

WISE

Well-being Innovations for Students in Europe

How can we contribute to student's well-being in Europe?

European WISE Survey: Synthesis

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Table of contents

I. The project and the framework of the report.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Partners of the project.....	5
Conceptions.....	6
Our conception of Higher Education Institutions.....	6
Our conception of student life.....	6
Definitions of Well-being.....	6
Plan of this output.....	7
II. About the report.....	8
WISE report.....	8
Dissemination of the survey.....	8
III. Student perceptions on specific topics.....	9
Profile of student respondents.....	9
Being on the campus.....	10
Sense of belonging to university.....	11
Services & department on the campus.....	12
Sport and well-being.....	13
Culture on the campus.....	13
Volunteering and well-being.....	13
International mobility : students going abroad.....	14
The importance of connections for student well-being.....	14
Perception and level of anxiety on different topics.....	15
The impact of the COVID.....	15
Crossed data: are there any differences in student well-being depending on sub-categories?.	15
How students feel they can act on these topics.....	19
V. Improving student well-being by Higher Education Institutions (HEI).....	20
Profile of university staff respondents.....	20
Well-being: a valued topic.....	21
The importance of studies for student well-being.....	21
The importance of connections.....	21
Difference between HEI and students answers.....	21
Strategy and process to improve well-being.....	23
Operational action, activities, and facilities.....	24
VI. Improving student well-being by student organisations.....	25
Profile of respondents and response shortcomings.....	25
Value of well-being and how associations contribute to it.....	25
The well-being of the students engaged in the associations.....	26
The needs of associations to ensure the well-being of their volunteers.....	27
VI. Conclusion and implications.....	27

I. The project and the framework of the report

Introduction

How can we contribute to student's well-being in Europe? In the current context where the health crisis has a strong impact on students' life, some groups of students are particularly vulnerable to issues of well-being due to the discrimination they already face (e.g. refugees, people with disabilities). In addition, new forms of malaise are emerging such as eco-anxiety which affects 15% of young people (2016 IPSOS survey). The well-being of students, therefore, represents a huge challenge for HEI and student organisations.

Since September 2021, the French student organisations network Animafac has been coordinating the Erasmus+ project called **WISE "Well-being Innovations for Students in Europe"**. This project is carried out in cooperation with six partners : the European Student Union (ESU), the European University Foundation (EUF), the Charles University of Prague (Czech Republic), the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra (Portugal) and the Transilvania University of Brasov (Romania).

The WISE European project focuses on identifying what are the causes of student's malaise and how to prevent it. It will provide an overview of practices in HEIs regarding students' mental health. In the long term, the project aims to raise awareness about students' well-being and highlight what can be done to improve it in Europe.

In order to carry out the project, the consortium is leading a major study on student well being in two steps:

1. The first step consists of a **quantitative survey "Student well-being initiatives in European higher education"**. The online survey was addressed to three different publics: one for students, the other for HEIs and the last one for student associations. Here is the **synthesis report concerning these 3 surveys**: it aims to identify what's at stake for students and HEIs and other institutions across Europe¹. For the student organisations survey there have been 55 answers and **we can observe an overrepresentation of the countries which are part of the project consortium**. Indeed 40 answers come from France, Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania or Greece.
2. The second step is a qualitative report based on focus groups and interviews of students, teaching and administrative staff in European HEIs to acquire a precise knowledge of actions for students' well-being in Europe. The objective is to document and deepen the knowledge about a series of interesting practices in favour of student well-being. The following report is referring to these focus groups, although a specific report will analyse deeper these interviews.

¹ This synthesis is based on the survey analysis: Quantitative study about well being (Authors: Prof. PhD. Ana Maria CAZAN, Prof. PhD. Mariela PAVALACHE ILIE, Master student: Alexander TUDOSE) (Transilvania University of Brasov)

Partners of the project

7 partners in the consortium:

3 student networks: [Animafac](#) (a network of student associations in France); [the European University Foundation](#) (EUF, a university network based in Luxembourg); [the European Students' Union](#) (ESU, a network of student associations, based in Belgium) ;

4 universities across Europe: [Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra](#) in Portugal; [Aristotle University of Thessaloniki](#) in Greece; [Transilvania University of Braşov](#) in Romania; [Charles University of Prague](#) in Czech Republic.



Universitatea
Transilvania
din Braşov



ARISTOTLE
UNIVERSITY
OF THESSALONIKI



CHARLES
UNIVERSITY



Moreover 6 associated partners are involved in the project to ensure the dissemination of the project and its results: the Erasmus Student Network, the European Youth Parliament, the Nightline association, the National Federation of Polytechnic Higher Education Student Associations (FNAESP), the UBUNTU Leaders Academy and Toute l'Europe (French media).

Conceptions

Our conception of Higher Education Institutions

It seems important to remind everyone there are several ways to consider HEIs.

Obviously, the first consideration is about the academic role of HEIs: Offering a place and framework to teach any competences and know-how that could enable students either to build

their academic career or to complete the skills base acquired during their training, in order to prepare their professional integration.

