

Children and Young people's well-being in Greece

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Introduction

Our goals were to:

- ask different age categories of children and young people in Greece in order to explore the meanings they convey and the way they understand well-being;
- observe and unveil potential differences and/or similarities between children and young people regarding well-being;
- get knowledge of and gain experience on the difficulties and challenges of working with children and young people in order to have their views about their well-being and living conditions;
- bring up the issue of whether children's and young people's voice is actually heard within society.

Results

The vast majority of children were not familiar with the term 'well-being' and some of them did not understand the term 'quality of life', either. When we explained the terms, they agreed that quality of life first and foremost is related and defined by the **family relations and a healthy family environment**. They also suggested that **good relations with friends** consist of another very important factor which is related with well-being.

In their majority children identified happiness with **pleasure which is derived from everyday situations**. They mostly feel unhappy, stressed and moody when they have a lot of homework or when they have difficult tasks to cope with in school or even when they have a fight with friends. The overloaded everyday programme which includes not only school activities but also extra school work, usually stresses them. **Free time is of great value for them feeling satisfied and content as they have the opportunity to be engaged in outdoor activities and meet with their friends**

"As I grow older I understand better the problems which exist in the world and for that reason I am not as happy as I used to be" (Interview, Tina, female, 11 years old)".

Young people in Greece were familiar with the concept of well-being. The vast majority of young people agreed that people's quality of life is dependable on many factors; amongst them **good health** is characterised as the most valuable. **Familial relations** is one of the most important factors for a good life, as well as **interpersonal relations** and specifically relations with friends.

All the respondents agreed on the lack of free time. They stressed that society has put many expectations on them and they feel great pressure and stress due to a vast amount of activities they are engaged in. Almost all claimed that free time is significant in order to be able to relax, hang out with their friends and entertain themselves.

Young people who were active in different fields of civic engagement declared that their engagement in such groups has helped enormously in growing up, in communicating with other people, being more responsible and adopting a more positive view on life; thus, increased their life satisfaction. **Some of the respondents feel insecure about the accomplishment of their goals because they believe the economic crisis has narrowed their potentials and opportunities. For that reason they consider seriously going abroad for studies and/or work.**

Children and young people of all ages (10-12 to 16-20) are feeling that their voices aren't heard by the politicians and the government and that as they almost all argued the older ones, 'the grownups', are not interested about children and young people and that they don't care about the problems they face.

"I think that our voice isn't heard. The grownups believe that because we are children they shouldn't pay attention to us. I would like my opinion to be taken into consideration because sometimes I think I am right" (Interview, Eleftheria, female, 11 years old).

"The state should listen to us, because we say important things, but usually the older ones are not listening to children's voices, they don't hear their ideas" (Interview, Evi, female, 11 years old).

Conclusions

- A longitudinal study on children's and young people's well-being is considered important and many expressed their interest to participate.
- Despite some everyday difficulties, children 10-12 years old mentioned that they are not stressed and anxious about the future.
- Young people of 15-16 years old expressed their anxiety for the tough programme they have at school and their disappointment for the continuous changes of the curriculum and the examination procedure to enter the university. Those already at the university (18-19 years old) expressed the additional anxiety of unemployment. Many of them said that they are seriously thinking of migrating abroad for studies and afterwards for work, while in some cases their own parents are supporting them to leave.
- All the respondents argued that their voices are not actually heard of by the politicians and those responsible for their lives.

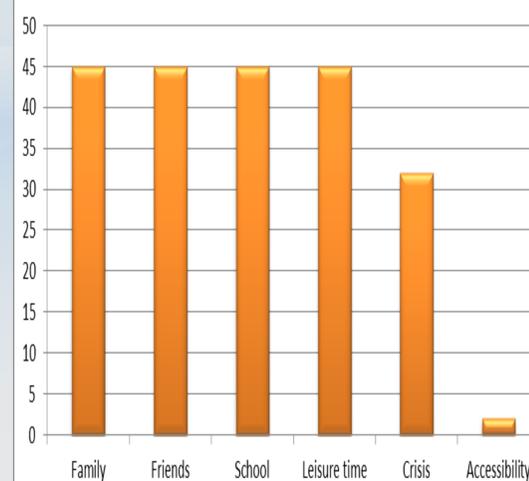
Materials and methods

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with children and young people from two contrasting schools of Athens:

- The 1st Experimental Primary School of the University of Athens (Marasleio School), a public school, located in the centre of Athens;
- Plato Schools, a private school, located in the suburbs of Athens

6 interviews and 1 focus with children, 10-12 years old; 5 interviews and 1 focus with adolescents, 15-16 years old; 5 interviews and 1 focus with young people engaged in some sort of social, political, civic etc. activity, 16-19 years old, and 5 interviews and 1 focus with young people not organised in any kind of social, political, civic etc. activity, 16-20 years old.

Factors influencing well-being of CYP in Greece (n=45)



Further information

For more information see the project's website fp7-myweb.eu and the Greek page <http://fp7-myweb.eu/greece>