, yoga, and meditation, is highlighted as an effective method for reducing stress and re-centering the mind. Engaging in physical activities allows them to shift their focus and momentarily disconnect from the external pressures. Normalization of emotions is another coping strategy discussed. Participants describe how accepting their feelings as valid—whether it's grief over losing a pet or anxiety about world events—helps reduce the emotional strain. By normalizing their responses to stressful situations, individuals feel less judgmental toward themselves, which contributes to better mental health management. Additionally, facing problems head-on and acknowledging feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression rather than suppressing them is seen as a key step in maintaining mental well-being.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group discussions highlighted key themes related to mental health, emphasizing the complex influences of personal, societal, and global factors. A major insight was the societal pressure to meet

expectations regarding career, education, and success, which often leads to stress and feelings of inadequacy. University environments, in particular, were noted as high-pressure spaces, where competition exacerbates mental health challenges. These pressures continue into adulthood, transforming into work-related stress and financial concerns.

Global events, especially wars and political instability, also impact mental health, with participants expressing feelings of helplessness and anxiety from constant exposure to negative news. Emotional intelligence and self-awareness were highlighted as essential for managing mental health, helping individuals understand and cope with their emotions.

Coping strategies such as physical exercise, hobbies, and social support were emphasized as effective ways to manage stress. Many participants noted the importance of "disconnecting" from external pressures to recharge mentally. Finally, normalizing emotions like anxiety and stress was seen as crucial for reducing stigma and fostering resilience, allowing individuals to process their feelings more effectively and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

Romania

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

The target group was reached through social media and discord channel.

Demographic Overview:

The demographic overview of the participants revealed a diverse group in terms of gender, nationality, age, and education. Of the total participants, 11 were male, 22 were female, and 1 identified as non-binary. The participants came from various countries, including Romania, Spain, Malta, Slovakia, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Poland, Ukraine, the Netherlands (with dual nationality in Italy), and Egypt. The age range of the participants spanned from 18 to 31 years, with an average age of 23. Regarding education levels, 13 participants held a Master's degree, 9 had a Bachelor's degree, 9 had a high school diploma, 1 had vocational training, and 1 participant had no formal education.

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

The responses reveal that mental health and well-being are viewed as crucial for personal stability, happiness, and peace. Participants commonly described mental health as a holistic concept, encompassing physical, emotional, and mental aspects that directly influence one's ability to function in daily life. Self-awareness emerged as an important theme, with respondents highlighting the value of understanding oneself, setting boundaries, and feeling at peace with personal decisions and emotions. Additionally, happiness and stability were emphasized as key components of mental well-being, with many noting that happiness—both internal and external—is a result of emotional stability, self-care, and the acceptance of personal limits.

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

Key recurring needs for maintaining mental health included several fundamental elements. Stability and safety were frequently mentioned, with many respondents emphasizing the importance of a stable environment, including financial security, stable relationships, and personal safety. Self-care routines also emerged as a critical need, with participants noting the importance of regular routines, time for relaxation, and support from therapy, nature, and creative activities. A significant focus was placed on maintaining a balance between work and leisure. Additionally, support networks, including friends, family, and professionals, were regularly cited as vital for mental well-being, with emotional connections through trusted relationships playing a key role. Finally, physical and financial well-being were highlighted by some respondents, who noted that mental health is closely tied to having sufficient financial resources, a good job, and a healthy physical body.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

Respondents highlighted several key knowledge and skills for protecting mental health. Emotional regulation was frequently mentioned, with many emphasizing the importance of understanding and managing emotions through techniques such as meditation, mindfulness, breathing exercises, and setting personal boundaries. Self-awareness and self-esteem were also identified as crucial, with respondents noting the value of personal insight into emotional triggers and the ability to establish clear boundaries. Practical coping techniques, including meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises, were often cited, along with strategies from psychologists, such as therapy. Additionally, a few respondents pointed out that understanding broader philosophical principles and human behavior is necessary for coping with mental health challenges, reflecting the importance of a deeper, reflective approach to mental well-being.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Participants identified a wide range of conditions that negatively impact their mental health, many of which fall into common stress-inducing categories. Interpersonal relationships were frequently mentioned as a major source of distress, including family issues, relationship problems, conflicts, and toxic environments. Miscommunication, lack of support, and negative opinions from others were also common contributors to mental health challenges. Work and career pressures were another significant factor, with tight deadlines, high workloads, toxic work environments, and financial stress being recurring themes. Several respondents linked financial instability and job-related stress to worsened mental well-being.

Social expectations and societal trends also emerged as key stressors. Participants felt societal pressures, such as the need to "be special" or meet family and social expectations, negatively affected their well-being. The influence of social media, particularly its role in increasing anxiety, self-comparison, and feelings of inadequacy, was highlighted as another major source of stress.

External crises and global events, such as inflation, racism, injustice, war, and environmental concerns, were cited as significant contributors to mental distress. For Ukrainian respondents, the ongoing war was especially impactful. Finally, internal struggles like negative self-talk, overthinking, feelings of stuckness, and unresolved past issues were also identified as personal factors that hinder mental health.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

Respondents emphasized the significant impact of global and social events on their mental health. War and conflict were particularly distressing for those from Ukraine or countries directly affected by conflict. The ongoing war induced significant anxiety, fear, and feelings of uncertainty, with one participant even describing hearing imaginary air alerts, illustrating the deep psychological impact of war, even for those physically distant from it. Economic instability, including inflation and financial uncertainty, was another consistent source of stress, creating a sense of insecurity and fear for the future.

Social polarization also emerged as a major stressor, with several respondents expressing frustration over the growing societal divide and the pressure to "choose a side" in polarized debates. Issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia were seen as aggravating factors contributing to mental distress. Environmental concerns and global injustice also weighed heavily on participants, who felt disheartened by issues like environmental degradation and the failure of governments to meet basic human needs.

On the positive side, some respondents found relief through positive social interactions. Meeting people from diverse cultures or participating in supportive communities, such as those found in Erasmus+ projects, brought positive energy and helped mitigate the negative effects of world events, offering a sense of connection and hope amidst global challenges.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

Participants shared a variety of methods they use to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, which can be grouped into several key areas. Therapy and professional help were often mentioned, with many respondents noting the importance of psychotherapy, some even paying for professional help, and describing it as life-saving. Social support and communication were also emphasized, with talking to friends, family, or supportive communities being a common strategy to manage mental health. Sharing worries with trusted people was often cited as a helpful way to cope.

Mindfulness and reflection were key strategies for many, with respondents mentioning meditation, yoga, prayer, and reflection through diary writing as important tools for mental well-being. Creative outlets and hobbies, such as painting, dancing, or music, were frequently used to reduce stress, alongside physical activities like exercise and sports.

Nature and solitude also played significant roles, with participants citing walks or spending time in nature as effective ways to recharge mentally. Nature was often described as a calming influence after periods of high stress. Physical activity and routine were also crucial, with activities like working out, dancing, and yoga serving as both stress outlets and means to restore emotional balance. Lastly, mindset shifts, such as reframing stress into excitement or practicing self-acceptance, were crucial for some individuals in managing difficult emotions and reducing the impact of stressors.

Conclusion:

The questionnaire data reveals that mental health is viewed as a deeply personal and multifaceted issue, influenced by internal and external factors. Participants from countries affected by war, like Ukraine, reported significant psychological impacts, while younger respondents emphasized self-expression and individuality. Most defined mental health as balance, inner peace, and emotional stability, closely tied to happiness, self-care, and the ability to manage life’s challenges.