Then there is another important consideration with a social dimension: the university plays an essential role in training engaged citizens². Studying in an HEI is often the first step to life as an adult, with all the organisation and administrative work that comes with it. Student life also gives students the opportunity to discover democracy and volunteering (in associations or student unions). So HEIs have an important social role, allowing students to make their first step as young adults and citizens.

Our conception of student life

Students do not go to university solely to acquire academic knowledge, they are also experimenting with different ways of being a citizen. As part of the civil society, students build their background and experiences, while getting involved in projects and causes.

That's why this survey investigated every part of student life: studying, housing, eating, participating in student association, playing sports, etc. It seemed important to the consortium to consider student life as a whole and study different factors of well-being for a student.

Definitions of Well-being

General definition

Well-being can be defined in many ways. Here is the definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Constitution: *"A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"*.

This definition is a good beginning but still, this definition does not take into account other variables which are also important for well being. For example, this definition doesn't include emotional experience, frequent and intense positive states (e.g. joy, hope, and pride) and it doesn't take overall life satisfaction into account. Also, during a focus group led by Animafac, some students added that it's possible to feel good even when having a disease or infirmity but that one should learn to live in peace with it.

Students definition

During several focus groups, students came up with 3 interesting notions regarding well-being, they:

- defined well-being by assessing and taking into account the socio-economic background of students (having money for food, housing, and socio cultural life outside the studies)
- also related mental health issues to work life balance.
- highlighted the issue of safety : *"The majority of participants stated that feeling safe is an important component of well-being"* (Focus Group lead by Aristotle University)

Consortium's definition

² European Step - Study Report

The consortium quickly understood it wasn't easy to come up with a common definition of well-being. Regarding the different definitions, we accept a broad definition of well-being which covers social, economic, physical and psychological aspects. It is the balance between different factors contributing to well-being or malaise. Well-being is not just the absence of disease or illness. It's a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. well-being is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, well-being could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.

Plan of this output

Committed to emancipation, and social and civic development of students, our consortium considers students as active citizens, both learners and actors in their environment.

Therefore, we decided to analyse the well-being factors in various aspects of a student's civic life, from their basic living conditions (housing, food, transportation) to their civic engagements, as well as their social life.

This report presents, in the first part, the different elements contributing to the well-being and fulfilment of students in their paths of social integration. Secondly, it addresses strategies to enhance their well-being throughout their learning and citizenship in the field of higher education.

II. About the report

WISE report

How can we contribute to student's well-being in Europe? Where do students struggle? What helps them to improve their well-being? Is a student's mental health taken into account in HEI's policies? How do institutions organise themselves to support students?

Coordinated by the Transilvania University of Brasov and AnimaFac, with the support of the consortium, the present report outlines the results of the European WISE surveys.

It interrogated students and HEIs about mental health, focusing especially on actions taken to improve students' well-being. The **main aim of the study is to identify the factors of well-being among students** regarding its different components. More specifically, we aimed to:

- Measure student well-being in different countries and compare their level of well-being according to different criteria (eg. gender, living situation, disability, etc.)
- Identify their opinions about the importance of well-being in daily life, by analysing several aspects of student life, such as activities for the development of well-being, and connections inside and outside the university.
- Analyse the impact of the sense of belonging and attachment to a specific university on well-being.
- Identify possible worries and anxiety generated by macrosocial events which could affect student well-being.

Dissemination of the survey

Different channels of communication

The seven partners of the project disseminated the online survey through different networks:

- Internet based activities (each partner has its own channel): Website, Newsletter, Social media, mailing lists, etc.
- Face to face activities: Business and trade fairs, Training seminars, Promotion events, existing events, Meetings/Roundtables, etc.

III. Student perceptions on specific topics

In the following part of the survey we sought to analyse specific aspects related to student well-being. The WISE consortium developed a questionnaire, including two main parts: a demographic section and a survey about well-being and several dimensions related to student life.

The socio-demographic questionnaire included questions related to: gender, marital status, nationality, type of student (undergraduate, graduate, PhD student), faculty and university, employment status, living situation, and health status.

The well-being survey included two subsections: the PERMA profiler (Butler & Kern, 2016) to measure student well-being (it is a brief multidimensional measure of well-being) and the attitudes and opinions survey to measure the importance of several types of activities, connections, sense of belonging to the university, use of university services, etc.

