

Wellbeing of youths (15-24 years old) living in the Cluj Metropolitan Area

Health – Education – Agency – Enabling environment

Oana Blaga, Alexandra Onișor, Carina Țîntăș, Marina Dascăl



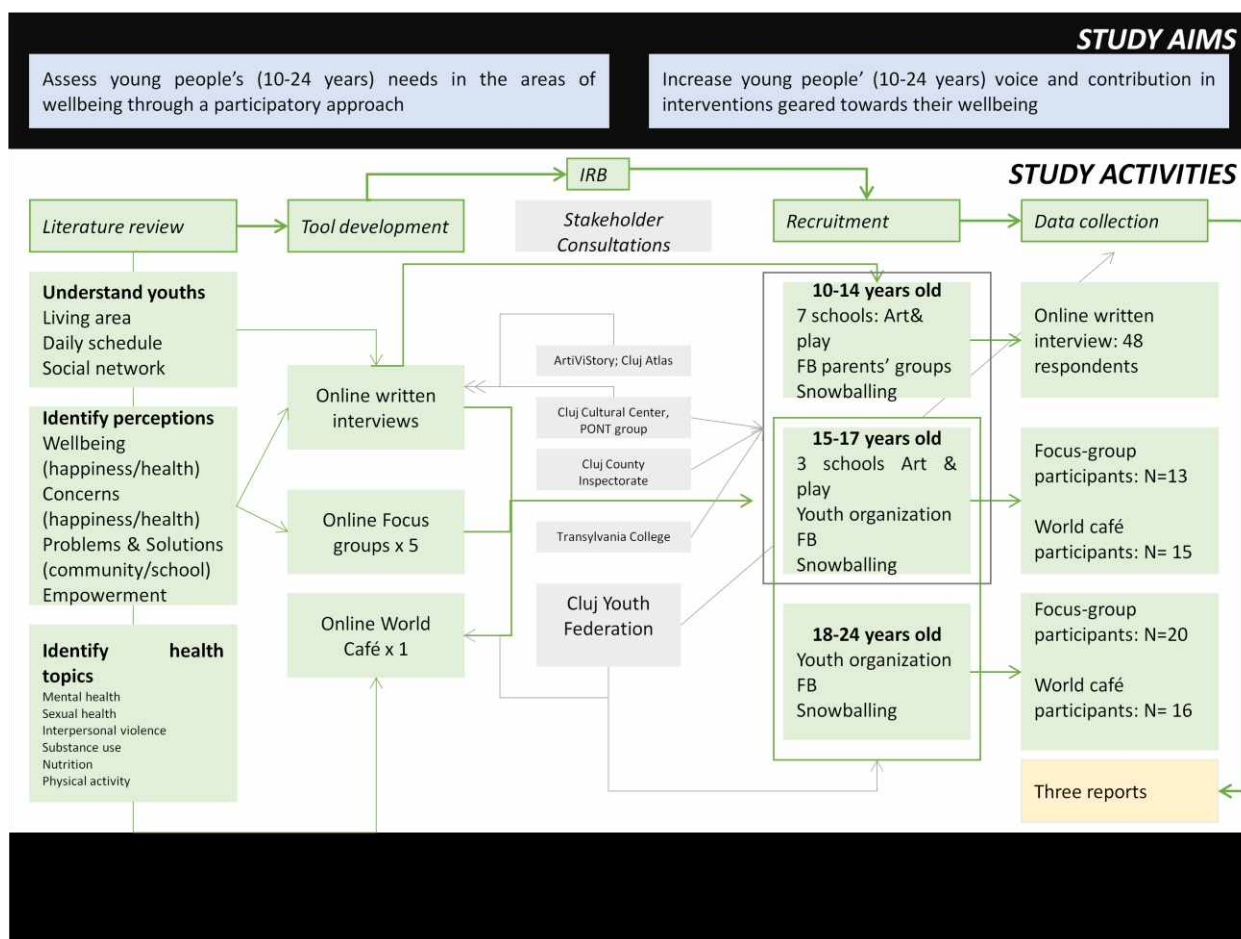
2020

Summary

The current report is a deliverable of the project „*Interdisciplinary study on young people’s needs and opportunities assessment in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (LEAP)*” implemented during January - September, 2020 with the support of the Department of Public Health and Political Science Department-FSPAC-Babes-Bolyai University, PONT Group and Cluj Cultural Center.

The LEAP project uses a rapid participatory assessment to identify needs, gaps and opportunities of the young population (10-24 years old) living in the Cluj Metropolitan area and comprised the following components: 1. stakeholder analysis; 2. quantitative study; 3. qualitative study; 4. stakeholder consultations; 5. systemic gap identification; 6. policy analysis and 7. a priority setting exercise.

The Qualitative Study of the LEAP project was employed during January – May 2020 and aimed to engage youths in identifying their needs and opportunities by using three methodologies: I. An online written interview addressing wellbeing with adolescents aged 10-14, II. Online focus-groups addressing wellbeing with youths aged 15 to 24 and III. An online World Cafe session addressing six health related topics with youths aged 15 to 24 years old.



The results presented in this report emerged from the 2nd component of the Qualitative Study – the online Focus-Group discussions addressing wellbeing.

FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSIONS: Brief study overview

Targeted population: adolescents and youths aged 15 to 24 living in the Cluj Metropolitan area

Objectives:

1. Understand adolescents' and youths' perspectives on wellbeing
2. Identify adolescents' and youths' perceptions with regards to their needs and solutions in addressing them
3. Empower adolescents and youths' in identify and solving the problems they confront with

Topics assessed:

1. Identify how adolescents and youths perceive wellbeing and the factors influencing wellbeing. This topic is promoted in the WHO AA-HA guidance. To identify perception on wellbeing, this guidance suggests asking adolescents and youths their perception of health and happiness
2. Identify adolescents' and youths' needs and problems. To identify needs and problems, the AA-HA guidance suggest to explore with adolescents and youths their main concerns about health and about happiness.
3. Identify solutions envisioned by adolescents and youths. To identify solutions, the AA-HA guidance suggest to explore with adolescents and youths the types of actions they believe can be implemented in the schools and communities to improve their wellbeing
4. Empowerment. To empower adolescents and youths in identifying and addressing their problems the AA-HA guidance suggest to explore how the young population can engage in the community

Tool: A semi-structured focus group guide was developed following the above 5 topics. The focus-group guide comprised the following main questions (followed by additional facilitating questions):

1. What is wellbeing?
2. What problems are youths facing?
3. What solutions can address the problems youths are facing?
4. What can you do to address youths' problems and improve their wellbeing?

Participants' recruitment: After obtaining the ethics' committee approval (IRB-PH Protocol #2020-200330-002), a recruitment form was developed online and a link + a text were disseminated using the following methods:

1. A snowballing technique.
2. Online promotion: the online recruitment form was promoted once a week for three weeks on the Facebook page of the Department of Public Health
3. Most importantly, a collaboration was set with the Cluj Youth Federation. This youth organization had a major role in recruiting participants through their Facebook page and through the personal engagement of Paul Marc and Georgiana Oltean in the recruitment process

Data collection: Five focus-group discussions took place online via Zoom between May 15 – May 27, 2020. Each focus group lasted between 60 to 120 minutes and was audio-recorder.

Data analysis: Audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo 11 Pro. Thematic analysis was employed and both deductive and inductive coding was used by two coders.

Deductive coding means that you start with a predefined set of codes. For this analysis we predefined codes based on the wellbeing framework that the LEAP consortium agreed upon, a framework that focuses on both the subjective and the objective categories of wellbeing.

OBJECTIVE WELLBEING

HEALTH

Individual and social determinants of health

Individual characteristics and stress; Home environment; Peer groups; Legislative issues; Community health

Health promoting and health risk behaviours

Eating; Exercise; Sleep patterns; Substance use; Injuries and interpersonal violence; Sexual behaviour

Health problems

Communicable and non-communicable diseases
Mental health
Sexual health

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Infrastructure

Youth centres, information points and hubs; Play and leisure; Housing infrastructure; Learning and working environment; Mobility and transport

Community services

Health/Social services; Educational services; Youth Information Systems

Policy framework

Youth Rights; Youth funding; Strategy, action plans and other policies

AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

Supportive relations/autonomy support

Home; School; Peer groups; Community; Social and professional networks

Opportunities for social-cultural-civic engagement

Culture; Civic engagement; Free time; Sports; Volunteering; International outlook

Participation and Leadership

Participatory processes; Youth organizations (formal and informal); Leadership support

AND LEARNING

Academic achievement School environment

Peer relations; Teacher-student relation; Gender/Ethnic equality; Education libraries; Digital tools and solutions

Non-formal education

Soft skills: creativity, collaboration, problem solving, communication; Recognition

Future of work

Vocational training

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

Life satisfaction

Affective balance

Results: The following pages of the report present the Focus-Group discussions results grouped in the five domains of wellbeing (Subjective wellbeing; Health; Education; Agency and Environment) and in two sections:

Perceptions of adolescents living in the Cluj Metropolitan Area (15 – 17 years old)

Perceptions of emerging adults living in the Cluj Metropolitan Area (18-24 years old)

Perceptions of adolescents living in
the Cluj Metropolitan Area
(15 – 17 years old)

„I just want to say that if we look at the teacher profession, it is the most important because there's where it all begins. And once we capitalize on it, then there will be other (positive) consequences.”

15 years old young woman living in Floresti, Cluj Metropolitan Area

I. RESULTS

1. Socio-demographics

Our project has sparked the interest of 67 parents who provided their written consent for their children aged 15-17 to participate in our project. In total, 65 young people aged 15-17 have expressed their interest to participate in the qualitative research component of the LEAP project, by filling out our assent form. Out of these, 85% were females, 54% were currently living in Cluj-Napoca, and 97% of them were of Romanian ethnicity.