External factors, such as societal pressures, economic instability, and global conflicts, were seen as significant influences on mental health. Common challenges included toxic environments, financial insecurity, and societal expectations, which often led to stress and anxiety. Coping mechanisms ranged from therapy to self-care practices like meditation, creative activities, and physical exercise. Social support played a central role, along with activities like yoga and spending time in nature.

In conclusion, the data highlights the need for stability, financial security, and supportive environments to maintain mental health. Despite challenges, respondents have developed effective coping strategies. There is a clear need for improved mental health resources and support systems to address the pressures of modern life and global events.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group was conducted onsite during the TrippyCaPeVremuri non-formal education caravan in Romania from September 1-9. The session was held in English and lasted for 1 hour. There were 5 participants, all Romanian high school students aged between 18 and 21. The group consisted of 4 females and 1 male, with 2 moderators facilitating the discussion.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

Common views on mental health emphasize it as a state of internal peace, balance, and the ability to manage emotions and mental challenges. Most participants agree that managing stress and resolving past traumas are essential for maintaining mental well-being. However, there were differing views as well: some participants associate mental health directly with external circumstances, such as achieving life goals or having peaceful surroundings, while others focus on the internal aspects, like resolving personal traumas and managing one’s mindset.

The group interaction observation:

The responses indicate a shared understanding of mental health but also reveal individual variations in how each person approaches mental health management. The group leans toward practical methods of managing stress, such as social interaction and self-care. The male participant's answers stand out slightly by focusing more on the practical aspects of reducing anxiety rather than emotional introspection

Perceptions of mental health & wellbeing:

Participants view mental health and well-being as a state of inner peace and emotional stability, where one can effectively manage stress, overcome emotional challenges, and maintain a positive mindset. It is closely linked to achieving life goals and resolving inner conflicts.

Needs to be mentally healthy:

The group highlighted the importance of addressing personal traumas, having less stress, achieving personal goals, and having peace in their surroundings. They believe that strong emotional well-being comes from balancing their internal and external worlds.

Necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health:

Participants pointed out the need for self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and communication skills. Knowing when to take breaks, practicing self-compassion, and understanding how to manage workload and personal responsibilities were seen as crucial to maintaining mental health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

External stressors identified by participants included school workload, personal problems, social interactions, fear of being judged or bullied, and broader social conditions, such as economic challenges. Internal stressors were also highlighted, with participants expressing anxiety from unforeseen situations, pressure from their own expectations, and the fear of making mistakes.

How the current world events or social changes affect mental health:

Most participants feel negatively impacted by world events such as war and climate change. Some are deeply affected by the uncertainty and fear these issues create for the future, while others mention that they try to avoid thinking about world events altogether.

Overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems:

The group has developed various coping mechanisms to deal with stress and anxiety, including engaging in hobbies, talking with friends, self-care routines, and adopting healthier coping mechanisms over time. However, some participants still struggle with stress management and rely on social interaction or reflection to process their emotions.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The participants in this focus group demonstrated a nuanced understanding of mental health, emphasizing the importance of both internal and external factors in achieving mental well-being. One of the recurring themes was the idea of balancing personal goals, social expectations, and emotional health. Participants repeatedly mentioned the need for peace—both within themselves and in their environments—as a critical factor in maintaining good mental health. There was a notable emphasis on the role of past traumas, stress from personal relationships, and school responsibilities in negatively affecting their mental health.

The group's responses highlight the tension between the internal self and external pressures. While some participants focused on self-driven aspects of mental health, such as managing emotions and building self-awareness, others expressed concern about external circumstances, such as economic conditions and world events. Several participants acknowledged the impact of global challenges, such as the war in Ukraine, on their mental state, which suggests that even at a young age, these individuals are acutely aware of the interconnectedness of their mental health with larger societal issues.

The methods participants use to manage stress and anxiety vary but consistently involve healthy coping mechanisms like communication, reflection, and self-care. However, a few participants indicated that unhealthy coping strategies were used in the past, but they are working towards adopting healthier approaches. The shared conclusion among the group is that mental health is an ongoing process that requires active effort and the development of emotional intelligence, self-compassion, and social support systems.

Portugal

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

The target group for the mental health questionnaire was reached through various direct and informal channels to ensure accessibility and engagement. These included WhatsApp, outreach by young interns from the association, local school representatives, staff members conducting face-to-face interactions, and Instagram stories. These methods were intended to create a personal connection and increase participation in the survey. No adjustments were made to the questionnaire, including the consent and information form, ensuring consistency across all materials provided to participants. This approach maintained uniformity in the data collection process while fostering a broad reach within the target group.

Demographic Overview:

The majority of respondents are Portuguese nationals (15 participants), with only one Italian participant. In terms of education, the highest level achieved by participants varies, with the most common being a Bachelor's degree (8 participants). Other educational backgrounds include high school diplomas (6 participants), a Master's degree (1 participant), and one participant who completed middle school. The participants' ages range from 18 to 30 years, with the average age being around 23 years old. The most frequent ages are 18 (3 participants) and 30 (3 participants), followed by 22 years old (4 participants), and smaller numbers of respondents at other ages (20, 21, 23, 25, 29).

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

The participants shared a strong understanding of mental health and well-being, emphasizing key elements such as balance, resilience, emotional stability, and the ability to enjoy life. They described mental health as achieving a balance in life, being emotionally stable, and accepting both high and low moments as part of the process. One participant noted, “Mental health is the emotional state of a person,” while another highlighted the importance of maintaining balance between oneself and their surroundings.

Additionally, many participants emphasized that mental health is crucial for enjoying life rather than merely surviving. As one participant shared, “Mental health & well-being means being capable of enjoying life and each day, instead of being in survival mode.” The overall consensus indicates that mental health is seen as the foundation for daily functioning, with participants believing that a lack of mental well-being can hinder one's ability to perform tasks and live fully. One participant concluded, “If our mental health is not in good condition, we cannot be at our best to carry out our daily tasks,” underscoring the central role mental health plays in overall wellbeing.

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

Participants highlighted several emotions and behaviors that contribute to mental health, with a strong focus on stress management and positive relationships. Stress was identified as a critical factor affecting mental health, and many emphasized the importance of reducing it. As one participant shared, “To be stress-free, mainly from work and personal relations,” while another added, “Not engaging in things that stress me to an exaggerated level.” This reflects a common desire to manage stress to maintain mental wellbeing.

Positive relationships were another key aspect for participants, with a clear consensus on the value of strong social connections. Several participants mentioned the importance of being around family and friends, noting that these relationships provide emotional support and reduce stress. One participant explained, “Being with good people who I love,” while another shared, “To have my closest friends around me. Being with them, even if just to have coffee, helps me reduce stress because I know I'm in a safe space in case I ‘fall.’” Other factors contributing to mental health included self-love, confidence, engaging in hobbies, staying physically active, and having a supportive work and personal environment. Participants also highlighted the need for balance in life and access to psychological support.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

Participants identified a range of knowledge and skills necessary to protect mental health, with some highlighting practical actions like engaging in sports, spending time in nature, talking to friends, or seeking professional help. As one participant mentioned, “I don't think there is any skill or knowledge related to it, you can do sports, meditate, go to nature, or talk with a friend or professional to help you improve your mental health.” However, many participants emphasized the importance of awareness and self-reflection as critical components of mental well-being.