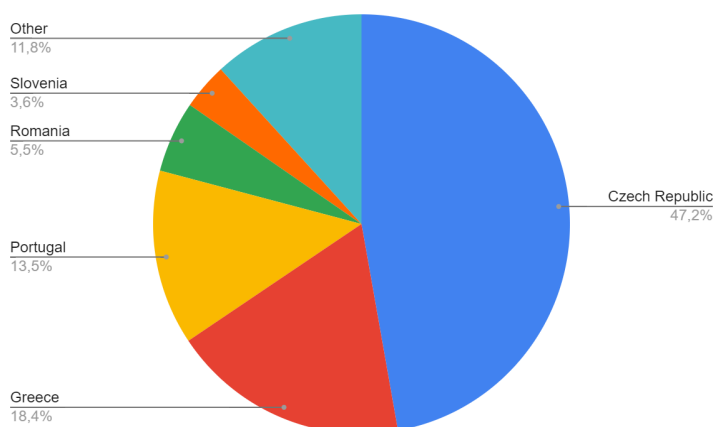
All the participants gave their written consent to participate in the study. The data was anonymised, and they were informed that the participation is voluntary and non-mandatory, with the possibility to drop out of the study being ensured at any moment.

Profile of student respondents

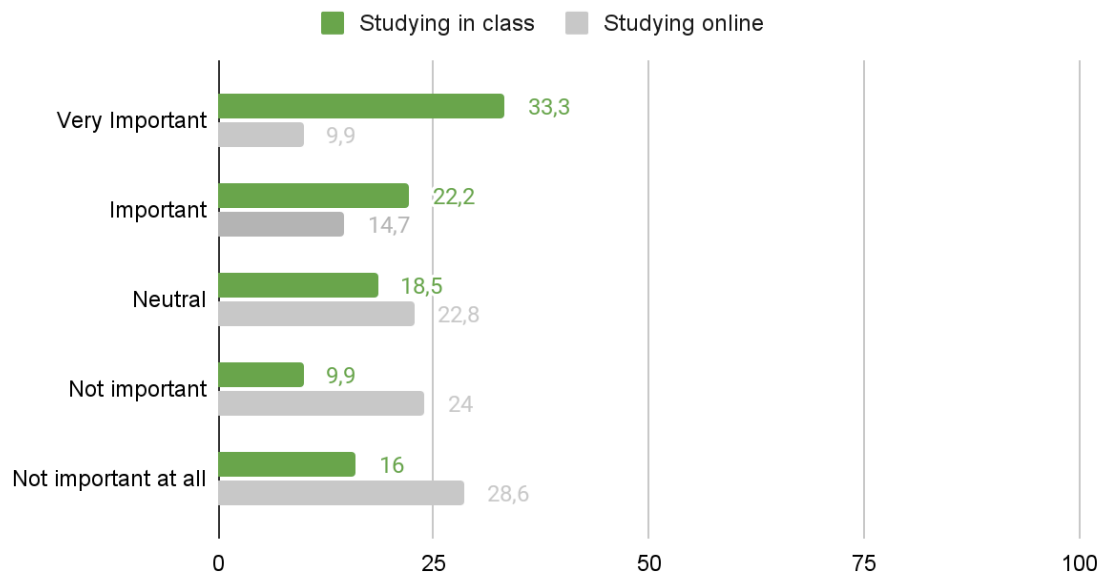
2697 students responded to the survey: the sample is diverse regarding gender, age, marital status, country of origin, type of student, disability, employment status, or living situation.

The report will detail below the different categories and give precise figures. This survey does not claim to represent students' in European countries, as some countries were more

represented than others. As it can be seen on the chart to the left, there was a high percentage of Czech respondents, in comparison to other EU countries. Therefore, the high number of responses from the Czech Republic probably influences the overall results of the survey. This should be taken into consideration while reading and understanding the results presented in the following report.



The importance of studies for student well-being



The first figures are about how studying contributes to student well-being. **Almost 70 % of the respondents consider that studying in class is important and very important for their well-being.** Studying online shows that it is not considered a desirable way to enhance well-being. Only 25% of respondents consider studying online as part of their well-being. Although learning from home would offer a more comfortable and relaxed experience, results show that **most of the students found online learning to be more stressful than in-person learning.** Maintaining concentration at home, limited privacy and frequent interruptions from family members or assisting siblings with their work can be major distractions and factors affecting students' well-being.

Additionally, for more than half of respondents doing an internship contributes to their well-being, likely because it allows them to prepare for their careers and offer them new connections.

Being on the campus

Results showed that students value relaxing areas on their campus: more than 50% consider these areas are important or very important to their well being. It's also interesting to see students also like relaxing outside the campus (86% of them identify areas outside the campus are important or very important as a source of their well-being).

It was surprising that other activities such as eating at the student restaurant or cafeteria do not have an important contribution to well-being, the percentages regarding the importance of this activity being balanced (and so, not significant). Although student well-being often focuses on

subjective perceptions and mental health, researchers started to take into consideration the importance of physical well-being linked to behaviours such as eating and drinking. Future communication to students about well-being may include this point.