Table 1. Socio-demographics of children aged 15-17 (N=65) who pre-registered to participate in the project/ offered their assent

		<i>N</i>	%
Gender	Female	55	84.62
	Male	10	15.38
Age	15	15	6.15
	16	24	1.54
	17	26	40.00
Ethnicity	Romanian	63	96.92
	Hungarian	0	0.00
	Roma	0	0.00
Residence	City of Cluj-Napoca	35	53.85
	Commune near Cluj-Napoca	30	46.15
Communes	Apahida	1	1.54
	Caianu	1	1.54
	Cămărașu	1	1.54
	Caseiu	1	1.54
	Cojocna	1	1.54
	Comuna Manastireni	1	1.54
	Cuzdrioar	1	1.54
	Dej	3	4.62
	Feleacu	1	1.54
	Floresti	5	7.69
	Gilau	6	9.23
	Jucu de Mijloc	1	1.54
	Mica	1	1.54
	Sălicea	1	1.54
	Savadisla	1	1.54
Turda	5	7.69	
Cluj-Napoca neighborhood	Andrei Muresanu	1	1.54
	Borhanci	1	1.54
	Bulgaria	1	1.54
	Europa	1	1.54
	Centru	4	6.15
	Dambul Rotund	1	1.54
	Garii	1	1.54
	Gheorghieni	5	7.69

	Grigorescu	2	3.08
	Herculane	1	1.54
	Manastur	12	18.46
	Zorilor	5	7.69
School	Colegiul de Muzică "Sigismund Toduță"	3	4.62
	Colegiul National "George Baritiu"	4	6.15
	Colegiul National "Emil Racovita"	3	4.62
	Colegiul Național "Mihai Viteazul"	5	7.69
	Colegiul National "George Cosbuc"	1	1.54
	Colegiul National Pedagogic "Gh.Lazăr"	10	15.38
	Colegiul Tehnic „Ana Aslan"	4	6.15
	Colegiul Tehnic "Anghel Saligny"	3	4.62
	Colegiul Tehnic de Comunicatii "Augustin Maior"	2	3.08
	Liceul Teoretic "Gelu Voievod"	4	6.15
	Liceul cu Program Sportiv	3	4.62
	Liceul de arte vizuale "Romulus Ladea"	3	4.62
	Liceul de Coregrafie și Artă Dramatică "Octavian Stroia"	3	4.62
	Liceul Tehnologic "Constantin Brâncuși"	6	9.23
	Liceul Teoretic "Eugen Pora"	2	3.08
	Liceul Teoretic "Lucian Blaga"	1	1.54
	Liceul Teoretic "Nicolae Bălcescu"	1	1.54
	Liceul Teoretic "Onisifor Ghibu"	4	6.15
	Raluca Ripan	1	1.54
	Seminarul Teologic Ortodox Cluj-Napoca	2	3.08

Regarding the sample of subjects aged 15-17 who have participated in focus groups, most were females, were 17 years old, all were of Romanian ethnicity, and 77% were living in Cluj-Napoca, in the Manastur or Gheorghieni neighborhoods.

Table 2. Sociodemographics of children aged 15-17 who participated in focus groups (N=13)

		<i>N</i>	%
Gender	Female	11	84.62
	Male	2	15.38
Age	15	2	15.38
	16	5	38.46
	17	6	46.15
Ethncity	Romanian	13	100.00
	Hungarian	0	0.00
	Roma	0	0.00
Residence	City of Cluj-Napoca	10	76.92
	Commune near Cluj-Napoca	3	23.08
Communes	Dej	1	7.69
	Floresti	1	7.69
	Gilau	1	7.69
Cluj-Napoca neighborhood	Andrei Muresanu	1	7.69
	Gheorghieni	3	23.08

	Manastur	4	30.77
	Zorilor	1	7.69
School	Colegiul National "George Cosbuc"	1	7.69
	Colegiul National Pedagogic "Gh.Lazăr"	3	23.08
	Colegiul Tehnic de Comunicatii "Augustin Maior"	1	7.69
	Liceul cu Program Sportiv	2	15.38
	Liceul de arte vizuale "Romulus Ladea"	2	15.38
	Liceul de Coregrafie și Artă Dramatică "Octavian Stroia"	1	7.69
	Liceul Tehnologic "Constantin Brâncuși"	1	7.69
	Seminarul Teologic Ortodox Cluj-Napoca	1	7.69

2. Subjective wellbeing

2.1. Young people's definition of wellbeing

Different from their counterparts aged 18-24, the youth aged 15-17 who participated in our focus groups have concentrated their definitions of wellbeing around words such as „stability” and „support”. In addition, they emphasized the importance of family and friends in their wellbeing and focused less on financial aspects. Yet, these were covered by mentions of assets to which youth should have access to, for them to be able to grow in an environment in which their „focus should be only on attaining my objectives, and nothing else”. Thus, the financial aspect of wellbeing was implied. What is interesting to notice, what the fact that wellbeing was perceived as a way of living, not an end point by one focus group participant: “wellbeing is given by all the activities that we do to get the way of life that we want. In other words, it is a process... a daily process, our daily activities that lead to our way of life”.

Some of the most emblematic quotes emerging from data analysis are included in the table below.

a state in which everything is good and thus your emotions must be the same... and I do not know how to explain this connection between what you feel as an emotion and the state you have because it seems to me that they are about the same thing.	Male, aged 15-17
I'm thinking about a good mood. Somehow a... fulfillment, a happiness of the soul	Female, aged 15-17
a calm mood... usually when I sit reading somewhere outdoors. I think that's the most important thing for me	Female, aged 15-17
for me, wellbeing is about doing something that makes you happy. I mean, enjoying the moment. I don't know... to be happy	Male, aged 15-17
mental comfort, living in the city of Cluj. Or I don't know, doing certain activities in the city. So is mental and emotional comfort, which has to do with contact with certain people or certain institutions	Female, aged 15-17

all the activities we do to get the lifestyle we want. I mean, it's a process in which ... a daily process, our daily activities that lead to our way of life, that is, the way we want it.	Female, aged 15-17
...you have all the conditions necessary for health. That is, when I think of wellbeing, I think of the wellbeing of learning. In order to be able to learn, you have to have an environment in which to learn, you have to have food, you have to have a family. I'm thinking of having certain resources necessary for you and more than that, when we have those resources we can say that wellbeing can last ... to do the things we like and that make us feel good	Female, aged 15-17

2.2. Factors influencing young people's wellbeing

The process of data coding for the information collected from youth aged 15-17 during focus groups rendered six main themes:

- access to resources as a prerequisite of wellbeing and as a means for them to be able to engage in the activities and the hobbies that they enjoy.
- mental health, with a focus on lack of self-trust and high anxiety levels, as well as lack of understanding and support from parents.
- the liberty to decide for oneself as a central pillar of wellbeing.
- The quality and extent of social relations with peers.
- The effective use of technology and a healthy attitude towards technology as a transversal aspect of wellbeing.
- and the importance of the natural environment as an enabler of wellbeing.

What was interesting to notice in the data was the fact that female participants tended to mention again and again the role of the family when referring to social relations as a factor that impacts wellbeing, while male participants most often mention their peers when talking about the impact of social relations on their wellbeing.

The six themes listed above are better described through the quotes included in the following table.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Quotes</i>	Participants' characteristics
<i>Access to resources</i>	when I'm thinking of well-being, I am thinking of the wellbeing of learning. To be able to learn, you have to have an environment in which to learn, you have to have food, you have to have a family. I'm thinking of having some of the resources you need..."	Female, aged 15-17
Lack of self-trust and high anxiety levels	...the fact that I'm not good enough at certain things, like ... to do very good homework.. or I don't know, not to have an "excuse Many of my worries are unjustified .. just because I have anxiety. If I think about it, logically speaking, I have no reason.	Female, aged 15-17
Lack of support from parents	From what I have seen with my friends, concerns stem from family problems, depression and other psychological issues, a little more provocative so to speak ... or from the simple ignorance of parents who say: you don't need to see a psychologist	Female, aged 15-17

Social relations	For me I think that people, the people who I am with affect my wellbeing, or generate a lack of wellbeing	Male, aged 15-17
the liberty to decide for oneself	When I'm free to do what I want and experiment on my own	Male, aged 15-17
The effective use of technology and a healthy attitude towards technology	I don't consider it (<i>the technology</i>) to be a problem of today's technology, but of the attitude we have towards technology, that we all know it can lead us to a rather unpleasant consequences: comparisons with celebrities, fear of communicating, lack of knowledge or communication skills. We observe an increased number of people experiencing social anxiety increases. I mean, they are afraid to approach other people. My opinion is that we need to know how to develop as human beings and how to control it so that we do not let ourselves be controlled by it..."	Female, 15-17
<i>The natural environment</i>	For me it would be to spend time in nature and not have any negative thoughts. To have a very calm inner state.	Female, 15-17

3. Health

3.1. How young people define health

When invited to offer their own definition of health/being healthy, we found out that the youth aged 15-17 had a very in-depth understanding of what health is. Most of their definitions contained words such as “equilibrium”, “peace of mind”, “mental health”, or the “health of our soul” (ro. sanatatea sufleteasca). What was interesting to notice was the pattern of thinking that the youth exhibited when talking about how mental health and physical health influence each other, and how their daily activities and schedule is linked to their mental health, for example. In addition, young people participating in our meetings were aware of the complex definitions and meaning of concepts such as health, wellbeing or happiness and suggested that “you need one meeting to discuss each of them individually. This is how complex they are”.