A key theme that emerged was the ability to recognize patterns in thoughts, particularly intrusive ones, as an essential skill for managing mental health struggles. As one participant explained, “Recognize patterns, in order to know when you are listening too much to your intrusive thoughts.” Another added, "Knowing our limits, our best qualities, and our weaknesses makes it much easier to avoid mistakes that can affect our mental health." In addition to self-awareness, participants highlighted the importance of managing anxiety and setting personal boundaries. One participant noted, “Finding strategies to deal with anxiety, surrounding myself with people who want the best for me, knowing that there will be good times and not-so-good times and that I shouldn’t ignore what I feel.” Reaching out for support and establishing boundaries were also seen as key skills in maintaining mental health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

Participants identified several conditions that negatively impact mental health, many of which were already mentioned in previous questions, such as stress and being around negative individuals. Other significant factors included overwork, pressure, lack of clear goals, and unhealthy relationships. Some participants pointed out, a “Bad or pernicious environment at work, at school, or at home,” and “Bad

environment, stress, and lots of tasks to do. Always living up to other people's expectations and having to make difficult decisions." Another participant highlighted the effect of loneliness, stating, "I don't like to be left alone with my thoughts for a long period of time." These responses underscore the variety of external and internal factors that contribute to mental health challenges.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

Participants largely expressed that current world events and social changes have a negative impact on their mental health, often contributing to stress, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness about the future. One participant noted the overwhelming effect of the environmental crisis, saying, "Personally, the environmental crisis gives me a lot of anxiety, for example." In response to these challenges, several participants shared coping strategies, such as distancing themselves from the constant flow of information. As one participant mentioned, "I used to be much more connected to what was happening in the world, but lately, I've found myself distancing from it as a way to avoid feeling worse mentally." This illustrates how the global context can exacerbate mental health struggles and lead individuals to seek ways to protect their emotional well-being.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

Participants shared valuable insights on techniques they use to overcome high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and other psychological challenges. Most participants demonstrated a solid understanding of mental health care and actively practice various strategies to maintain their well-being. Common techniques mentioned included therapy, self-care routines, physical activity, socializing, and engaging in hobbies. For example, one participant highlighted, "Therapy and sports," while another mentioned using mindfulness techniques, saying, "Doing deep breaths... focusing on my 5 senses." These responses underscore the importance of both professional support and self-implemented strategies in managing mental health struggles.

Conclusion:

The online questionnaire results reveal a comprehensive understanding of mental health among participants, emphasizing the importance of balance, emotional stability, and positive relationships. Key factors for maintaining mental health included stress management, strong social connections, self-awareness, and physical activity. Participants identified external pressures, such as overwork and

negative environments, as major contributors to mental health challenges. They also noted that global events, like the environmental crisis, exacerbate stress and anxiety, prompting many to distance themselves from overwhelming information. Coping strategies, including therapy, self-care, and mindfulness, were commonly used to manage mental health struggles. Overall, the findings highlight the complex interplay of personal, social, and environmental factors in maintaining well-being.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group procedure for the topic of mental health involved two sessions, both conducted onsite. The first session, held in Amarante during a youth exchange on street art, had four participants: three Portuguese (21, 23, and 19 years old) and one Italian (26 years old). The second session was with a single Italian participant, a 23-year-old volunteer at the youth center. In both sessions, the questions were posed in English, though the first session was primarily in Portuguese with some English used for technical terms or emotions. The second session was conducted entirely in English. The duration of the first session was about 25 minutes, while the second session lasted approximately 10 minutes. Recording was done with a phone, and manual transcription was used for both sessions. There were no adjustments to the consent and information forms, and the focus group was moderated by a single person.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

The participants shared a collective understanding of the importance of mental health, acknowledging the role of both internal and external factors in well-being. While all emphasized the significance of emotional comfort, calm surroundings, and supportive relationships, there were differences in focus. Some participants concentrated on personal and social development as central to well-being, while others highlighted the importance of the natural environment and community support. The Italian participant's responses were more structured and centered on social dynamics, contrasting with the more emotive reflections of the Portuguese participants. Despite these differences, there was agreement on the essential role that mental health plays in personal growth and community engagement.

The group interaction observation:

The group interaction was respectful and balanced, with each participant contributing based on their personal experiences. The dynamic was characterized by thoughtful exchanges, where participants listened attentively to one another and built upon each other's ideas. This collaborative environment

allowed for diverse perspectives to be shared, with the group showing a clear respect for different viewpoints. While the participants' backgrounds influenced their individual responses, the focus remained on mental health as a shared concern, with everyone demonstrating a collective commitment to understanding the factors that impact well-being.

Perceptions of mental health & wellbeing:

In the focus group, participants expressed that mental health and well-being are influenced by multiple interconnected factors. A calm environment and positive social interactions were highlighted as crucial for mental peace, with one participant noting that these conditions prevent feelings of nervousness and anxiety. Another participant distinguished between wellbeing, which they saw as linked to basic needs, and mental health, which they connected to social dynamics and relationships. Self-care and relationships were central themes in the discussion, with one participant emphasizing the importance of being at peace with oneself and others. Additionally, mental health was viewed as an ongoing journey of growth, improvement, and learning. In session 2, the participant underscored the relationship between mental health and the environment, describing both as equally essential to well-being. Overall, the focus group conveyed a comprehensive understanding of mental health, encompassing environmental, social, and personal factors that contribute to overall well-being.

Needs to be mentally healthy:

The focus group participants identified several key elements necessary for maintaining mental health, emphasizing both personal and social aspects. They highlighted the importance of a safe and flexible environment, both physically and emotionally, with one participant noting that a quiet, open space allows for creativity and idea exchange. Personal fulfillment, particularly through artistic activities, was also recognized as a significant contributor to well-being. Social connections were considered essential, as one participant explained the need to be with people they like and identify with, while also ensuring personal space. In the second session, the participant underscored the importance of balancing solitude with social interaction, stating that it is crucial to have time for oneself but also to have someone to talk to when needed.

Necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health:

In the focus group, participants recognized that awareness and self-knowledge are crucial for protecting mental health. One participant emphasized the importance of "being aware of what's good for me" and understanding personal limits, alongside the need for effective communication to express one's needs. Therapy was also identified as a valuable tool for managing emotions and gaining perspective. Another participant stressed the significance of asking for help when necessary, with self-knowledge and self-respect seen as foundational to mental well-being. In the second session, the participant added that recognizing toxic influences and practicing self-care actions, such as reflecting on the day, are also essential skills for maintaining mental health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

In the focus group, participants identified various conditions that negatively affect their mental health. One participant mentioned feeling anxious when "you're always in a hurry" and struggling with workaholism, admitting that she pushes herself "to the limit" and has difficulty knowing when to stop. Another participant described experiencing panic when tasks accumulate, especially with "schoolwork," and highlighted the negative impact of not having a community with which she identifies. Differences in values with her community, as well as poor working conditions and salary, were also pointed out as significant stressors. One participant emphasized the importance of avoiding external pressures, saying, "You're more concerned with feeling that you're not disrespecting yourself." In the second session, another participant underlined the role of "the environment, the people," and living conditions, stressing the need to distance oneself from "negative people."