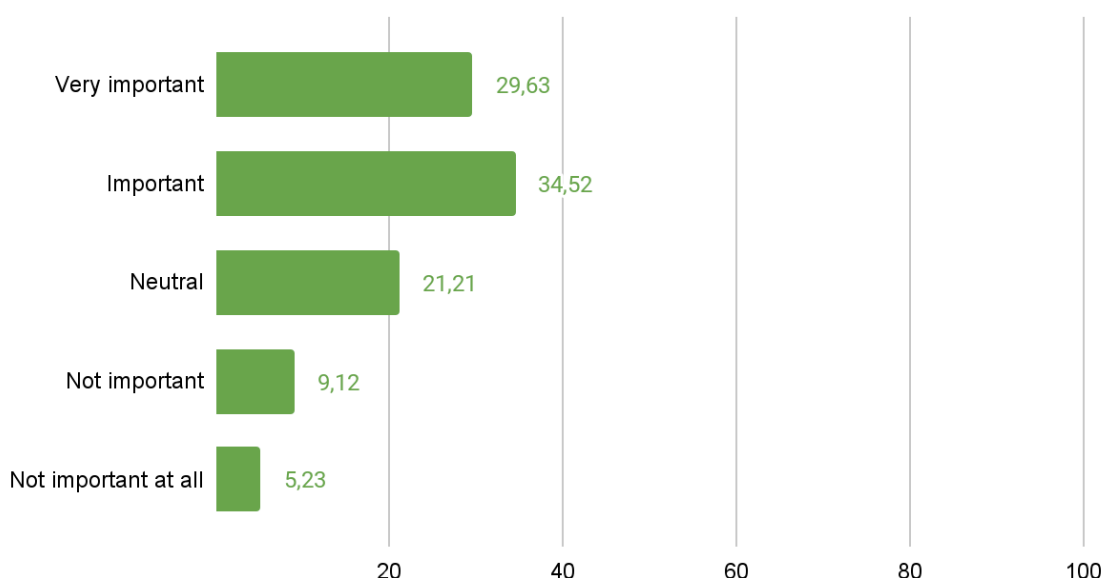
Another place which is not considered as a source of well-being on campuses are libraries: 40% of respondent students would say the library is not important or not important at all for their well-being and 25% answered “neutral” to the question.

Sense of belonging to university

The concept of “belonging” refers to how much students feel valued, accepted, and included, fostered through social, academic, and professional interactions (Parkes 2014). The sense of belonging is crucial for positive educational experiences and academic adjustment, being associated with well-being, motivation, and achievement (France, Finney, and Swerdzewski 2010). The need to belong and identify with others is pressing and anxiety-inducing for new students, and making initial social contacts is crucial for them to feel a part of university life (Maunder et al. 2013). Meaningful social involvement offers students valuable social and emotional support during their adjustment to university (Tinto 1993). Previous studies found significant relationships between the adjustment to university and the level of attachment students had to their university and peers. Students who had stronger connections and relationships with their peers at the university exhibited higher levels of adjustment, whereas those who experienced problematic relationships reported lower adjustment. **The attachment to the university itself was also associated with adjustment**, with students who had a stronger sense of attachment to the institution demonstrating higher levels of adjustment; the most influential factor in predicting university adjustment was the level of attachment students had to their university friends. Although university attachment also played a role in adjustment, its impact was relatively smaller compared to peer attachment (Maunder, 2018). The results of our study confirm that aspects such as going on to campus, belonging to the university or being part of the university are considered very important by the students, which confirms their high attachment to the university and the high sense of belonging.

In the following graphs we can see how important belonging is to the university. The majority asserts that it was important and very important for them.

How important is belonging to your university for you?



We can underline that Undergraduate and Graduate students value going to campus more than PhD students, while Undergraduate and PhD students value belonging to the university most.

Services & department on the campus

If universities offer a large number of services and departments, it seems difficult to reach all the students. Too few are aware of services and most of them mention to never have used the following services :

- Students health centre: Never used by 80,015% of students
- Student life office³: a bit less than 50% never visited this office
- Student housing organisation: never for 71,22% of students
- Medical Center: never for 74,75% of the students
- Career counselling : never for 81,53% of the students
- Counselling services : never for 76,19% of the students
- Academic Help: never for 68,89% of the students

In conclusion, this usage level is not optimal. Universities may need to review whether they fulfil their target figures for how many students make use of their services. HEIs provide different services, such as medical & health care. But students do not use these services, they often do not know about their existence. HEIs need to develop new ways to communicate about these services to students at any time of the year.

³ In France, we understand the services dedicated to student life which are not administrative related.

Sport and well-being

Fifty percent of students consider doing a sport on campus to be unimportant, whereas **more than half of them consider doing a sport outside the campus to be important or very important**. Engaging in physical activity has been linked to various benefits for emotional well-being, including a decrease in depressive, anxiety, and stress disorders, as well as improvements in self-esteem and cognitive functioning. Research shows that doing sport more than the recommended 7h per week is supposed to increase well-being (Merglen et al, 2014). Well-being could be predicted by sports participation, physical activity levels combined with levels of optimism and pessimism (Pietsch, Linder, & Jansen, 2022).

Culture on the campus

It is encouraging that a large number of students perceive the contribution of participating in cultural activities to well-being (**63,21% consider cultural events as important or very important as a source of well-being**). However, the activities offered by the university are not highly appreciated, either because they do not exist or because they do not meet the expectations of the students.