Some of the most emblematic definitions of health collected by youth aged 15-17 are included in the table below.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
to be a balance between the mental and physical part, because I think that all diseases and all physical ailments come very much from the mental part and the way we think. And if a person fails to be aware that his decisions have a great influence on her life and those around her, and does not differentiate between good and evil, she cannot be in balance with her body.	Female, aged 15-17
For me, health is related to mental health and physical health, but it	Female, aged 15-17

seems to me that the biggest problem I have had and see in many teenagers is the sleep program, honestly.	
But the health of the body is still related to mental health. I mean... before, when I was talking about mental and physical health, I was thinking that certain people have problems, especially in adolescence, with mental health. The moment you get hurt in love by a person or by a friend or a loved one, it seems that neither mental health nor physical health are well. Because you don't care anymore... we're also talking about hygiene and that's about health. You don't take care of yourself anymore, you don't eat properly, you don't think properly, you don't do things properly, you don't respect that program you had every day. What I wanted to say and what I wanted to add, is that all the words I said so far at the meeting are overly complex and have many areas. We should have one meeting to discuss each word. This is how complex they are	Female, aged 15-17

3.2. Factors influencing young people's health

Surprisingly, youth aged 15-17 have identified the lack of a sleeping schedule and the lack of time management as two important factors that impact their health. From the perspective of the wide variety of factors that have the potential to affect health, the lack of transversal skills (i.e. lack of time management) is a remarkable mention. This highlights even more the complex nature of health and the interdependencies between health and aspects of life, including the presence of various life skills. Also, for youth aged 15-17, health was influenced by a combination of physical activity and healthy nutrition – “you cannot be healthy if you only eat healthy but you do not engage in physical activity at all”. Finally, they mentioned substance use as a “form of entertainment” that has the potential to significantly affect health. The table below presents the most relevant quotes extracted from the data.

Theme	Quotes	Participants' characteristics
<i>Sleeping schedule and time management</i>	<p>for me, health is a matter of mental health and body health, but it seems to me that the biggest problem I have had and see in many teenagers is the sleep program, honestly.</p> <p>Time management... we can call it time management and when we skip meals, or when we have very big differences in our program, in the sense that we eat in the morning, we don't eat at all at noon and we only eat in the evening. Which does not provide balance to the body</p>	Female, aged 15-17
<i>Equilibrium between sports and nutrition</i>	The two main activities of being healthy are healthy eating and so to speak exercise... it means you can not be healthy if you eat daily	Male, aged 15-17

	from KFC or Mac but still do sports. Or you can't be completely healthy if you only eat healthy but you don't exercise at all	
<i>Substance use</i>	As far as I've seen, the surprising number of students who have access to drugs and what's more surprising, who choose to ... choose this form of entertainment, after all... and the very very limiting way in which it is seen. We are being learned that drugs are bad, that those who do drugs are bad and the discussion ends here.	Female , aged 15-17

4. Education

4.1. General aspects regarding the educational system

For youth aged 15-17, the most important aspects they talked about at the level of the educational system were: the relative status ascribed to “important” vs “unnecessary” school subjects by teachers and professors alike; the role of financial resources in deciding on a college youth want to attend; as well as the lack of future objectives and perspectives, which was also highlighted by the youth aged 18-24 as well.

Regarding the first theme, the students aged 15-17 do not agree with the artificial distinction between the “important” and “unnecessary”/unimportant school subjects that both their parents and teachers do. Second, they report that the selection of a college at the end of high school is heavily influenced by how much parents can afford to pay or not. This translated in youth selecting colleges what do not necessarily want to attend, but which they afford to attend. In turn, this generates lack of perspectives for the future and the inability to effectively integrate on the work market (also mentioned by youth aged 18-24).

Finally, related to the previous topic, is also the theme associated with the lack of perspectives regarding the youth’s future. Yet, the students suggested some solutions in this regard, more specifically to supported “to identify their passions and talents” trough “games and activities”.

The table below presents the most relevant quotes extracted from the data.

Theme	Quotes	Participants’ characteristics
Important vs unimportant school subjects	They pressures you so much.... what subjects are important and what subjects are useless, but you gain much more from a useless subject that you feel good about than from a subject that you feel stressed about	Male, aged 15-17
The importance of the financial aspect when selecting a future college to attend	the financial condition of parents who influences them a lot, at least, as I have seen with friends who now go to college. Many of their decisions are made based on how much their parents can afford to pay for college, especially if they do not get a scholarship. And	Female, aged 15-17

	this is why their options are limited	
Lack of future perspectives	<p>the future, what we will do next and how we will be ... what will I practice or where will I go, if I want to leave or if I want to stay,</p> <p>As for the future of young people, so to speak, they don't really know what they want to do in life and some of them are quite old. That is, they end up not doing the college they wanted or starting too late. Or even to never do what they really wanted and not know.</p>	Female, aged 15-17

4.2. The lack of courses teaching life skills

In connection to the changes suggested by youth 15-17 to the educational system, they mentioned several types of classes focused on developing life skills that would be needed to ultimately enhance the wellbeing of youth. When making suggestions, focus group participants made connections and parallels between how some classes unfolded for them and how they could have been organized and held so they could be of help for them. One of these classes mentioned several times by youth was the “entrepreneurial education” class they have in high school. The comprehensive list of classes mentioned by youth or extracted by the data coders from the accounts of youth regarding their needs is included below:

- Entrepreneurial mechanisms
- Dance lessons instead of sports classes
- First aid
- Motivation and personal development
- Time management
- Online presence
- Mental health
- Nutrition and health
- Career guidance
- How to effectively search for information

In the table below we included some of the most illustrative quotes collected from youth aged 15-17 regarding their needs of classes teaching life skills.

Quotes	Participant characteristics
For example, I had an entrepreneurial education class. There we were given to do a project. But the project was quite simplistic. And I was wondering if a private company could be involved, that would somehow facilitate the development of projects: for example, writing projects should be a skill that students could use. From 20 students in a class of 20, maybe 2 students want to go do this thing.	Male, aged 15-17
I, for example, when I have something to say in front of the class or something... Or to speak in front of people or to present something... I feel very anxious. Or when I know that they only have to listen to me... or present something. Many times I prefer not to get involved in many projects that although I would like, because	Female, aged 15-17

maybe I would fail or maybe they involve talking in from of people and I couldn't handle it.	
I meant that many young people have a problem with adapting to society. I mean, as it is now with technology, don't know how to communicate with other people, to adapt to being part of groups. Because they no longer develop communication skills... for example when they arrive in a room with 15 people and if they are like that, they don't know what to do. He looks at everyone and doesn't know what to say, what to do, because he doesn't communicate enough with other people.	Male, aged 15-17
but it seems to me that the biggest problem I have had and see in many teenagers is the sleep schedule, honestly. And this is also caused by stress and depression and anxiety and sometimes when we spend more time over our usual schedule, over bedtime to do your homework, because you did not know how to organize our time... and it seems to me that you have a much longer life, healthy life when you know how to organize yourself... it starts from our own desire to be healthy and from wanting to exceed our own limits and try to wake up earlier, to do sports, to eat healthy. For me, that's the most important thing.	Female, aged 15-17
Time management. I mean, we can call it time management and when we say we skip meals, or so we say, have very big differences in our program, in the sense that we eat in the morning, we don't eat at all at noon and we only eat in the evening. Which does not provide a good balance to the body.	Female, aged 15-17
At one point, from a certain year, you were changed from Physical education to dance lessons, a thing that a student seems to be more interested in: to learn to dance than to do sports. And then clearly, it was clear how much the atmosphere changed, that people started dancing and they were much happier, in a much better disposition, you can't come here with counter-arguments.	Female, aged 15-17
Let's not necessarily sum it all up to learning and sitting there with our heads between books... at least socialize, do some more spiritual things or things that simply make us happier in our lives.	Male, aged 15-17

4.3. Life-long learning programs for the teaching staff

The issue of life-long learning programs for the teaching staff was a common theme that emerged from both the discussions with 15-17 years old, but also from the focus groups organized with youth aged 18-24. The youngest group mostly focused in their account on describing the “aggressive and bad/ugly behavior” of their teachers and suggested the following courses that the teaching staff would need from their perspective:

- Child/adolescent psychology
- Communication & interaction with students
- Innovative/ interactive/ updated teaching methods, adapted to the needs of the students
- Personal development for the teaching staff

In the table below we included some of the most illustrative quotes collected from youth aged 15-17 regarding their opinion on the content of the life-learning programs targeting the teaching staff:

Quotes	Participant characteristics
yes, to understand each other better. I mean, I understand that you give me ... that you do the lesson and teach more, but understand me that maybe I had a practice until the evening and I don't have that much time, and then give me less homework. That's what I mean. That's just an example.	Male, aged 15-17
to observe the behavior of students for example, when a student is much more panicked from minor things, it means that he is much more anxious and then to leave him alone, not to press him on certain topics, if a student is stressed from anything or he is silent .. don't call him to the answer all the time that he will be in a state of discomfort that he will start crying there. But teachers have the impression that they have their method in which they know how to get what they want from the student and, in fact, touch the most painful points .. and it is a mess	Female, aged 15-17
It would be interesting if there were many more activities to increase children's interest in class. It depends, each teacher can make his class more interesting if he really intends to do so, with games or activities, to make students much more active. There are different alternatives, if they really need... there are books that specialize in alternative education and if they really want, they can find them. And besides, honestly, looking at what teachers I have, and I suspect that in every school there is that type of teacher, I would send them ... I would advise them to go if there were some specialized courses for teachers. Because a lot of them are aggressive, they are bad, they are, I don't know ... insensitive. They are mean to conclude. And I don't know, it would seem to me that there should be some specialized courses for teachers, that it seems to me that not everyone has that sensitivity and that pathos of teaching, as do teachers who are really interested in the subject ...	Female, aged 15-17
It would be much better if the teachers do some extra training on psychology and child psychology. A teacher came to us once, who is very good and who always arouses the interests of students, and said that: I do not understand how you have problems with the teachers and how they don't draw your attention... I read a book and learned how to get the attention and how to convince the children to do projects or things that I want them to do, you know? The problem seemed truly clear to me at the moment.	Female, aged 15-17
personal development for teachers in the first place, so that they can eventually practice it in class, to advise children.	Female, aged 15-17

4.4. Discrimination by the teaching staff and the role of the school psychologist

As opposed to their older counterparts, the subjects aged 15-17 who participated in our focus groups mentioned several aspects regarding the relationship between the teaching staff and students, which we now gathered under the larger theme of discrimination. Based on their accounts, students aged 15-17 highlighted that they face discrimination from teachers due to the grading system employed by each individual teacher, due to the fact that some teachers have preferred students and they treat other students with less attention, and due to the fact that they intend to freely express their opinions in class, and this is not appreciated/encouraged by teachers.