How the current world events or social changes affect mental health:

In the focus group, participants shared varied perspectives on how current world events and social changes affect their mental health. One participant noted that while she is "fully aware" of global events, she understands they are structural problems that don't directly impact her. In contrast, another participant mentioned avoiding the news to prevent becoming too affected by stories of "children/women," emphasizing the emotional toll these events take. Social events were also discussed; one participant indicated that to protect herself from negativity, she might avoid events that would not be good for her, often using "innocent excuses" to explain her absence. Another participant expressed discomfort with negative comments in social settings, such as xenophobia, and felt saddened by the inequality in freedom based on birthplace. In the second session, the participant reflected on the complexity of reactions to

global issues, noting, "You can feel bad, but there's often little you can do," while also acknowledging the importance of taking action through policies and local initiatives. Overall, the group highlighted a mix of awareness, emotional impact, and the need for self-protection in response to social changes and global events.

Overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems:

In the focus group, participants shared various techniques for overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. One participant emphasized the importance of silence, stating, "I like silence, talking to myself, listening to music, and avoiding news/shows/movies." Another suggested the need to "understand what's causing anxiety" and to be honest with oneself about whether thoughts are real. Therapy and physical activities were also highlighted as coping strategies. One participant noted that engaging in sports, dancing, and developing healthy intimate relationships helps manage stress. Additionally, techniques such as the "shake technique" from theater were mentioned. Other strategies included breathing exercises, going to the gym, reading, and spending time with friends. One participant discussed the concept of "active watching," focusing on the present moment and addressing problems step by step without rushing. They also stressed the importance of knowing personal limits, stating that if something bothers them, they simply "set it aside and move on." Overall, the group highlighted a combination of self-awareness, physical activity, social support, and mindfulness as key approaches to managing psychological challenges.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The focus group highlighted several key factors in maintaining mental health. Participants emphasized the importance of emotional comfort, supportive relationships, and a calm environment for well-being. Personal and social development, as well as a positive natural environment, were also identified as essential for mental health. Social connections and personal fulfillment were seen as crucial, with a safe and flexible environment being a key factor in supporting mental well-being. The need for supportive relationships and spaces for creativity was also emphasized.

Self-awareness, understanding personal limits, and engaging in therapy were viewed as vital for maintaining mental health, with self-care and reflection being central components. On the other hand,

negative influences such as work pressures, lack of community, and toxic environments were noted as significant stressors, with participants stressing the importance of avoiding these negative influences.

Regarding the impact of global and social changes, some participants felt detached from world events, while others noted their emotional toll. Self-protection, such as avoiding negative environments, was mentioned as a common coping strategy. Coping strategies shared by participants included physical activity, therapy, self-reflection, and mindfulness, as well as building healthy relationships and setting personal boundaries.

In summary, the focus group underscored the interconnectedness of personal, social, and environmental factors in maintaining mental health, emphasizing the role of self-awareness, support systems, and effective coping strategies.

Türkiye

Results for the online questionnaire procedure (Mental Health)

Target groups were reached out through personal connections, the ELNN Türkiye youth community WhatsApp Group, and representatives of specific youth associations such as Leo Club of the Istanbul Akatlar Lions Club. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish. While translating the questionnaire the "Mental Health" was translated as "Psikolojik sağlık" which means "psychological health". Although in literature, psychological health is a different concept from mental health & well-being, in Turkish daily use, it is mostly used to refer to mental health in society and youth communities. Thus, the term "psikolojik sağlık" (psychological health) was used to clarify the topic for getting the responses.

Demographic Overview:

The demographic overview of the participants includes 13 men and 16 women, with ages ranging from 18 to 28. The majority of participants were 22 years old, representing the highest concentration within this age group. Regarding educational background, 51.72% of participants have a high school degree, 41.38% hold a university degree, while 3.45% are university students and another 3.45% are still high school students. Additionally, one participant holds a master's degree. This distribution indicates a mix of educational backgrounds, with the largest group being high school graduates, followed by those with university degrees.

Perceptions Of Mental Health & Wellbeing:

The findings reveal that youth perceive mental health and well-being through various perspectives, emphasizing the importance of coping with life's challenges, managing emotions, and maintaining harmonious relationships. Participants defined mental health as encompassing psychological, emotional, and social well-being, which enables individuals to function effectively and find fulfillment. They linked mental and well-being to specific capabilities, such as cognitive functioning and social adjustment, viewing it as a statement of ability or capacity. Key themes identified include holistic well-being, which integrates psychological, emotional, and social aspects; emotional regulation, or the ability to manage and control emotions; cognitive functioning, reflecting the capacity to think, reason, and make decisions rationally; social adjustment, highlighting the ability to adapt and function well in social contexts; and personal acceptance, which refers to embracing and accepting oneself. These insights underscore the interconnected nature of mental health and well-being, emphasizing both internal and external factors that contribute to overall well-being.

Needs To Be Mentally Healthy:

The findings indicate that youth have both intangible and tangible needs related to environmental, personal, and lifestyle factors in order to maintain mental health. Some participants mentioned the need for hobbies, sports, art events, therapy, travel, and a steady income, while others emphasized the importance of justice, a nurturing environment, moral external influences, freedom from addictions, avoiding overthinking, healthy relationships, and inner peace. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle, managing stress, and feeling secure and content were also highlighted as crucial elements for mental well-being.

The key themes identified include environmental factors, such as a healthy growth environment and a morally supportive external environment; personal factors, including freedom, the absence of addictions, and the ability to avoid overthinking; interpersonal relationships, emphasizing love, respect, understanding, and healthy communication; lifestyle factors, like engaging in hobbies, sports, art, and music, and fostering inner peace; and ideal life conditions, including fulfilling work and low levels of stress and anxiety. Participants also noted that cultivating love, understanding, and social connections, along with pursuing fulfilling work and activities, can significantly contribute to psychological well-being.

Necessary Knowledge and Skills to Protect Mental Health:

The findings reveal that a variety of personal skills and strategies are essential for youth to protect their mental health. These include the ability to think independently, express oneself, manage emotions in challenging environments, and practice self-care through activities like exercise and healthy eating. Self-awareness, communication skills, empathy, and the capacity to maintain perspective, without becoming overly invested in every situation, are also vital. Effective problem-solving, emotional regulation, and boundary-setting were identified as key skills. Additionally, staying socially connected, keeping up with current events, and being open to personal growth and new experiences further support mental health.

When facing adversity, the ability to analyze the situation objectively, remain calm, and create new opportunities was considered invaluable. Participants also emphasized the importance of seeking professional support when needed. Maintaining a balanced lifestyle and managing stress emerged as crucial elements for mental well-being. The key themes identified include self-expression, emphasizing the need to express one's thoughts and ideas; emotional regulation, focusing on managing oneself in distressing environments; self-awareness and interpersonal skills, highlighting the importance of self-knowledge, communication, self-esteem, and empathy; adaptability and acceptance, the ability to not take everything too seriously and adapt; and resilience and positivity, the capacity to navigate adversity and create new opportunities.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

The findings indicate that personal, environmental, and financial conditions significantly affect the mental health of youth. Stressful environments that exceed one's capacity, negative comments from people in the inner circle, and the negative impact of social media were all identified as key environmental factors contributing to mental distress. Adverse daily experiences, social pressure, and lack of communication further exacerbate mental health struggles. Dealing with unsuitable people and being ignored or dismissed, particularly regarding one's intelligence, thoughts, and aspirations, can lead to intense anger and frustration.