Various extracurricular activities have been examined in relation to well-being and anxiety, including music, art and cultural activities in general. Music, in particular, has garnered significant interest due to its historical role in supporting humanity during pandemics (Bassler, 2020).

Informal activities, cultural and civic activities are the most common actions taken by associations to promote well-being. But there's a real dissonance between the students' perception of student organisations and the perception of student organisations in their impact on student well-being. According to students, student organisations are not very important for their well-being (57,90% consider student associations are not important or not important at all for their well-being). Whereas 80% of the student organisations think that their action is important for the well-being of the students.

Volunteering and well-being

Research highlighted the positive effects of volunteering activities and charitable donations on psychological well-being (Appau & Churchill, 2019), individuals involved in volunteering activities tend to report higher life satisfaction, fewer depressive symptoms, and improved overall psychological well-being (Choi & Kim, 2011). Here results are surprising: **Only 22% of students believe that participating in student associations or societies contributes to well-being**.

Those who are engaged in volunteering would say volunteering activities provide a sense of purpose, meaning, fosters interpersonal trust between volunteers and those receiving help, creates a sense of security and acceptance, promotes social interactions that provide emotional warmth. Benevolent acts often allow individuals to take pride in their skills and strengths, enhancing their sense of self (Musick & Wilson, 2003).

HEIs also have their role to play in recognising student engagement. The skills-based approach might be considered as it answers to the demanding labour market. Indeed, the idea that students need to differentiate themselves on the labour market by extending their resume with internships and extra-academic experiences is omnipresent.⁴ Engagement can be valued from an employability perspective which may explain the role of the institution in its recognition. It is more about recognising the skills acquired than recognising the experience of engagement in itself.

International mobility : students going abroad

Going abroad for student mobility moderately contributes to well-being (46,64% of students consider going abroad a important or very important source of well-being). The language barrier or a lack of experience as an outgoing student could be potential factors responsible for this finding. This aspect deserves further investigation, given the fact that the opportunity to study abroad can offer significant academic, personal, and professional rewards, providing a chance to know a new culture, expand horizons, and undergo personal growth. However, being in a foreign country away from familiar support systems can also present challenges. Adapting to a new culture requires flexibility to embrace different customs, beliefs, and living conditions.

The importance of connections for student well-being

Meeting other students is one of the strongest dimensions of well-being for students. This is understandable given that the need for affiliation is crucial for students.

To the question “How important are the following connections for your well-being ?” here are the answers:

- With teachers: almost 2/3 of students consider connections with teachers as important or very important for their well-being.
- With non-academic staff: results are balanced and thus, not significant
- With student associations or unions : almost 30% declared it's not important at all and 45% “not important or neutral”. Associations are not identified as a factor of well-being by most students
- With family : connections with family are very important for 79,71%
- With friends: that's even more important, with 82,90% of the respondents answering that it is important or very important for their well being

Connections contribute to student well-being: Significant connections to family, friends, teachers and other students are important factors for increasing the well-being of university students. Indeed, based on the pandemic experience, students have been mentioning connections as an important factor of well-being.

⁴ European STEP

Perception and level of anxiety on different topics

When asked how often they feel anxious, the following percentage responded feeling very anxious about: 69,6% war, 62% health, 52% climate change. We can thus see that students are preoccupied by social topics and that they are not focused only on student life and university. Above their identity as students they also behave as citizens and are concerned about political events and developments.

The impact of the COVID

The studies also revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted most of student activities especially: Studying in classes (68,3%), Meeting with students (74,6%), Eating at the cafeteria (53,6%).

Crossed data: are there any differences in student well-being depending on sub-categories?

The participants to the survey were 2697 students, the sample being diverse and different categories well represented concerning gender, age, marital status, country of origin, type of student, employment status, or living situation.

Depending on sub-categories, we can observe some differences: some categories are more concerned by anxiety than others, and the factors of well-being can also be different from a sub-group to another.

Differences according to gender (male, female, not the gender assigned at birth)

Among the answers, 70.1% (N = 1906) identify as female, 27.5% (N = 741) identify as male, 1.9% (N = 50) identify with another gender, while 2.2% (N = 58) do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

We focused on cisgender as we do not have enough answers for the other two categories: the number of participants identifying with other genders or not with the gender assigned at birth is too low compared to the other gender groups. Thus our conclusions may not be valid. Nevertheless we can underline that if male and female participants are mostly on the same level for all well-being dimensions, the ones who identify with another gender have significantly lower levels of well-being.

The answers show that female students may be more anxious on several topics, such as climate change, war & conflict and also gender inequalities. Student life habits and connections students value for their well-being are (surprisingly!) very similar for male and female students.