One important aspect also mentioned by youth was the lack of trust in school psychologist due to repeated breaches of psychologist-client confidentiality. In some schools, this led to a complete lack of trust in accessing the services of the school psychologist, even though the need for talking with a psychologist is stringent for some students who do not find understanding and support at home.

The table below presents the most relevant quotes extracted from the data.

Theme	Quotes	Participants' characteristics
The grading system	how to the grading system is made... plus we have other teachers who took our theses, did not correct them and graded them all with 10. It does not seem very correct	Female, aged 15-17
Preferred students	I, for example, feel very bad because it's not like... there are students who try to flatter the teachers and there are students who only learn very well and they don't try to make teachers to like them	Female, aged 15-17
Expressing their own opinions	if the teacher sees that you are starting to express your opinion or that you are behaving like a normal person who thinks on his own, believe me that even if you try to behave nicely with him, if he sees this difference, ... he will get upset or will he feel very offended or will he feel like „who this child is to start talking to me like this“?	Male, aged 15-17
Lack of trust in the school psychologist	many of my colleagues do not trust psychologists, respectively because they talked to psychologists about personal problems, things, and the psychologist talked to the teacher, the teacher talked to the parents...	Female, aged 15-17

4.6. School infrastructure and cleanliness

The topic of school infrastructure and cleanliness was also of interest in the discussions we had during our focus groups with youth aged 15-17. In terms of the available infrastructure, the students mentioned that the poor status of their classes and their benches influences their educational achievement, as a male student points out: “so if I would have a modern and nice classroom, without my bench or chair to squeak... it would set me in a state of wellbeing... I think I would be happier if I would study and work in an environment which is nicely designed, modern, because we are in 2020 afterall”.

With regards to cleanliness, the youth mentioned both the lack of cleaning products and the need to buy their own products (from brooms to trash cans), to the lack of cleanliness in their classroom when they come to school.

In the table below we included some of the most illustrative quotes collected from youth aged 15-17 regarding their opinion on the school infrastructure and cleanliness:

Quotes	Participant characteristics
I mean... who will believe you.. try to convince a sponsor to come to our school and when he walks behind the school there is full of cigarette butts, beer and destroyed things and trees scratched with a knife	Male, aged 15-17
We had to raise money to buy trash, brooms, brooms, cleaning solutions, chalk, sponges, chairs	Female, aged 15-17
more garbage bins in schools, because they are not and are very small. And they get full after two breaks. To have cleaning equipment, like in every class at least one broom, something to wipe the dust... at some point we actually brought stuff from home to clean the classroom	Female, aged 15-17
And that's not even that difficult, I don't think it would cost that much to set up/ arrange some schools. I mean, I swear... when I went to Avram Iancu, they have that modern building, they have an elevator in the building. And then you think of the other schools in Cluj.... and then you go back to Avram Iancu and see that they have an elevator and clean bathrooms.	Male, aged 15-17

5. Engagement and agency

1.1. Involvement in the community/ volunteering activities

Youth aged 15-17 referred to youth as a vector of change in the society and the school, mentioning volunteering and free speech as two means through which they can improve the society. Although this topic was only shortly discussed, a female participant argued that “we also want to change something, to behave better, to participate in volunteering, and we are quite good to work with children and people, in general, to be social...”. Her remark was met with enthusiasm by a male participant who was sure that he can improve wellbeing just by relentlessly and continuously proposing new ideas: “I, personally, will not be stopping from proposing new ideas or from trying to make changes. I mean... as long as we do not stop trying, maybe at some point things will change”.

Supporting relations

Social relations represent one of the main factors that participants associated with an improved or decreased wellbeing. However, youth aged 15-17 mentioned different needs with respect to supporting relations as opposed with youth aged 18-24 who participated in our focus groups. For example, youth aged 15-17 mentioned the lack of support and the lack of trust coming from their parents as the main issue. As a suggestion, they believe that parents can be trained to be more malleable and to offer more decision liberty to their children.

Apart from their relationship with their parents, an important place for youth aged 15-17 in the hierarchy of social relations is taken by group pressure. One female participant mentioned that “in any decision they make, there are many young people who are influenced by what their friends do... irrespective if we are talking about the selection of a high school to attend or about deciding the place where to go and hang out”.

These two topics are better described by using the quotes included in the table below.

Quotes	Participant characteristics
we are very few who are not influenced by parents. In fact, most students go where their parents want, I don't think many of us are lucky to have parents like who let us choose where we want to go (regarding the decision to select a college to attend)	Male, aged 18-24
Parents think totally in one way and children in another way. They don't know, they don't listen, they don't understand and they get, I don't know, to all sorts of things, to fights, to blackmail	Female, aged 15-17
now I also mean abusive parents, because many children do not find safety at home	Female, aged 15-17
yes, that is, if you have good parents, who understand you, who give you the space you need .. I had a good case, they left me to make my own decisions, they let me go about my business and we get along well ...	Male, aged 15-17
it would be nice to teach parents that there are is an entire world out there, besides their child	Male, aged 15-17
the decisions that young people make in any circumstance, there are many that are taken based on what others have decided... some do not do what they want, it does not matter if we talk about what high school I should go to or to what college, or who I should go out with... you have a choice to be part of some groups or not, some influence you, some let you choose	Female, aged 15-17

6. Urban/enabling environment

6.6. Access to services and activities

One interviewee who participated in our focus groups organized with youth aged 15-17 mentioned cultural activities a means to connect people and to subsequently improve their wellbeing. More specifically, she mentioned singings, dancing, and drawing as activities that would improve wellbeing, speacially when conducted in groups, in public places. One other example she offered consisted in her experience of attending movie nights organized in the lulus park or the movie screenings organized at the County library. In this regard, she mentioned the following: *“I would consider some group activities, for example going to the city center with people and dancing, doing portraits...it would be great if we would have this type of activities in the city center and every person crossing by could participate ..it would unite the Cluj community”*.

6.7. Infrastructure

Similar to their counterparts aged 18-24, traffic congestion was an important issue for youth aged 15-17. Many participants talked about introducing some new rules on the public transport, including priority hours for students and workers in the morning. In addition, they proposed the promotion of bike use throughout the city, along with an increase in the rights of people who use bikes.

When proposing solutions for this issue, the participants draw upon the experiences they have gained as part of student exchange programs in Holland of Copenhagen.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
I went to an experience program in the Netherlands and I stayed there with the family of a student. I could clearly see that they have a much healthier way of life than us, there were many more bike lanes, many more were taking their bicycles at school, they did a lot more sports. The city was arranged so that you had a place to do physical activity at almost every step. They had bike lanes and also traffic lights so that accidents would not happen, cyclists had priority. They had the legal right to hit you with their bike if you were on their bike lane, they didn't have to shout as it happens in Cluj. And they were much more encouraged at school to do Physical education and stuff like that.	Female, aged 15-17
on the bus... if there were some rules... the students would have higher priority between 6 and 8.	Female, aged 15-17
I think that if there would be more bike lanes, I think that would lead to an increased wellbeing. There is this initiative with the bus pass that has an unlimited number of lines, it helps a lot. But also the fact that many young people have this ecological initiative not to drive to school every day, or not to stay in traffic. And I think that if they would make bike lanes and if it would be safer, I think that many more people would use bikes	Female, aged 15-17

6.8. Leisure activities

Like their counterparts aged 18-24, the youth aged 15-17 mentioned the need for more green spaces which should be developed to include places where people could use when it suddenly rains or when they would like to study or do homework in the park.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
For example, the park next to Julius mall was built. I often went there and I wanted to sit and do our homework and it started to rain and there were two gazebos. But on top of the gazebos were only plants, so the water passed through them, you were wet, it had no sense,. You need to do a covered area so I can sit there when it rains. If there were places in the open air where you could study like there are in the rest of the world, it would be great.	Female, aged 15-17

System-level changes

Throughout the discussions we had with youth aged 15-17, three main themes have become apparent that were related to the changes the youth believe are needed at the level of the society as a whole.

The first one is related to a mentality change that is needed among Romanians in general and the promotion of a more egalitarian discourse. More specifically, youth would like Romanians to become more open and to understand that we are all equal.

Interestingly enough, youth mentioned one issue which is inherent to the administrative system across Romania and strongly related to the quality of the educational act: the financing the schools receive. It

was apparent to them that funding is strongly correlated with the grade the students receive on the most important school exams that take place at the end of the 8th grade and the 12th grade.

Finally, the last theme emerging from the data was the need to recognize and to assign the due importance to the teaching profession. Two ideas emerged in relation with this theme. The first one points out that the teaching profession is seen as one which requires many sacrifices but is poorly paid. This, in turn, might deter good students to follow a teaching position because they know they could earn more by selecting another job. The second one highlights the poor quality of the teachers due to the fact that many professionals who teach barely passed their exams to become teachers. This leads to poorly prepared teachers and will ultimately translate in poorly prepared students.

