

# Child and Youth Well-Being on the European Political Agenda

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## POLICY TRENDS

### POLICY TRENDS ACROSS EUROPEAN MEMBER STATES

Our analysis suggests that policies are focused on the following areas

#### For young people

- High unemployment rates (Spain, Italy, Romania)
- Education and training
- Enhancing participation;
- Housing (Spain, Poland, Italy, Romania, Cyprus)
- Health, anti-risk, identifying young people heading for crime
- Leisure time (particularly focused on by youth workers).

#### For children

- child care (adjusted to parents' work time)
- support of parents: flexible working hours, parental leave entitlements, family benefits, childcare and family support services
- child protection: intervention and measures aimed at combatting violence and sexual abuse against children (Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden)
- child poverty
- child health (particularly obesity: UK)
- mental health: the particular focus here tended to be on the need to give this issue more attention
- children with physical and mental disabilities: the particular focus here tended to be on the need to give this issue more attention
- access to education
- early school leaving/ dropouts
- settlements with poverty problems fostering segregation (within city or urban-rural).

### COUNTRIES WITH AN INDEPENDENT YOUTH LAW

Country	Countries with a youth law or legislation that specifically refers to youth issues, or laws containing a section addressing the needs and rights of young people	Is there an institutionalized and regular cooperation between the ministry responsible for youth and the youth research community?
Austria	✓	//
Belgium	✓	✓
Bulgaria	✓	✓
Croatia	✓	✓
Czech Rep.	✓	✓
Denmark	//	//
Estonia	✓	✓
Finland	✓	✓
France	//	✓
Georgia	✓	✓
Germany	✓	✓
Greece	✓	✓
Hungary	✓	✓
Ireland	✓	//
Italy	//	✓
Latvia	✓	✓
Lithuania	✓	✓
Malta	✓	✓
Netherlands	✓	✓
Poland	✓	✓
Portugal	✓	✓
Romania	✓	//
Slovakia	✓	✓
Slovenia	✓	//
Spain	//	✓
Sweden	//	✓
UK (England, N. Ireland, Scotland)	✓	✓

### DEFICIENCIES IN REGARD TO THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF WELL-BEING

- Only little practical attention is given to subjective aspects of child well-being
- More concrete descriptions of the problems concerning children's rights are needed
- Child policies are too paternalistic and thus miss to empower children
- 'Average' young people are largely excluded from programs

### OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFICIENT WELL-BEING POLICIES

- Lack of specific and elaborated child and youth policy and law
- Discontinuity and fragmentation of policies
- Lack of interdepartmental collaboration
- Disparity between municipalities: regional differences
- Children and young people are the main victims of austerity policies
- More talk about outcomes rather than starting programmes
- No cooperation between ministries and research community
- Politicization of organizations (with close connection to political parties)

## AVAILABILITY OF DATA

### EXISTING DATA ON CHILD AND YOUTH WELL-BEING DIMENSIONS ACROSS THE EU

Our analysis of existing administrative and survey data revealed that the following aspects are covered well for EU countries

- Administrative data covering objective well-being aspects related to the state
- Quantitative, cross-sectional surveys in paper and pencil or face-to-face mode
- Combination of objective and subjective measurements of well-being
- Topics in surveys and administrative data: socio-demographics, economical aspects, education, health
- Personal relationships often covered in survey data
- Abstract concepts such as "happiness" often covered

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

- International Survey of Children's Well-Being (Jacobs Foundation): Including several countries; longitudinal design; large sample size; focus on children between 8 and 12 years; including several dimensions of well-being.



- Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (WHO): Including several countries; longitudinal design; large sample size; focus on children between 11 and 15 years; including several dimensions of well-being, objective as well as subjective measurements.



- Children's Well-Being in UK, Sweden and Spain (UNICEF): Focus on children between 8 and 13 years; including several, also psychological dimensions of well-being, objective as well as subjective measurements; taking regard of children's views.



- Identification and Prevention of Dietary- and Lifestyle-Induced Health Effects in Children and Infants (EU7): Including several countries; longitudinal design; large sample size; also bio data; including several dimensions of well-being, objective as well as subjective measurements; several methods for counteracting nonresponse.



### WHAT'S MISSING IN EXISTING DATA SETS?

- Not all EU countries are equally represented in data sets: small countries (Denmark, Ireland, Malta) and East European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania, Poland) provide significantly fewer data
- Children's and young people's views on well-being aspects are rarely included in studies
- Alternative survey modes allowing the implementation of child/teenager appropriate tools (such as avatars in the web mode) are not used
- Longitudinal studies are rarely used
- Topics in surveys and administrative data: environment, risk behaviour, safety, culture, participation, child abuse and neglect
- Psychological aspects of well-being
- Missing data on care leavers, impossible to track their pathways
- Only few studies that comprise children below the age of 11
- Vulnerable groups, e.g. children in homeless hostels, disabled children

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES ON CHILD AND YOUTH WELL-BEING

- Longitudinal studies in order to reflect children's/young people's life from a holistic perspective
- Covering also the early years of development (young children/pregnancy)
- Focusing not only on negative indicators, but also on positive ones
- Covering diverse well-being dimensions in depth
- Using mixed methods in order to
  - Take regard of children's/young people's views on well-being
  - Implement child appropriate measurements (e.g. observation in playing sessions)
- Any study should be accompanied by a professional monitoring systems that measures its actual policy impact