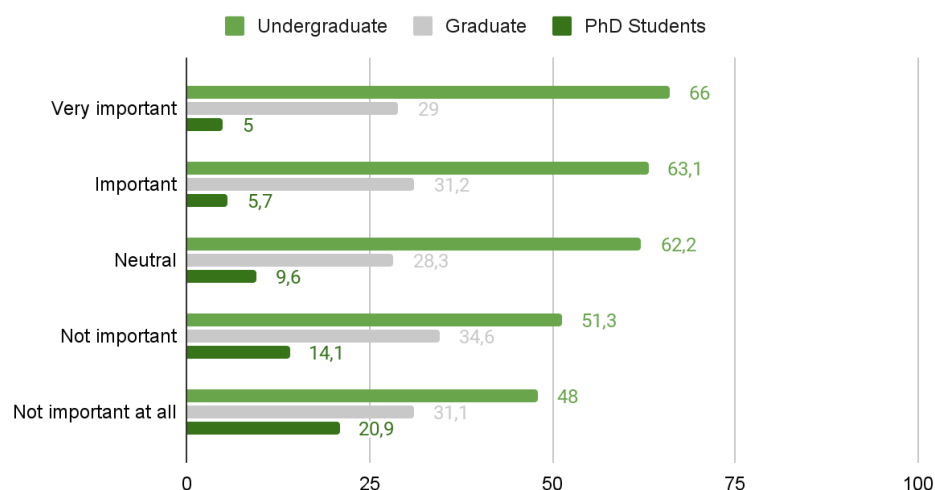
Differences according to type of students (undergraduate, graduate, PhD students)

Among the answers, there was 62.1% (N = 1676) of undergraduate students, 30.1% (N = 813) of graduate students and 7.7% (N = 208) of PhD students, while 1.1% (N = 29) are Erasmus students and 9.3% (N = 252) domestic international students.

Here is probably **the most differentiating category**. We observe lots of disparity in the answers: Being an undergraduate, graduate or PhD student strongly influences factors of well-being for them.

Studying in class : Undergraduate students consider going to class to study is an important factor for their well-being. They also value doing an internship more than other students who declared on the contrary it's not important at all to them. PhD students massively answered "not important at all" to the question about how important studying in class is for their well-being.

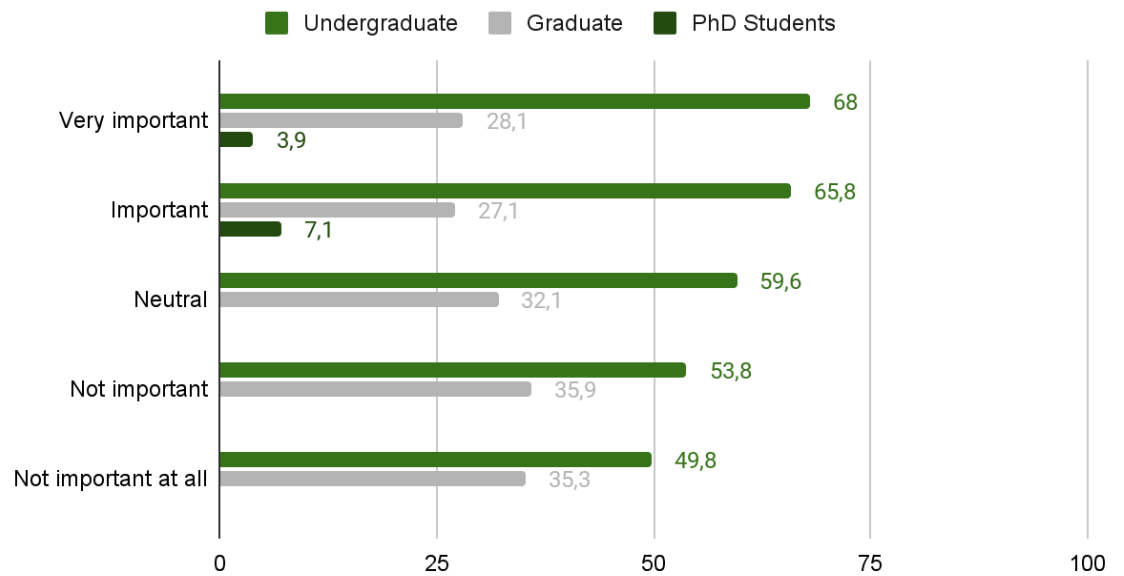
For your well-being, how important is it to study in class?



Respondents: 62,1% Undergraduate students, 30,1% Graduate students, 7,7% PhD Students

Going on campus: To the question about how important going on the campus is (for student's well-being), graduate students did answer without saying that going on campus was not the most important factor regarding their well-being. In contrast, undergraduates declare it's very important to them, whereas PhD students declare that going to the campus does not contribute to their well-being.

For your well-being, how important is it to go on campus?



Volunteering in different University related activities: undergraduate students

appreciate more volunteering opportunities than other students which is considered as not important at all for PhD students.

Anxiety: undergraduate students declared more to be “extremely anxious” about terrorism and gender inequalities. Concerning anxiety, PhD tends to be generally less worried than other students.