Theme	Quotes	Participant characteristics
Mentality change and a more egalitarian discourse	I would like to change the mentality of Romanians, that's what I would like to change ... in what? In open people who understand that ... Who do not behave like they are superior to others who understand that we are all equal, at least to a certain level. Dude, I understand, you have money, you're there, I'm here. Until we make people understand that you are not smarter than that, because you have money and a car, everything is in vain	Male, aged 15-17
Funding differences in school based on the grades of the students	it's no coincidence, when I go to a school where there are 9.90 students, everything is beautiful and as the average admission grade decreases, everything gets worse. So I can't believe this is just a coincidence	Male, aged 15-17
	the idea is that we are treated differently based on our grades ... that is, we are treated in a special way because we are in A class, it is considered that we are smarter; so I have messages in which I talked to my teacher and she told me that special in some way, we are smarter, more disciplined, and that's why she invested in our class and we have a blackboard with marking, and a TV, and new desks.	Female, aged 15-17
Recognizing the teaching profession	Because the teaching profession is seen as a profession in which you have to sacrifice a lot and not earn much	Male, aged 15-17
	From what I know about education and the job of becoming a teacher, I don't ... I still think it should have a different reputation. That is to be paid better, but even for that they should have to have more courses, and more exams to take before they become teachers. I know someone who is probably a teacher now, and she told me that a lot of people become teachers with very low exam grades. I mean, there are some who pass the exams with passing average only. And so they become teachers. It very sad. And in addition to that, a lot of older teachers stay in the teaching positions above the limit that they should ... more than they have to stay and they don't retire and they stay for another year, another year, and so. And all these are problems that should be identified and solved.	Female, aged 15-17

Perceptions of emerging adults living
in the Cluj Metropolitan Area
(18 - 24 years old)

„Given that change starts with individual responsibility, I believe that the mere fact that everyone recycles their garbage, or everyone follows their work schedule, gets involved in different activities or in what community development mean for them [...], even punctuality I think it is one of the things we can refer to when we talk about small changes or small things through which we can contribute [to increase the well-being of young people].”

23 years old young woman living in Cluj-Napoca

II. RESULTS

1. Socio-demographics

In total, 116 young people aged 18-24 have expressed their interest to participate in the qualitative research component of the LEAP project, by filling out the online form. Out of these, 69% were females, 67% were currently living in Cluj-Napoca but their residence was in a different city, and 95% of them were of Romanian ethnicity. Their mean age was 20.5.

Table 1. Socio-demographics of young people aged 18-24 (N=116) who pre-registered to participate in the project/ offered their consent

		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Female	80	68.97
	Male	35	30.17
	Other	1	0.86
Age	18	24	20.69
	19	14	12.07
	20	18	15.52
	21	17	14.66
	22	21	18.10
	23	15	12.93
	24	5	4.31
Ethnicity	Romanian	111	95.69
	Hungarian	2	1.72
	Roma	0	0.00
Residence	City of Cluj-Napoca	36	31.03
	Commune near Cluj-Napoca	11	9.48
	Other city	67	57.76
Communes	Apahida	2	1.72
	Chinteni	2	1.72
Cluj-Napoca neighborhood	Floresti	3	2.59
	Buna ziua	3	2.59
	Centru	2	1.72
	Dâmbul Rotund	2	1.72
	Făget	1	0.86
	Gheorgheni	14	12.07
	Grigorescu	3	2.59
	Groapă	1	0.86
	Hasdeu	12	10.34
	Intre Lacuri	2	1.72
	Iris	1	0.86
	Manastur	25	21.55
	Marasti	17	14.66
	Mihai Viteazu	1	0.86
	Plopilor	1	0.86
	Zona gării	1	0.86
Zorilor	8	6.90	
School	Colegiu Național Pedagogic "Gheorghe	3	2.59

Lazăr"		
Colegiul de Muzica "Sigismund Toduta"	1	0.86
Colegiul Economic "Iulian Pop"	4	3.45
Colegiul Național "Mihai Viteazul"	2	1.72
Colegiul Național „E.Racoviță"	1	0.86
Colegiul Tehnic "Anghel Saligny"	1	0.86
Colegiul Tehnic de Comunicații "Augustin Maior"	1	0.86
Liceul cu Program Sportiv	5	4.31
Liceul de Coregrafia și Artă Dramatică "Octavian Stroia"	1	0.86
Liceul Tehnologic "Constantin Brâncuși"	1	0.86
Liceul teologic Maranatha	1	0.86
Liceul Teoretic "Nicolae Balcescu"	2	1.72
Liceul Teoretic "Eugen Pora"	3	2.59
Liceul Teoretic "Alexandru Papiu Ilarian" Dej	1	0.86
Liceul Teoretic "Onisifor Ghibu"	1	0.86
Seminarul Teologic Ortodox	2	1.72
Universitatea "Babeș Bolyai"	63	54.31
Universitatea de Arta si Design	6	5.17
Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie "Iuliu Hațieganu"	5	4.31
Universitatea Tehnica Cluj-Napoca	6	5.17

Regarding the sample of subjects aged 18-24 who have participated in the qualitative research phase, their median age was 20, all were of Romanian ethnicity, 40% were from Cluj-Napoca and 60% have relocated to Cluj-Napoca but are from other cities, and most live in Marasti or Manastur neighborhood.

Table 2. Socio-demographics of young people aged 18-24 (N=20) who participated in focus groups

		N	%
Gender	Female	15	75.00
	Male	5	25.00
Age	18	1	5
	19	2	10
	20	5	25
	21	3	15
	22	2	10
	23	4	20
Ethnicity	24	3	15
	Romanian	20	100.00
	Hungarian	0	0.00
	Roma	0	0.00
Residence	City of Cluj-Napoca	8	40.00
	Commune near Cluj-Napoca	0	0.00
	Other city	12	60.00
Cluj-Napoca neighborhood	Buna Ziua	1	5.00
	Centru	1	5.00

	Dâmbul Rotund	1	5.00
	Gheorgheni	1	5.00
	Haşdeu	2	10.00
	Între Lacuri	1	5.00
	Manastur	9	45.00
	Marasti	4	20.00
School	Liceul cu Program Sportiv	1	5.00
	Liceul teologic Maranatha	1	5.00
	Universitatea "Babeş Bolyai"	15	75.00
	Universitatea de Arta si Design	1	5.00

2. Subjective wellbeing

a. Young people's definition of wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing was explored in-depth with the youth who participated in the three focus groups. The definition youth ascribed to wellbeing consisted of mentions of both physical and mental health and included words such as “the absence of any discomforts”, “balance”, “stability”, “consistency” and “peace”. It is worth mentioning that most youth referred to both physical and mental health when asked to think about their definition of wellbeing, with the mental health component being the first mentioned and the most elaborated. Only one subject (male, age 22) limited his response to financial wellbeing and did not touch mental health as a component of wellbeing: “financial wellbeing is a good thing for me”. One definition of wellbeing that stood out from the others was the one offered by a young female who insisted on “career and personal development opportunities” as a major component of one’s wellbeing. In addition, one male participant offered a definition of wellbeing that incorporates the concept “energy” that we all take from the places we live and highlighted the fact that the neighborhoods and the countries we live in have a great impact on our wellbeing.

Some of the most emblematic quotes emerging from data analysis are included in the table below.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
I think I would associate wellbeing with stability, I think it would be an environment that provides mental comfort, maybe financial stability - the environment in which my focus would be strictly related to the goals I have and nothing else....	Female, 18-24 age group
Probably the minimum necessary... the basic things that exist primarily in your life, such as being able to cover certain expenses with the income you have and living in a city in full development and in continuous development. More... to have people around you with whom to have common interests and way of thinking and to be able to express yourself... to be able to feel free with the people around you	Female, 18-24 age group
Emotional wellbeing, the emotional wellbeing we have	Female, 18-24 age group
a state of balance between the financial part, or rather the material and emotional wellbeing to which my colleagues have referred to, plus to all these, a certain number of development opportunities. And	Female, 18-24 age group

I am talking here about both career development and personal development on the part of character or... now it depends on each person. But basically, development opportunities, in addition to the basic material and emotional needs.	
Financial wellbeing? From a financial point of view, this should be a good thing for you	Male, 18-24 age group
we can say so... if you live in a bad neighborhood...and when you are in that country, that neighborhood, you can you feel the energy that the place offers you... and the only way you can get over this thing would be to have great inner strength, but the things around you will not help you, and then they will automatically put a heavier weight on you, this does not help you.	Male, 18-24 age group

b. Factors influencing young people’s wellbeing

For youth aged 18-24, their wellbeing is influenced by a wide variety of factors, from access to educational and health services to financial resources and development opportunities. For example, one female participant included access to “quality education and medical services” as factors which “can significantly influence people’s wellbeing because if they don’t have easy access to an educational institution or to a medical service... even if they are highly motivated to learn, the environment surrounding them is not conducive to their development”. Six main themes have emerged from the data. The first theme refers to wellbeing as a product of both the immediate environment (family and friends), but also of the larger, more distant environment, such as the youth’s neighborhood. The second theme emerging from the data referred to mental health as a general topic, with a specific focus on social anxiety and social pressure. A common aspect also noted by participants was related to their personal and financial satisfaction as a factor that impacts their wellbeing. In addition, they mentioned social relations and the social environment as an important piece in their wellbeing, highlighting the fact that their ability to help themselves and others is an important factor in their wellbeing. Finally, a common aspect that subjects agreed upon was that getting out of their comfort zone was a major positive source of personal development and wellbeing.

The six themes discussed above are better described through the quotes included in the following table.