On the personal side, factors such as past failures, self-criticism, and feelings of inadequacy were noted as contributors to stress, anxiety, and unhappiness. Dwelling on negative emotions, pessimism, and an

inability to say no further intensify these feelings. Irregular sleep, bad habits, and introversion were also highlighted as harmful to mental health. Additionally, financial difficulties, economic hardship, and work-related stress were noted as significant stressors.

The key themes identified include stressful environments, where demanding surroundings exceed one's coping capacity; financial difficulties, such as economic hardship causing distress; feelings of inadequacy, stemming from fear of judgment, mistakes, and perceived incompetence; lack of belonging and worthlessness, arising from unfavorable conditions and feelings of not fitting in; and negative social feedback and impacts, particularly from the inner circle and the adverse influence of social media. These findings underscore the complex interplay of personal, environmental, and financial factors that negatively impact mental health.

How The Current World Events or Social Changes Affect Mental Health:

The findings reveal a range of perspectives on how global developments and events affect individuals' mental health and well-being. Some participants reported feeling deeply impacted, experiencing heightened anxiety, hopelessness, and a diminished sense of agency in response to negative global trends such as natural disasters, wars, economic instability, and social upheaval. Others attempted to maintain a more neutral stance, recognizing the potential emotional turmoil but consciously avoiding excessive exposure to distressing news. A few participants expressed a philosophical acceptance of the cyclical nature of global change, seeing current turbulence as a necessary precursor to transformation.

The key themes identified include emotional responses, reflecting the various emotional reactions participants have to world events; coping strategies, outlining the different ways individuals try to manage the impact of global changes; worldview and beliefs, showing participants' perspectives on the state of the world; sensemaking and adaptation, which involves efforts to understand and adjust to changing circumstances; and social and economic concerns, highlighting participants' worries about societal and economic issues. These insights underscore the diverse ways in which individuals process and respond to the complex global challenges shaping their mental health and well-being.

Overcoming High Levels of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Or Other Psychological Problems:

The findings indicate that youth employ a variety of strategies to cope with difficult situations and emotions. These strategies include addressing the root cause of the problem, engaging in distracting

activities, focusing on positive aspects, and immersing oneself in work. Practicing self-care through activities such as exercise, meditation, or spending time with loved ones is also a common approach, as is seeking professional help from therapists or counselors. Some participants find it helpful to physically remove themselves from the situation or withdraw to reflect and process their emotions.

The key themes identified include problem-solving approaches, which focus on addressing the root cause of issues; emotional regulation, which involves techniques for managing and calming emotional states; social support, where participants seek help and connection from others to cope with difficulties; distraction and avoidance, where individuals engage in activities or behaviors to divert attention from problems; and self-reflection and introspection, which involves thoughtful contemplation to process and understand experiences. These findings highlight the diverse methods youth use to navigate challenging emotions and situations, emphasizing both proactive and reflective approaches to mental well-being.

Conclusion:

The survey results reveal that the youth perceive mental & well-being as a statement of an ability or a capability and in general, the ability to cope with life's challenges, manage emotions, and maintain harmonious relationships. They have tangible needs such as doing sports, having a steady income, or going to therapy as well as intangible needs such as justice, avoiding overthinking, and inner peace to be mentally healthy. The results showed that a range of personal skills and strategies are necessary for youth to protect their mental health. The personal (i.e. overthinking, feeling inadequate, bad habits, etc.), environmental (being ignored or dismissed, lack of communication, negative comments of the people in the inner circle, etc.), and financial conditions (i.e. economic difficulties, financial problems, etc.) negatively affect the mental health of youth. In addition, current world events or social changes affect the mental health of most of the youth negatively. The youth employ various strategies to cope with difficult situations and emotions to overcome high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems from problem-solving approaches to social support.

Results for the focus group procedure (Mental Health)

The focus group session was conducted online via the Zoom platform and lasted for 45 minutes. It was held in Turkish, with 7 participants and 2 moderators. One moderator managed the general flow of the session, while the other handled technical tasks, such as starting the session, ensuring the recording was functioning, handling transcription, and managing time. The participants were university students aged

between 22 and 28, with 3 women and 4 men. The session was recorded using Zoom's recording feature, and after the session, the audio was transcribed using the MS Office 365 program's dictate feature. The questions from the mental health online questionnaire were used as the basis for the discussion.

The common and different points of view on the questions:

The participants generally shared a common viewpoint that mental health is closely tied to daily life issues. They provided various examples, such as the impact of social media posts and physical conditions, which influence their mental well-being. However, their perspectives diverged when it came to overcoming mental health challenges like high stress or depression. Solutions ranged from avoiding overthinking to seeking therapy. Despite these differences, the most widely accepted strategy for overcoming mental health problems was sharing emotions and learning how to express them effectively.

The group interaction observation:

The group interaction was highly participatory, with participants actively engaging in the discussion and expressing enjoyment of the topic. At the end of the session, they even asked relevant questions to the moderator, showing their interest in the subject. Additionally, the participants demonstrated a good understanding of the medical aspects of mental health and were aware of the connection between physical health and mental well-being, as reflected in their thoughtful responses to the questions.

Perceptions of mental health & wellbeing:

Participants demonstrated that they perceive mental health together with various parameters. Mostly, they perceive mental health as a reaction to daily life issues. They see mental health as a changing state, affected by various conditions. In addition, it has been observed that they see the conditions affecting mental health as a part of the concept. They described mental health with some other parameters such as physical health, the circumstances they are in, and the people near them. When it was asked what mental health & well-being to mean to them, they explained what makes them well or not. Participants consider mental health in terms of the medical aspect and the correlation between physical health and mental health.

Needs to be mentally healthy:

Participants had various opinions about the need to be mentally healthy. They were not on the common side. One participant mentioned that the main point was to accept life as it was. Another participant agreed with the idea of acceptance but stated that it could not be easy for every time and could have the experiences that made it impossible. One other participant also disagreed with the idea by mentioning other techniques were needed, and the main point was our interpretation of the life issues. A similar contrast between participants appeared in another comment, too. One participant said not thinking so much was the need to be mentally healthy. Another participant disagreed with this opinion and mentioned that sometimes, it was necessary to think about all aspects of the issues, so not thinking so much was not the need to be mentally healthy by explaining her real-life example to reinforce her idea. Other participants stated that what is needed is to look at the situation from a positive perspective and occupy oneself with things that make one happy, respectively.

Necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health:

Most of the participants concentrated on abstract concepts. One participant focused on sharing emotions and learning how to do it for the necessary knowledge and skills to protect mental health. She also correlated this with having people around her who will listen to her, who will not judge her, and with whom she can express herself easily. Most of the participants accepted her correlation. One participant advocated that hearing how other people who had similar experiences with him overcame mental problems is necessary knowledge to protect mental health. Another participant disagreed with this idea by mentioning that every person had a unique point of view, even if they had the same experiences. Only one participant focused on a tangible element, such as sports. She mentioned doing some sports is necessary to protect mental health.

Conditions Negatively Affecting Mental Health:

The participants mentioned several conditions such as social media, physical condition, people around them, and the environment they live in. They think that all these conditions affect their mental health. Besides this, they discussed the medical aspects of mental health. One participant focused on psychological disorders and their genetic aspects as the conditions that negatively affect mental health. He talked about people who were genetically predisposed to a psychological illness and about those who were ill and treated for it.