Being a graduate student who has a long experience of university life improves student well-being: that’s probably why graduate and PhD students do not identify studying in class or doing an internship as a factor of well-being. **This survey clearly points out undergraduate students feel more anxious than the rest of students. They also strongly appreciate going on campus, probably to socialise.**

Differences according to marital status (single, married/cohabiting, divorced/separated)

Among the answers, there was a large majority of single students: 83.8% (N = 2260). Then 15.1% (N = 408) of married or cohabiting students and lastly 1.1% (N = 29) of divorced, separated, or widowed students. There is no important difference on general habits on the campus (about eating, library, sport, culture, associations, etc). Here are the notable ones:

Studying in Classes : is more important for the well-being of single or divorced/separated/widowed students. They are probably looking for more opportunities to socialise. On the contrary, studying online is very important to married or cohabiting students.

Meeting other students : is not important at all to married or cohabiting students (still in the same line)

Differences according to living situations (with family, shared flat, own flat, student dorm)

Among the answers, 38.8% (N = 1046) of students declare they live at home with their family, 24.0% (N = 646) live in a shared flat, 22.4% (N = 605) live in their own flat and 14.8% (N = 1046) live in a student dorm.

The living situation does not influence factors of well-being on campus, whereas we could have thought some students are more isolated if they live alone (flat or student dorm). But it seems, if students choose the housing that fits their way of life, the living situation does not influence factors of well-being.

The only two noticeable differences are:

Studying online: is less important (not the favourite method) for students living in a student dorm. That may be due to the difficulties of finding a quiet room and a good internet connection.

Relaxing outside the campus is not important at all for students living “at home/with family”. They spend probably their time relaxing time at home

Differences according to disability

8.3% (N = 224) of student respondents have disabilities. Maybe the proportion of answers is not enough to give strong and valid conclusions. Still, it can provide an insight on what factors are important for students with disabilities's well-being.

Having disabilities changes students' answers especially about connection and student life. It does not impact the anxiety rate which is very similar for students with disabilities and students in general.

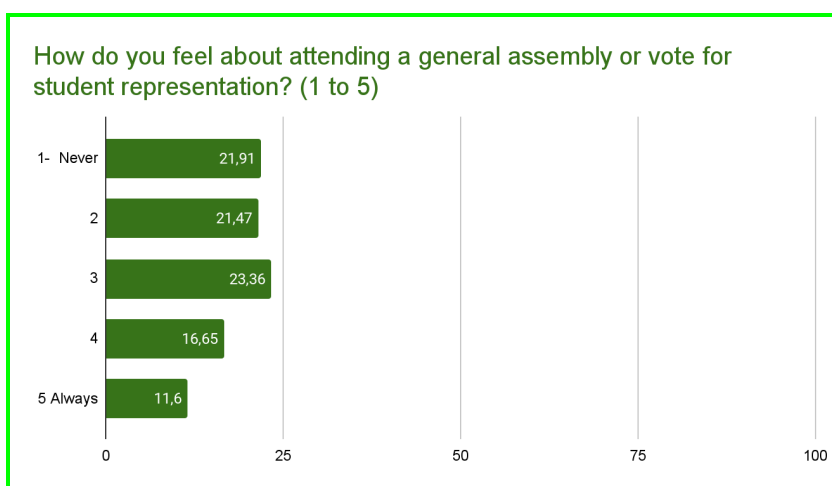
- Studying in class is less important for the well-being of students with disabilities. Still in this line, they defined studying online as an important factor of well-being for them.
- Meeting other students: is considered as less important to them than for students in general. It might demonstrate they do not see their time on campus as time for socialising.
- Sport outside of the campus: less important to them than students in general
- Cultural events: they show no specific interest
- Relaxing outside the campus: students with disabilities consider it does not contribute to well-being at all.
- Connection with family, other students and friends: they declared more than other students that it's not important for their well-being. This answer is very surprising.

These are surprising figures, which can really question our survey and how we asked questions: we probably have a bias as valid people. Maybe we didn't ask the right questions! Our figures do not allow us to see if there are favourite places frequented by students with disabilities on campus (the only real well-being factor that we can identify is the fact that they prefer to study online). As for connections: it is also true that we did not ask the question of whether students prefer to be solitary. What would it mean about their well-being then?

How students feel they can act on these topics

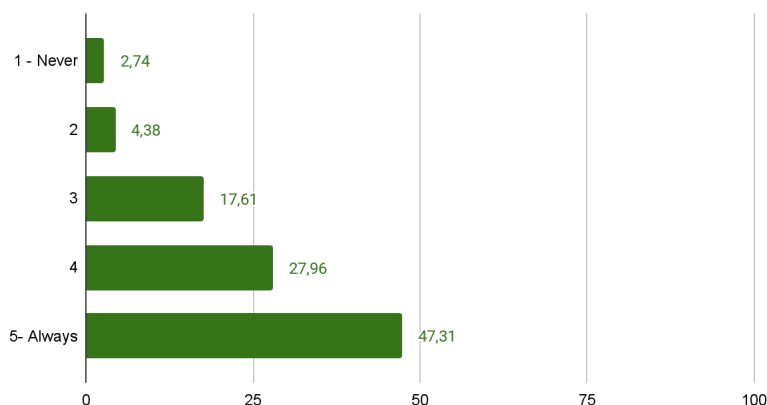
The attitudes of students towards aspects such as democracy, attending a general meeting, voting for a student representative, volunteering or helping others were also investigated. More than half of the respondents believe that they can take action supporting democracy (52,07%).