Theme	Quotes	Participants’ characteristics
<i>External environment</i>	The environment and the context matter a lot and, for example, the city where you live ... you can have a good situation at home, but every time you go for a walk, or if you live in a neighborhood or in an isolated place where you do not you have opportunities .. it seems to me that this also affects your wellbeing to some extent ... if you do not have a balance between wellbeing at home, for example, which you can acquire when you see that the neighborhood looks good, you find friendly people, you have many opportunities ... it seems to me that there should be a balance on several levels.	Female, aged 18-24
<i>Social pressure and anxiety</i>	At least I know I have friends ... the fact that they don't feel ready, that they have a lot of anxieties, and a lot of worries and no one tells them how to heal, to get to know themselves, and then to see what do they do with their life. They feel pressure...	Female, aged 18-24

	everyone says “ok, what are you doing with your life? What do you want to do next”? And they simply don't even know themselves enough to know what they want to do.	
	Especially all these cumulate in the pressure to be successful and to succeed in life and to be there, on the first positions. To be a successful person	Female, aged 18-24
<i>Personal and financial satisfaction</i>	It can go both financially and personally... I think for many the first thing will be the financial part. Of course, it brings you wellbeing because having a good financial situation helps you cover many of your needs; and then the personal part, which you build on social relationships, on interpersonal relationships.	Male, aged 18-24
<i>Helping themselves and others</i>	The fact that you know that from what you have learned along the way... that you can help someone, and you know that that person will no longer experience distress, or certain unpleasant things... going through a learning process that can be difficult, for example. if I know how to help someone, I help them than to live them go through a difficult situation that I also lived through.	Female, aged 18-24
<i>Social relations</i>	I would say the influences of the environment and relationships .. Now that I have been in isolation, it also matters the relationships you have with your family, if there are tense relationships in the family, it will be affect your wellbeing .. This influences me usually the most ... the condition of the people around me.	Female, aged 18-24
<i>Getting out of the comfort zone</i>	Getting out of the comfort zone. Get out of your own bubble. I mean, before I joined the association, I didn't talk to anyone much, I was afraid to express my opinion, I had those thoughts like “what I'm going to do after college or where I'm going to work”. But I didn't let them come to the surface, I kept them inside me. So after I somehow found this solution with the NGOs, with the association, I managed to somehow overcome these fears and what will happen, how I should do that, why I am like that, is that so, why does he talk to me like that and so on. And I think getting out of the comfort zone can help a student or an individual a lot. I mean, all this time I noticed a lot of people who came to NGOs. By before they got out of their comfort zone, they were very withdrawn, as if they were scared	Male, aged 18-24

3. Health

a. How young people define health

In our focus groups, participants were encouraged to discuss about health and about how it is related to wellbeing, from their perspectives. On this topic, the participants’ account ranged from a state defined by “the lack of diseases” to a “complementary” and “direct proportionally relationship between the physical and mental health”. Our subjects demonstrated an in-depth understanding of health and emphasized, similar to the definition they have ascribed to wellbeing, that mental health is essential in their wellbeing. Actually, participants tended to focus more on mental health issue than on physical

health issues in their definitions of health. This suggests a shift in the importance youth assign to their mental health as compared to previous generations.

Also, worth mentioning is the definition one of the female participants assigned to being healthy. For her, health was a state in which she is able carry out all the activities she wants to without having the feeling that something that is inherent to her (ie. her physical or mental health) is stopping her in achieving her goals. Being more practical, one male participant mentioned that he is healthy if he hasn't been to a doctor recently.

Some of the most emblematic definitions offered by youth aged 18-24 are included in the table below.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
this part of health implies a state of balance that you must feel as an individual from all points of view: mentally, physically...	Male, aged 18-24
I somehow think, as he said (the name of another participant), that you don't realize how important health is until you get sick. I think somehow... health is a state of affairs - that is, you are always healthy until you fall into the extreme, the other site, and you get sick. You do not seek health. However, you tend to seek happiness all the time.	Male, aged 18-24
The lack of one of these two (physical health and mental health) can cause the lack of the other. For example, you can't have one without another.	Male, aged 18-24
I think they are somehow directly proportional (physical and mental health). After all, I don't think you can enjoy yourself as long as you're not healthy and I think most of the time we notice how lucky we were when we were healthy and only when we got sick we realized this... .. I think that's what we do most often. And as I said before - considering that both mental and physical health are interdependent, I think we depend on them as much as we can enjoy and how happy we can become. So yes - directly proportional - that's what I meant	Female, aged 18-24
For me, health means something very complementary, that is, mental and physical health together because they are very complementary and because they influence each other a lot; as long as you are physically unhealthy, you influence your health. Psychic and vice versa. And then that would be the idea.	Female, aged 18-24
for me to be healthy means to be able to carry out all the activities I want to do, without feeling that something is stopping me. That is, as others have said, related to physical or mental factors.	Female, aged 18-24

b. Factors influencing young people's health

Among the factors that young people mentioned to affect their health, youth aged 18-24 mostly mentioned aspects related to mental health and factors of emotional nature. For example, they referred to stress and anxiety as being perpetuated by the society and by each of them individually, because they do not know themselves well enough. In addition, they explored the relationship and interdependence between physical and mental health and their relationship with substance abuse, which in turn are linked to poor physical health outcomes.

The table below presents the most relevant quotes extracted from the data.

Theme	Quotes	Participants' characteristics
Stress and anxiety	It seems to me that many young people have all kinds of anxieties, social anxiety, performance anxiety... and perpetuate their worries and everything they do. And they do not know themselves .. "; "At the same time, I think that young people are very affected, very stressed. But somehow also by this pressure imposed by the environment. Somehow we all think we all have to move at about the same time. That is, we have to do college at that age, to graduate at the same age. If you graduate, you must find a job, if not – you did not achieved anything. And somehow all this pressure is put on them	Female, aged 18-24
the relationship and interdependence between physical and mental health	The most popular form of mental illness is depression - if the depressed person tends not to take so much care of themselves and this inevitably leads to physical health problems such as. I don't know, you eat a lot of unhealthy stuff. This can lead to either obesity or anorexia - either one or the other. So both are physical health problems due to mental problems... or the development of an addiction... I don't know, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs ..	Female, aged 18-24
<i>Substance abuse</i>	I think that one, two, three things that affect young people are alcohol and drugs in the first place, because alcohol and drugs give young people the impression that they have a well, that they are happy.	Female, aged 18-24

4. Education

a. General aspects regarding the educational system

Talking about the educational system, in general, young people aged 18-24 have focused exclusively on changes in teaching styles, the lack of future perspectives and objectives, as well as the lack of support regarding labor market integration in the field they have graduated. More specifically, in terms of teaching styles, one male student mentioned “toxic professors” who are in their position for years, they are “from the old generation” and who are not willing to listen to students’ opinions or to recognize when they are wrong or when they made a mistake. Nonetheless, several participants mentioned that both in their current educational institution (i.e. college or faculty) but also in their former high schools, the educational system emphasized the need to memorize facts and information, which is no longer a skill needed in the 21st century. This is because students now “do not memorize the information, they

memorize where to find the information”. Similarly, participants insisted on the need to update the school/college curriculum to the requirements of the industry and the current market.

The same amount of interest was raised by the topic of labor market integration in the Cluj metropolitan area, when students who participated in the focus groups mentioned that it is difficult to find a job after you graduate a non-IT college. It is well known that Cluj-Napoca is the Silicon Valley of Europe and that graduates of IT-related colleges find work even before graduation, but the same is not true from graduates of non-IT colleges. A solution identified by youth was a more developed collaboration between universities and the local administration, for the latter to attract more investors in the industry fields in which universities prepare graduates.

The last emerging theme from the data on the educational system was the one related to lack of future perspectives and objectives. Students tracked this back to the decision regarding the selection of a college that most youth take based on peer preferences or parent pressure. This suggests the need for career counseling at the end of high school and later during college years. Nonetheless, one student mentioned the “involvement of private companies” in the education of students during the university, through universities-private companies’ partnerships.

The table below presents the most relevant quotes extracted from the data.

Theme	Quotes	Participants’ characteristics
Changes in teaching style and curricula	first of all, what we teach, the school curriculum, should be updated according to the needs of the current century, because we now... we no longer memorize things, we memorize where to find things	Female, aged 18-24
Labor market integration	I was listening to the discussion and what seems to me that Cluj is somehow deficient... is the fact that we have a very wide range of universities, with many profiles ... with many fields in which you can specialize, but the city does not offer you the opportunity to get employed, to continue your professional career in that field	Male, aged 18-24
Lack of future perspectives	the fear that he will not be able to work in the field he studied or that he will not find a job or that he will starve in Cluj. ... that indeed students make a mistake in what their future represents. They come to that faculty only because their best friend comes, or because they give in to parental pressure or something like that, that pushes them to make a decision that will affect them in the future and hence this fear that they will not they will like their job/ area of work	Female, aged 18-24

b. The lack of courses teaching life skills

In connection to the changes needed to the academic curriculum that youth ages 18-24 mentioned at the previous topic, they also insisted on the introduction of new courses focusing specifically on building life skills, such as time management, speaking in public, effective use of technology, communication & feedback, motivation and personal development, education regarding public services available to access free of charge, or even cooking classes. The comprehensive list of classes mentioned by youth or extracted by the data coders from the accounts of youth regarding their needs is included below:

- Time management
- Public speaking
- Efficient use of technology
- Communication & feedback
- Creativity
- Motivation and personal development
- Education on how to access free of charge public services (i.e. how to navigate the health system)
- Political education
- Civic education
- Critical thinking
- Sexual education
- Financial education
- Legal education
- Entrepreneurial mechanisms

In the table below we included some of the most illustrative quotes collected from youth aged 18-25 regarding their needs of classes teaching life skills.