How the current world events or social changes affect mental health:

The participants evaluated the current world events or social changes similar to the conditions that negatively affect mental health. This question was not directly asked to the participants but, while the group was discussing the brain's healing power for mental health at the end of the session, they also focused on some current events and social changes, and their effect on mental health. At that point, one participant mentioned digital detox events and explained why he made it and how it affected his mental health.

Overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems:

The participants mentioned several activities for overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems. These included going to therapy, practicing meditation, adopting a positive point of view, engaging in sports, staying busy with activities that bring happiness, not postponing emotions, and avoiding overthinking. These strategies reflect a diverse range of approaches to managing mental health challenges.

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group:

The key themes and insights gained from the focus group include several important perspectives on mental health. First, mental health as a changing state emerged as a key theme, with participants recognizing that mental health is influenced by various conditions, ranging from social media posts and physical health to daily life issues and current world events. Participants also demonstrated a clear knowledge of the mental health and physical health correlation, acknowledging the mutual effects these two aspects have on each other. Regarding overcoming postponing emotions, nearly the entire group agreed on the importance of sharing feelings and not postponing them, recognizing the negative impact that ignoring or delaying emotional expression can have on mental health. This shared awareness highlights the group's understanding of the importance of timely emotional processing for mental well-being.

Teams & Groups & Communities & Localization

The ELNN project aims to connect youth communities across Europe and provide them with the resources to drive change in their local communities. To achieve this, ELNN has sought to build an online

youth community through its Discord channel. The ELNN Youth Hub is designed to engage young people across Europe by hosting weekly events and training sessions on debatable topics. However, engaging and motivating youth to actively participate has been a significant challenge for all partners. Several factors contribute to increasing active participation and motivation within groups, teams, and communities. One key factor is peer support. Encouragement and support from peers are essential in creating a safe and trusting space where individuals feel secure expressing themselves. In response, ELNN established the Discord team and ambassador model. The team launched several departments, including marketing, engagement, and external relations, with volunteers working in each area. Each partner youth community selected ambassadors for these departments, who then meet online on Discord to develop strategies and plans for their respective areas. This approach helps to empower youth, a key objective of the ELNN project.

Localization

Raising awareness of European opportunities and providing access to them is a core value of the ELNN Project. The ELNN Discord Youth Hub plays a key role in this by facilitating the partners' efforts to engage and channel their respective communities or relevant members. Through the Discord channel, various projects, events, and training sessions aimed at empowering youth across Europe are shared and announced, working to raise awareness of European opportunities and provide access to them. However, challenges in engaging youth on Discord have limited its effectiveness in this area. Additionally, the use of only one ELNN social media account in English proved insufficient in some partner countries, as local languages would be more effective for marketing and disseminating the project.

In response to these challenges, the localization of ELNN was discussed and agreed upon by participants during the Train of Trainers - NFE (Non-Formal Education), Community Engagement training course in April 2023. As a result, local social media accounts were created in countries like Türkiye and Romania, allowing all ELNN opportunities to be shared in their national languages. Furthermore, the Türkiye general channel was launched on the ELNN Discord Youth Hub to run activities in Turkish. This localization has significantly contributed to raising awareness of European opportunities and promoting the project more effectively in these regions.

Focus Group Event on ELNN Discord Channel (Quality Learning & Mental Health)

The ELNN project has proposed Discord, not only for community building but also for research activities and the development and implementation of educational content. In this perspective, the research team designed an online focus group event on the ELNN Discord Channel in September 2024. Although the event was composed as a part of ELNN Research, it also aimed to contribute to the dissemination and marketing of the project. Therefore, it was programmed as an interactive event rather than a traditional focus group session. The program flow included interactivity with the Mentimeter as an ice-breaker and a tool for engagement and getting participant opinions. The event was designed in two parts. The first part included the introduction, ensuring engagement and fun, and preparation for focus group sessions through Mentimeter. The second part included the room discussions as focus group sessions. The ELNN Discord Team managed the event in general. Participants were the members of the partner organizations' youth communities, representatives from the research and marketing teams of the project, and the ambassadors of the ELNN Discord Youth Hub. Before the event, the partner PUHU created a detailed event procedure and shared it with partners, and meetings were conducted with the Discord team and the ELNN Discord Youth Hub ambassadors. While considering the event is not a traditional focus group, the research and Discord team decided to give the moderator roles of the focus group room discussions to ambassadors. It was also part of empowering them as an objective of the project. Thus, the ambassadors were assigned to be facilitators or supporters of the event according to their choice. The event procedure was shared with the ambassadors, and they were informed of all event details.

The questions for the focus groups were selected from the online questionnaires of the Research Stage II. The selected questions are:

Quality Learning:

1. What conditions motivate you to learn?

2. Which skills do you think are important for you to acquire or develop today?

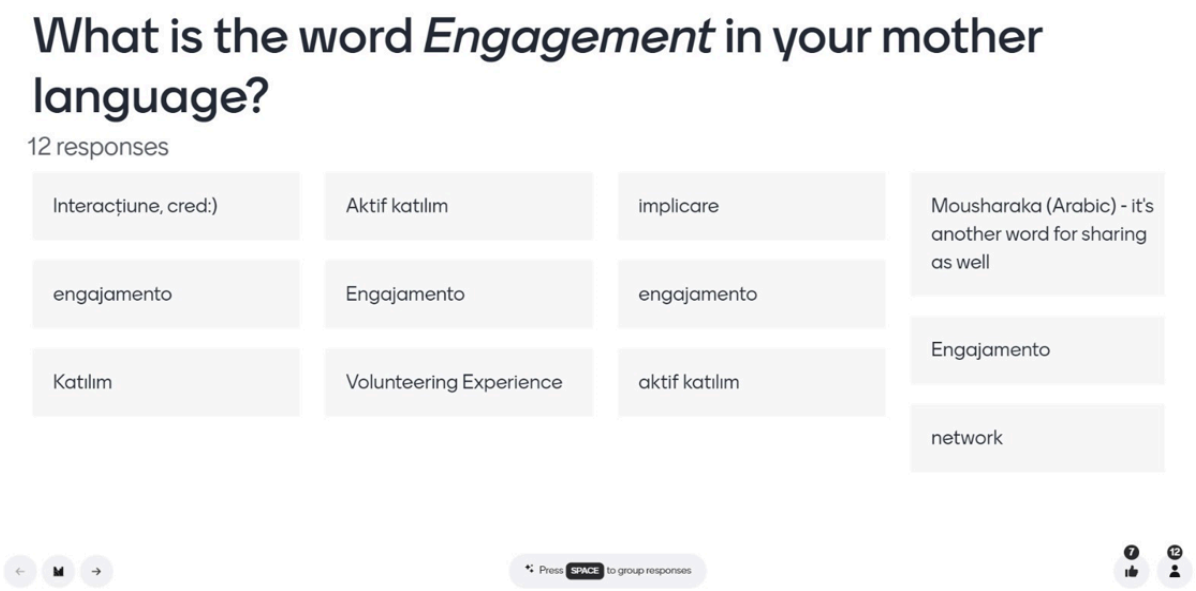
Mental Health:

3. What are the conditions that negatively affect your mental health?

4. How do you overcome high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems?

The event started with introduction and giving information through the consent form. Then the results of the research stage I was shared and the following Mentimer question was asked as an ice-breaker to ensure engagement with fun: What is the word Engagement in your mother language?

