

What Should We Know About Child Well-Being?

How would the EU benefit from the survey proposed by the MYWeB project?

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 tie (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

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