Quotes	Participant characteristics
I would like to ... at least, I consider that if I managed to manage my time better I could do more activities and in this way I could be even happier and more proud of myself, to I say so. But because I don't manage my time very well, I would like to improve this thing.	Male, aged 18-24
... something that will teach you how taxes work, how income is taxed, how the state works in terms of finances. Because I didn't receive any information like that and I had to catch up along the way, after I started my first job.	Male, aged 18-24
So the first thing to do is to educate the society. So effectively at the school level – education on public services. Because in the end, public services are designed in such a way as to be available and accessible to the citizen. Now the problem is that the information does not reach the citizen. And the question is where do you start informing the citizen. So that's why I say, I think starting from education and familiarization from an early age. With different systems. And here I do not mean only the public health system, but in general.	Female, aged 18-24
from a much younger age, children to be taught what empathy means, I know countries where there are empathy courses... what civic spirit means. Because if you don't know since you were little how you can help the community where you live or as an adult you will not get to appreciate, you will not have gratitude for volunteers, for example. Besides empathy and civic sense, I think that one thing I would appreciate, would be the aesthetic sense, to be developed from a much	Female, aged 18-24

younger age... and this cultural side - how much attention we pay on the cultural side, I don't know, I think they all start from the environment in which we develop, from parents and then at school, and as not all children are lucky... it is clear that later the educational system or the state is responsible to educate them to become responsible future adults, through schools.	
The business part, or not necessarily business, but to somehow understand the entrepreneurial mechanisms. I know it had an optional class... they are not very well focused on practical aspects, mechanisms, but rather on theories that teachers made you learn and that's it. And there are quite a few very important subjects that are neglected during the school years, even plastic education, where most people see this part of talent - drawing, when in fact plastic education means more than that; it also means creative thinking. It also means concept, maybe that would be a bit more useful courses, and I mean in general.	Female, aged 18-24
I refer in large part to civic education, but not to civic education from the perspective of very general concepts, as actually happens in school. But very clearly, somehow punctual ... but it seems to me that this thing, the lack of a proper civic education is not a problem only at the level of Romania, but in general at the level of the world. Because somehow, children and young people are seen as inferior in terms of their ability to understand certain information. I don't know how to explain this. I think we were all told the phrase: you are too small, you will not understand. Or something like that. When we were little.	Female, aged 18-24
Political education, I would say. It is good to include legal education... let's say that these are pretty basic things.	Male, aged 18-24

c. Life-long learning programs for the teaching staff

The issue of life-long learning programs for the teaching staff was a common theme that emerged from both the discussions with 18-24 years old, but also from the focus groups organized with youth aged 15-17. This suggests an in-depth and complex issue of the educational system in Romania and lead back to the training of teachers and the quality of the teaching act. Most often, youth aged 18-24 described this theme in connection with the teachers' inability to adapt to new generations in terms of teaching styles and methods. Therefore, they insisted on the fact that the training of the teaching staff "should not end when they finalize their studies" and should be done throughout the entire period teachers actually instruct or tutor. The comprehensive list of classes mentioned by youth aged 18-24 or extracted by the data coders from the accounts of youth regarding the field in which the teaching staff should be continuously trained is included below:

- Digitalization
- Communication & interaction with students
- Leadership
- Time management
- New teaching methods/ interactive teaching methods, adapted to the needs of the students
- Learning how to be a mentor or a coach for students

In the table below we included some of the most illustrative quotes collected from youth aged 18-24 regarding their opinion on the content of the life-learning programs targeting the teaching staff:

Quotes	Participant characteristics
<p>Maybe a recurring training every year would be quite useful, maybe on the digital side. I come from the largest college in the country after all and yet even though I have teachers who are not necessarily elderly, 40-50 years old, they are not so familiar with all this digital part in which we are forced to carry out our activity today.</p>	<p>Male, aged 18-24</p>
<p>Communication, I don't know, I don't think anything else comes to mind now, but I think the main thing would be communication, digitization, how to use it differently for the platforms needed to deliver courses... aaa, maybe time management. There are some who do not manage their time very well, in hours I mean, and then maybe this thing would help. Maybe public speaking, there are quite a few teachers who don't necessarily create an image that you would like to watch for an hour, a half hour, maybe even 2, and after the first 5 minutes of speaking linearly, who teach some information without enthusiasm, may lose the audience's attention.</p>	<p>Male, aged 18-24</p>
<p>I would say that we should somehow encourage collective activity, and activities between teachers and students, to somehow get to know each other better. And getting to know each other better, and at school level, as many activities in several fields as possible. And knowing each other better, they will have a different perception when they go to class ... I think so. They will know how to talk, or how to encourage some students, because not all students are the same... then there is already a discrepancy between the method of communicating with a student</p>	<p>Female, aged 18-24</p>
<p>Maybe they don't lose their skills and how, as you said, it's about adapting to the new, we are no longer in Ceausescu's time, when all we knew was that we had to read some booksthey need to find new methods, adapted to the present times.</p>	<p>Female, aged 18-24</p>
<p>But also the teachers, because everything will be in vain if.... you have a curricula that is updated and that is suitable for the period in which we live, but the teachers will remain the same and will teach in their own ways because they know better, because they are in the system for 30 years.</p>	<p>Female, aged 18-24</p>
<p>Maybe one of the things they could influence, I don't know if it would completely change things ... would be for teachers to be .. to be .. encouraged, so to speak, not forced, that wouldn't be ok for them, maybe participate in sessions where they learn how to be more of a mentor or a coach for the student, not to be a teacher who is seen as an authority.</p>	<p>Male, aged 18-24</p>
<p>From this perspective, I believe that at the educational level, teachers should have the opportunity to be involved in lifelong learning programs... at the moment there are many ... they are quite behind and how this digitization is forced somehow... it pushed them to use technology, but not necessarily that they know how, and they do it out of inertia... And then I think that a program like lifelong learning would be super helpful. This is where their mentality should change in this direction, they want to learn new things and not stay in the past.</p>	<p>Male, aged 18-24</p>

5. Engagement and agency

a. Involvement in the community/ volunteering activities

Involvement in the community was one of the main themes emerging from the data collected from youth aged 18-24. The discussions around this issue mostly focused on the lack of volunteering opportunities, which was later operationalized as a lack of promotion of these opportunities, not a lack of opportunities themselves. Another angle of this issue mentioned by youth referred to the stigma associated with “working for others for free” (i.e. as a volunteering activity). This suggests that the culture of volunteering is not well understood, and that youth could benefit from a description of the intangible benefits brought by the engagement in volunteering work.

In addition, the youth brought into the discussion their limited involvement in the process of decision making, mentioning that they do not believe “our voice will have any repercussions, I don’t think we can affect too many things at the social level”. As a solution to this problem, some participants proposed to use NGOs as a vector of change, to conduct lobbying and advocacy activities that would have a larger impact in the society.

A selection of the youth’s accounts on this theme are presented in the table below.

Theme	Quotes	Participants’ characteristics
Efficient promotion of volunteering opportunities	There are many opportunities ... but the group of people reached by the information is very small. And then maybe that would be one of the problems ... For which a system, a solution or I don't know should be thought ... a lot of things happen in Cluj, but we don't know about them. Yes, for students who come only for 3 years 4 years in Cluj, but generally for the community. A lot of things happen and it's hard to filter them maybe.	Male, aged 18-24
Involvement in the process of decision making	I don't think for the most part that our voice will have any repercussions somewhere above, so somehow I have the impression that you can't really affect a lot of things at the societal level.	Female, aged 18-24
Use of youth NGOs to conduct meaningful lobby and advocacy activities	considering that many of us are part of student organizations, we somehow have access to lobby, advocacy. And considering that we are organizations at the local level but that we are usually part of organizations at ... at the national level, in federations, we can try to make a difference especially on the issue of education, because most of us also do student representation. But, again, for us, only the student part is valid. But I think that lately young people have started to be a much more valid voice at the level of society's problems, namely on the lobby and advocacy side	Female, aged 18-24

b. Supporting relations

Social relations represent one of the main factors that participants associated with an improved or decreased wellbeing. However, youth aged 18-24 mentioned different needs with respect to supporting relations as opposed with youth aged 15-17 who participated in our focus groups.

More specifically, youth aged 18-24 insisted on the lack of appreciation and feedback as a trademark of poor quality social relations. In turn, youth feel the need for their work and effort to be acknowledged and to get real, qualitative feedback for their work. This topic is better described by using the quotes included in the table below.

Quotes	Participant characteristics
I think a lot of people think about the idea of being relevant, I don't know ... they always worry that they have to be relevant, or their voice should be heard, or their voice should be taken into account, someone should listen to them, to give them justice, or simply to receive feedback for what they do... and, I don't know, they have a simple activity, if they don't receive external feedback, they don't seem to be ok, you don't feel ok, you don't realize that you invested time, you invested knowledge, or energy in that activity and you didn't even receive feedback, be it positive or negative	Male, aged 18-24
if young people, and those who are already employed and we are older, if everyone would receive some satisfaction, some appreciation for the things we do, being they are not exactly at a very, very high level, that is, someone who is doing a perfect thing... is indeed appreciated. I want to say that a lot of people do some things that are good and get almost no appreciation for them, in the way that, if they get appreciation and those who don't do good enough things, they could gain more confidence in themselves and thus continue to do that and become better	Female, aged 18-24

6. Urban/enabling environment

a. Access to services and activities

A strong theme that emerged among participants aged 18-24 who participated in our focus groups was the access to services that might contribute to an increased wellbeing. For example, many participants talked about access to health services and the need to understand how the health system works (we have already, discussed the latter issue in the previous sections of this report), especially in the case of students who relocate to Cluj-Napoca to obtain a college degree and do not have access to their own family doctors and to parents to facilitate their connection with the healthcare system. Yet, this issue is not inherent only to newcomers. One female interviewee argued that even though she has lived in Cluj-Napoca for all her life, she still wouldn't know "how to reach my doctor because my mother has done this for me all the time... I wouldn't know where to go and who to talk to". This suggests that students in general might need some sort of education regarding how the health system works and how can it be accessed, to empower them to access health services when they need them and ultimately to increase their health literacy.

In their accounts of the services that youth would need access to, a special place was taken by access to cultural events. Two main topics of discussion have emerged from these accounts: the first one relates to the need of cultural education starting from early years and the suggestion to relocate/ redistribute the cultural events (which take place most often in the city center) to the other parts/neighborhoods of the city as well.

These two topics are better depicted by the quotes included in the table below.