Figure 5: Mentimeter ice-breaker question

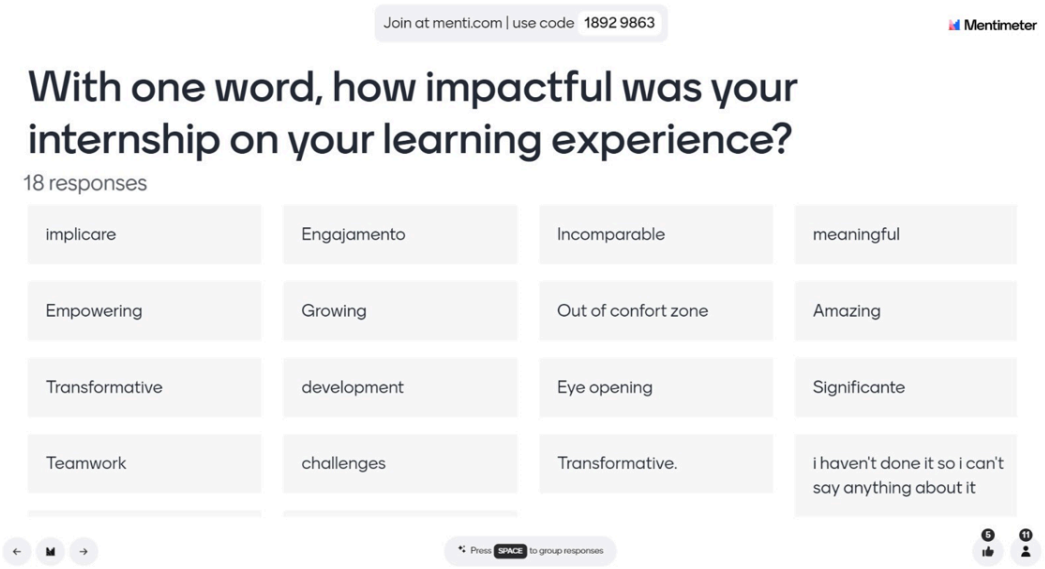


The ice-breaker question was successful. After that, the research team explained the goals and topics of the Research Stage II, and participants were prepared for the room discussions by getting their opinions through a Mentimeter. The discussion on the answers to the Mentimeter question in the event's main room warmed up the participants for the room discussions. Then, the Discord Team split the participants into two rooms for the focus group sessions. In each room, there was one ambassador as a moderator and a research team member. The focus group sessions in the rooms were carried out in two rounds. In the first-round quality learning questions, and the second round mental health questions were discussed. Each room discussion took nearly ten minutes for two questions on the two topics.

Results for the Focus Group Event on ELNN Discord Channel (Quality Learning & Mental Health)

The first part of the event was the initial phase of the focus group sessions. To prepare the participants to discuss the questions for quality learning in the rooms, the following question was asked through Mentimeter before splitting them into the rooms: With one word, how impactful was your internship on your learning experience?

Figure 6. Second Mentimeter Question



Some participants haven't done any internships. Thus, the Discord team suggested sharing the experiences of the ones who had completed the internship. The participant who also wrote the "Eye-opening" on Mentimeter (Figure 6) shared her experiences and explained why she wrote "Eye-opening". She said she had one short internship at a company that showed her the "bad side" and one at a volunteer project that showed the "good side". She explained her "bad side" experiences like not getting any feedback about her work although it was her first job, feeling alone while there were people around her due to not being cared for, and not learning anything for her career. On the other hand, for the "good side", she said to be supported whenever needed, have opportunities for her profession, and be let find her way.

In the second part of the event, the participants were split into rooms to discuss questions for quality learning and mental health in two rounds. Feedback was requested after the rounds. Participants send positive emojis appropriating the digital feedback.

The findings of the focus group rooms for mental health and quality learning were as follows.

Mental Health: The first discussion was about the conditions that negatively affect mental health. The participants in the two rooms focused on the stress factor and "fake" or negative people. In one room

participants clarified the "fake" people as people who talk behind each other's backs. Similarly, some participants in the other room also pointed out the things that affect their mental health negatively are people not having nice behaviors or not respecting others. Another factor was financial problems. Thus, two main conditions were revealed:

- Negative behaviors of the people: People not having nice behaviors or not respecting others, people who talk behind each other's back, people's judgment
- Stress: Stress from school due to teachers or personal concerns like a lot to learn or study, or the things happening out of your control

The second discussion was about how they overcome high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems. In this discussion, there were various responses such as sleeping, listening to music, focusing on the present, and not thinking about the past or future. When looking at the discussion in both rooms, talking with people or friends and doing activities like dancing were the common responses. In addition, one participant said to stop watching the news as a way of overcoming levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems. She pointed to especially the fake news. Thus, the responses revealed the following for overcoming high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, or other psychological problems:

- Doing some activities: Dancing, running, doing sport
- Talking with others: Talking with someone or friends, sharing thoughts.
- Busy with: Having a hobby, trying new things
- Focus on the present: Not thinking about the past or future, to be in the present
- Other: Sleeping, writing, being alone

Quality Learning: The question on the conditions motivating to learn was discussed in detail in one room whereas in the second room, the question on the important skills to acquire or develop today was focused on in detail. Although the moderators had both questions in their hands, within a short-time limit the group interaction created the focus on one question more than the other. It was one of the consequences of the focus group discussions, which is called group interaction, as mentioned in the focus group section of this document. The participant mostly mentioned a non-judgmental environment for learning motivation. They also talked about having more knowledge to create their best version. According to the group, humans can achieve the best version of themselves by learning which motivates

learning. Other opinions were having a goal, passion from the inside to learn, and curiosity. In the room where the conditions were discussed in detail, the moderator also asked in which context these needs motivated the group to learn, in a formal like university or a non-formal context. Two participants agreed that the learning system at schools and universities didn't meet the needs of people right now. Thus, they were less motivated at school than learn by themself through the resources on the internet. In the other room, the moderator also asked which one the participants preferred during learning, silence or white noise in the background like a piece of music. Some of them agreed on the music in the background. In this room, the group also discussed the focusing issue during learning and commented that they were challenged to be focused on something even if it was a sports activity.

As a result of the discussions at the rooms, he conditions motivating the learning were revealed as follows:

- Environment**:** Includes a non-judgmental environment, people help, friendly place
- More knowledge and the best version: Having more knowledge, achieving the best version of itself
- Curiosity and passion: To be interested in learning, the subject itself takes the attention of, passion from inside
- Having a goal: To have an objective or a goal

In the discussion on the important skills to acquire or develop today, the participant mostly focused on soft skills such as critical thinking, communication, and public speaking. Besides soft skills, teamwork and time management were the other focused ones. One participant especially mentioned the value of creativity in this age. According to his points of view, everything looks like each other today so being unique is very important and requires creativity. Another opinion was the importance of emotional intelligence, especially in the work environment

Thus, the following skills were revealed from the discussions:

- Soft skills: Includes critical thinking, problem-solving, strong communication, public speaking, adaptability
- Team-work
- Time management

Conclusion

The European Lead by Nature Network (ELNN) stands as a powerful collaborative platform bringing together diverse organizations across Europe to empower youth and drive social change. Launched in March 2023, the ELNN project aims to foster interdisciplinary cooperation to create sustainable, innovative solutions that promote youth engagement and leadership. This report presents the second stage of the ELNN Research, focusing on two critical EU Youth Goals—Youth Goal #5: Mental Health & Well-being and Youth Goal #8: Quality Learning.