Theme	Quotes	Participants' characteristics
Access to health services	...a familiarization of the patient with the health system. Because there is a very big issue in accessing the system. In Romania, especially in rural areas, but in the city as well... it is very strange that among young people we have this blockage, because as my colleagues said it is quite complicated	Female, aged 18-24
	One problem I encountered related to the medical system is that I failed to change my family doctor in my hometown to here in Cluj, and this created many problems for me because I am a person with a low immunity, quite sick and there is no season when I do not catch a cold, and when I get sick I have the whole package. This was the most difficult process: to call my doctor from home, to prescribe me medication, I did not benefit from discounts because I did not have a prescription, the doctor being in Galati, at a distance of 14 hours. As I said before, only when we get sick we realize how much we want to be well. For example, I haven't done tests for a very long time, because I didn't have a very serious problem to have to do them, but in the current context, when it seemed like a short break, I realized it was time to pay more attention to myself. There is a chance that there are things I do not know about my physical health, and this is likely to influence me in making future decisions.	Female, aged 18-24
	For example, if I have a serious problem and I have to go to the hospital, I don't know if the necessary procedure costs or how to pay the doctors, if I have to do that or in fact what they have to do there.	Female, aged 18-24
	In the private sector it's much simpler. If you, I don't know, want to have a check-up on anything, you must first go to the family doctor, he will give you a letter, after that you have to go to the specialist doctor. I mean, you	Male, aged 18-24

	waste time here. And on the other hand, in private sector, you give a phone call, "I want to make an appointment. Yes, ok, you're coming tomorrow". For me, I don't know if ... I kind of know how things work there and I know what I should do. But there are people who have no idea and go to the emergency for health issues which require only a check from the family doctor.	
The need for cultural education from early years	the aesthetic sense to be developed from a much younger age and this cultural side - how much attention we pay on the cultural side, I do not know, I think it all starts from the environment in which we develop, from parents and then at school, and since not all children are lucky, it is clear that later the educational system or the state is the one responsible for this.	Female, aged 18-24
Relocating cultural events from the city center to other neighborhoods	One thing, I think, and as far as I know they have been tried throughout the projects. I know that the CCC had this in mind, to somehow move the events that were in the center and to other neighborhoods, to have this buzz of people to exist in Cluj, and not just focused only in the center of Cluj and I think it's a great idea so much so that, after all, getting to know your neighbors is a plus in your wellbeing and that of those around you.	Male, aged 18-24
	it would be nice if some dance places were organized, so to speak. Not really a club, to be open during the day. And young people to have access. I don't know ... let's say from 15 to 24. Or 26. Not to have too many drinks, that is, so that minors can be included. And not to be adults, say their 30s. That is, because of the discomfort it could cause or the problems. How it happens in clubs	Female, aged 18-24

b. Infrastructure

With regards to infrastructure, two major themes emerged from the data we collected from the youth aged 18-24: the problem of housing and the problem of traffic and congestion. With respect to housing, focus group participants mentioned the high rent prices and the large differences between amounts required by different owners for similar comfort level apartments. This view was echoed by another male informant who specifically talked about the issue of student housing in dorms. Yet, the participants did not stop at identified issues, they have also offered some solutions, including the development of an online portal where people interested could find places to rent and all the posting to be checked by the public local administration as part of the local policy to improve housing. Another solution was to

revitalize the neighborhoods and make them more appealing, to increase the wellbeing of people who live in the area. Whilst only one interviewee mentioned this issue, we believe it is important to note that one female participant indicated that she has safety concerns when leaving and coming back home during dark hours due to the limited coverage of the public lighting system.

Traffic congestion was the second main theme that was extracted from the participants' accounts. Most felt that traffic is a big issue in the city and suggested the introduction of a metro line, the introduction of differentiated travel hours for pensioners, and the extension of the Cluj Bike system to the metropolitan area of Baciú and Floresti.

The most significant participant accounts are included in quotes in the table below.

Theme	Quotes	Participants' characteristics
Housing	I think that if it was possible at the level of local administration to come up with a clear housing policy ..."; "The local administration to make a portal for real estate in which those who have apartments for sale or rent to upload them there and there is a small benefit, I don't know... at the level of tax or, at the level of local tax, I don't know how it works legally	Male, aged 18-24
	in the city when you see that things are somehow set up. I don't know, it's light, it's bright, it's colorful, I think it gives you a feeling of well and this part and then... Living points in the city if revitalized in a certain way can be a plus.	Male, aged 18-24
Mobility and transport	eventually I would have a small suggestion related to the Cluj bike part. If it could be implemented in the communes near Cluj, such as Floresti, Baciú. It would make the transport part much easier, too.	Female, aged 18-24
	one of the things is the traffic. Because we lose a lot of time in traffic and it's very crowded, especially .. for example... I was in Hasdeu and I was in college at FSEGA. In the morning at 8 o'clock, in the 25 bus it was very crowded and it was very difficult to get to classes.	Female, aged 18-24
	I wanted to say two things about traffic. One, I think it's very nice what Boc has implemented now, in the morning... the old people should no longer have ... the elderly should be ... better said, should no longer have, as he says... access to free means of transport. And it seems very ok to me, because in the morning, I don't know why they have to go at 7-8 o'clock when young people go to college	Female, aged 18-24

	or school. They just fill the buses. And the second thing, this idea with Cluj bike is very nice, because you can promote this thing, to ride a bike, an electric scooter, to get something other than a car or a bus at college or school.	
Safety	And the street lighting .. it happened to me .. I also had a personal problem and since then I have been a bit traumatized ... I am sometimes more paranoid than the rest of the population and it seems to me that maybe the police do not do enough patrols, regardless of whether it's night, day ... or maybe they don't take their job seriously when certain complaints are made against certain people	Female, ages 18-24

c. Leisure activities

The informants aged 18-24 mentioned that they would like to have more green spaces around their neighborhoods and for the city hall to invest in more cultural events/festivals. Most of them believed that these would lead to an increased wellbeing for all the inhabitants of Cluj, not only youth. Their accounts are included in the table below.

Quotes	Participants' characteristics
I can say that as if there was more nature integrated in the place where we live, such as in our neighborhood, I can say that for example, in the area where I live, in Manastur, a few meters away is actually a park and from there you can enter the forest and you can walk .. even if there is nothing arranged and so on, simply the fact that you can walk there and you have this possibility and that it is not far away offers you wellbeing because you relax more when you are there than when you are between blocks of concrete... so .. this can be an aspect that also brings you wellbeing	Female, aged 18-24
I think about an environmental aspect, I don't know, if they would invest in parks, in a lot of green space, all kinds of, as they are, these street foods festivals, festivals, it seems to me that they generate wellbeing and it makes you feel good when you see that the city itself is active	Male, aged 18-24
basically, the event to take part in nature, for example, and on the Citadel were organized picnics at one time, or in the park at Iulius was something of a movie night or something like that... I think it would be very useful to have more outdoor activities.	Female, aged 18-24

System-level changes

In terms of system-level changes, we identified in youths accounts the following three emerging themes: increase mental health awareness, seeing youth as a resource, and personal responsibility as a means of

societal improvement. Looking into the first theme identified from the discussions we had with youth aged 18-14, the participants mostly agreed on the fact that mental health is more prominent in their life as an issue that needs attention, as opposed to how rarely it is approached as a subject by older generations. However, they still felt that efforts should be made to make mental health a discussion topic and to acknowledge the importance it has on the youth's wellbeing.

Regarding the second theme emerging from the data, using youth as a resource, the participants noted that youth, in general, are seen as inferiors to adults. This inferiority feeling emerged from several types of relations: the student-teacher relation, the employee-employer relation, but also the volunteer-coordinator relation. This suggests that this issue is inherent to the Romanian society.

As with regards to the third theme, the youth aged 18-24 believed that the solution to improve our society and to increased wellbeing is to promote personal responsibility in youth (and people, in general). More specifically, they believe larger changes (in the society) are driven by a large number of small changes connected to the behavior of each individual who is a part of that society. Therefore, if all of our actions are characterized by personal responsibility, including for example being punctual or recycling, this will lead to great improvements in society and wellbeing, in general.

Theme	Quotes	Participant characteristics
Increase mental health awareness	I think everyone was referring to this thing when we talked about health and mental health, and I don't think that if we had asked about health about 2 generations ago, someone would have mentioned mental health. So, it seems to me that awareness regarding mental health issues has increased. Also the fact that we know that it affects us a lot every day... this awareness is more among young people and it seems a good thing to me ... considering that we are aware of this aspect, this somehow affects us more, but we also have the advantage that we can be aware, we can address the problem.	Female, aged 18-24
Seeing youth as a resource and as an equal	young people are seen somewhat inferior... I have felt this a few times. It's just that, at the same time, I feel that, I don't know, maybe as you get older, this perception changes. ... or maybe the systems in Romania are starting to evolve in such a way as to see young people as a resource ... to rely more on young people. But I notice this trend of change.	Female, aged 18-24
	Many employers, do not necessarily ignore young people, but tend to overlook them because they are considered inexperienced, without developed skills, and many employers in various fields do not hire young people just out of college and do not give them a chance to develop the skills required for a specific job.	Female, aged 18-24
Personal responsibility as a means of societal improvement	Given that change starts with individual responsibility, I think that the simple fact... for example, talking about recycling, if everyone recycles their garbage, or everyone respects their work schedule, gets involved in different activities or in what community development means... I think things can be improved this way. Even punctuality, I think, is one of the things we can refer to when we talk about small changes or small things we can contribute to.	Female, aged 18-24

This report is a deliverable of the project „*Interdisciplinary study on young people’s needs and opportunities assessment in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (LEAP)*” implemented during January - September, 2020 with the support of the Department of Public Health and Political Science Department-FSPAC-Babes-Bolyai University, PONT Group and Cluj Cultural Center

Financial support: Fundation Botnar