Through ethnographic methods, including online questionnaires and focus groups, the research has provided valuable insights into the needs and experiences of youth across several European countries. The findings from both research stages (Stage I and Stage II) highlight common themes that resonate across countries, reinforcing the importance of addressing mental health and quality learning in youth policies and programs.

Mental Health and Well-being emerged as a central theme in the research, with findings indicating that social support, self-awareness, and coping strategies like mindfulness and physical activity were critical to mental health resilience. Participants across countries, including the Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, and Türkiye, noted that stress, societal pressures, and global crises were major challenges. At the same time, many youth preferred non-medical coping strategies such as therapy, mindfulness, and engaging in meaningful activities. These findings align with Youth Goal #5's focus on reducing stigma, improving mental well-being, and fostering social inclusion.

In relation to Quality Learning, the research highlighted the importance of lifelong learning, personal motivation, and mentorship across all participating countries. Respondents emphasized the need for a supportive environment that includes both human support (e.g., mentors, family) and technological tools. From the Czech Republic to Portugal, participants stressed the importance of adaptable learning strategies, with a particular focus on the development of soft skills such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and problem-solving. In countries like Lithuania and Romania, curiosity-driven motivation and the role of passionate mentors emerged as key factors for effective learning. These insights underscore the interconnectedness of quality education and mental well-being, with both areas being vital to youth empowerment.

The EU Youth Goals, reflected through the ELNN Research, emphasize the need for policies that promote social inclusion, mental health, and educational equity. The findings also underline the importance of engaging youth in shaping the future of these policies. By integrating these insights into ongoing and future initiatives, the ELNN network can continue to influence positive change across Europe.

The collaborative nature of the ELNN project is strengthened by its partner organizations, each contributing unique expertise. From INspire in the Czech Republic, which supports disadvantaged youth facing mental health challenges, to PUHU in Türkiye, which blends social sciences with technology, these organizations work together to advance the network's mission of fostering youth empowerment, inclusion, and sustainable development.

In conclusion, the ELNN project plays a pivotal role in shaping youth policies and programs that address critical issues such as mental health and education. The insights gathered from Stage II of the research serve as a foundation for further enhancing these policies and ensuring that youth are equipped to meet the challenges of the future. As the project continues, these findings will guide the development of innovative, youth-centered solutions across Europe.

References

1. Agar, M., & MacDonald, J. (1995). Focus Groups and Ethnography. *Human Organization*, *54*(1), 78-86.
2. Bacalso, C. & Moxon, D. (2018). *Education & Learning*. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/education-and-learning
3. Basarab, T. & O' Donovan, J. (2020). *Youth Work Esseantials*, Youth Partnership. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/90268416/057520-Youth-Work-Essentials-WEB.pdf/a3b32e6c-3c86-d317-7dab-c79b54eb2b92?t=1630581628000
4. Eriksson, Päivi, and Anne Kovalainen. *Qualitative Methods in Business Research: A Practical Guide to Social Research*. SAGE, 2015
5. EuroHealthNet (2023). *EuroHealthNet's input on the interim evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027*.

https://eurohealthnet.eu/wp-content/uploads/20230728_eurohealthnet_consultation_response_eu_youth_strategy.pdf

6. EU Council Resolution (2009), Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), 2009/C 311/01. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX %3A32009G1219%2801%29
7. ELNN (2023), Policy Recommendations For Youth Youth Report 2023/2024. https://www.elnn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Youth-Report-Policy-Recommendations.pdf
8. ELNN (2023), https://www.elnn.eu/about/
9. European Youth Forum (2021). *Structured Dialogue from A to Z toolkit for International Youth NGO's*. https://yeu-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SD-from-A-to-Z-YEU.pdf
10. European Youth Forum (2024). *EU Youth Dialogue*. https://www.youthforum.org/topics/eu-youth-dialogue
11. European Youth Portal(2024). *EU Youth Dialogue*. https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/euyouthdialogue_en#email
12. European Youth Portal(2024). *European Youth Goals*. https://youth.europa.eu/strategy/european-youth-goals_en
13. European Youth Portal(2024). *EU Youth Strategy*. https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en
14. European Youth Portal (2024). *Previous EU Youth Dialogue Consultations*. https://youth.europa.eu/get-involved/eu-youth-dialogue/previous-eu-youth-dialogue-consultations_en#email
15. Hart, Tabitha. "Online ethnography." *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods* (2017): 1-8. Jörg Matthes (General Editor), Christine S. Davis and Robert F. Potter (Associate Editors). 2017 JohnWiley & Sons, Inc. Published DOI: 10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0172
16. Kitzinger, J., & Barbour, R. (Eds.). (1999). *Developing focus group research: politics, theory and practice*. Sage.
17. Millen, D. R. (2000, August). Rapid ethnography: time deepening strategies for HCI field research. In *Proceedings of the 3rd conference on Designing interactive systems: processes, practices, methods, and techniques* (pp. 280-286).
18. Morgan, D. L. (1996). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (Vol. 16). Sage publications.

19. Moxon, D. & Barta, O. (2018). *Structured Dialogue Cycle VI Thematic Report: Education and Learning*. https://zenodo.org/record/3716194#.XnNyGaj0mUk, DOI:10.5281/zenodo.3716193.
20. Moxon, D. & Barta, O. (2018). *Structured Dialogue Cycle VI Thematic Report: Mental Health and Wellbeing*. https://zenodo.org/record/3716244#.XnN3XKj0mUk, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3716243.
21. Moxon, D. & Barta, O. (2018). *The VI Cycle of Structured Dialogue Consultation Introduction to the Final Reports*. https://zenodo.org/records/3716256, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3716256
22. Quinn, A. & Maraffa, F. (2023). *Youth Progress Index Exploring Social Factors In Youth Mental Wellbeing*, European Youth Forum and Social Progress Imperative. https://www.youthforum.org/topics/youth-progress-index
23. Skågeby, J. (2011). Online ethnographic methods: towards a qualitative understanding of virtual community practices. In *Handbook of research on methods and techniques for studying virtual communities: Paradigms and phenomena* (pp. 410-428). igi Global.
24. UNESCO (2023). *Quality and Learning Indicators*. https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/monitor-learning/quality-and-learning-indicators
25. UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report Team (2024). *Education for All: The Quality Imperative*, https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/efa-quality
26. United Nations (2015). *Sustainable Development Goals*. https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals
27. Vindrola-Padros, C. (2021). *Rapid ethnographies: A practical guide*. Cambridge University Press.
28. WHO (2021). *Making Every School A Health-Promoting School: Implementation Guidance*. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025073
29. World Economic Forum (2023). *The Future of Jobs Report 2023*. https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/
30. Youth Goals (2020). *Youth Goals*. https://youth-goals.eu/youthgoals
31. Youth Goals (2020). *#5 Mental Health & Wellbeing*. https://youth-goals.eu/yg5
32. Youth Goals (2020). *#8 Quality Learning*. https://youth-goals.eu/yg8
33. Youth Progress Index 2023, https://www.youthforum.org/topics/youth-progress-index