In contrast, it is disheartening that **only a quarter of students believe they can participate in a general meeting or vote for a student representative**. Student unions or associations do not reach a large percentage of students on the campuses. Over a quarter of students are ambivalent, indicating that they could be drawn towards such activities. The situation is similar when it comes to volunteering in university activities. Around 40% of students consider it possible to volunteer both in a student association or union and in a university activity, in addition to 25% who are potentially willing but currently express ambivalence towards these activities.



On the other hand, it is encouraging that **nearly 80% of respondents feel capable of helping another person with a personal issue**. And the strongest dimension that helps student feel they can act is “everyday actions”

Everyday actions are the best way to help others



V. Improving student well-being by Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

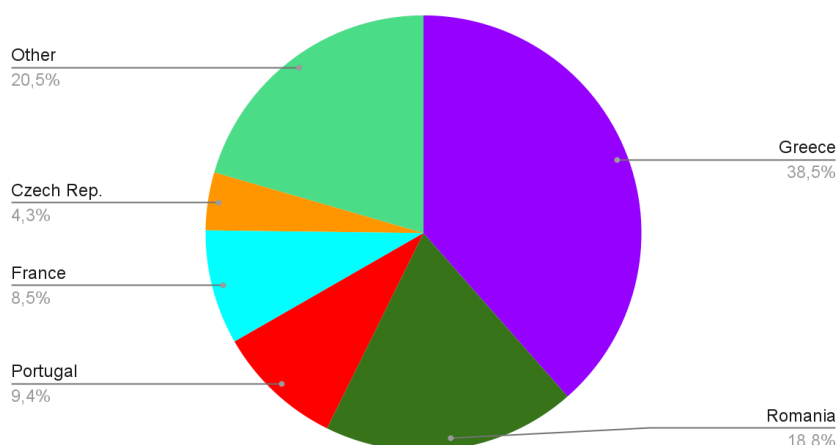
Many European universities try to offer their students the necessary support to achieve their academic potential and gain the most from their time. Student well-being is a priority for many people's schedules in the domain of higher education. The most recent mental health statistics from the Insight Network detect that 42.8% of the students that answered characterised themselves as generally or repeatedly distressed and the COVID crisis deeply changed students' and staff's habits on campuses. So well-being is an inescapable topic that is still on the rise.

Well-being as a part of HEIs strategies. It seems that well-being is taken into consideration in the strategy and services of universities in Europe. Most of the HEIs who answered responded that well-being was an important subject implemented with different actions. The second trend is that well-being is a subject which is tackled through other subjects. The third trend is that well-being is an important subject but they don't have any actions on it. And last but not least, the subject is not addressed. The needs of associations to ensure the well-being of their volunteers: In order to improve the well-being of volunteers in associations, more than half of the respondents (58.18%) would need training on well-being and health and better communication with the medical and social services and mental health consultation services of their universities or cities capable of supporting volunteers in difficulty

Profile of university staff respondents

The survey had **117 university staff respondents**. They are all working at various faculties around Europe. It's important to mention some countries are more represented than others, mostly because the dissemination was actively led by our partners in their countries. Here is the repartition :

Staff respondent



The main professions of respondents are: administrators, pro-rectors, deans, department directors, researchers, professors, etc.

Well-being: a valued topic

Most of the HEIs **(60,6%) value student well-being as a topic for which they take specific actions**. And it's interesting to read that **24,9% of HEI answered well-being as a topic they value, but have not taken any specific actions for improving it**.

About having an official definition with the HEI, only 3.42% mentioned having an official definition of well being. Moreover **47% of them feel there is an informal definition**.

The importance of studies for student well-being

The majority of **HEI staff believe that studying in classes is important or very important for student well-being**. As you can see below they value it more than students:

- HEI: Important = 27,35% + very important = 57,26%
- Students: Important = 33,77% + very important = 35,52%

In opposition, **studying online seems to be a less relevant activity (from HEI and students' perspective)**: The results from the answers are equal. Lastly, more than 75% of HEI staff consider doing an internship as being important or very important for student well-being. They value it more than students but still, both students and HEI agree about the importance of doing an internship.

The importance of connections

Fostering social interactions for students seems to be one of the priorities for HEI, with almost **85% of HEIs describing meeting other students as being very important for their well-being**.

Social activities are also considered important by academics: eating at the student restaurant, going to the library or doing sports, participating in cultural activities, relaxing inside and outside the campus, etc. are considered very important (more 45-50%). Albeit, students would rather socialise in other places/activities than the campus.

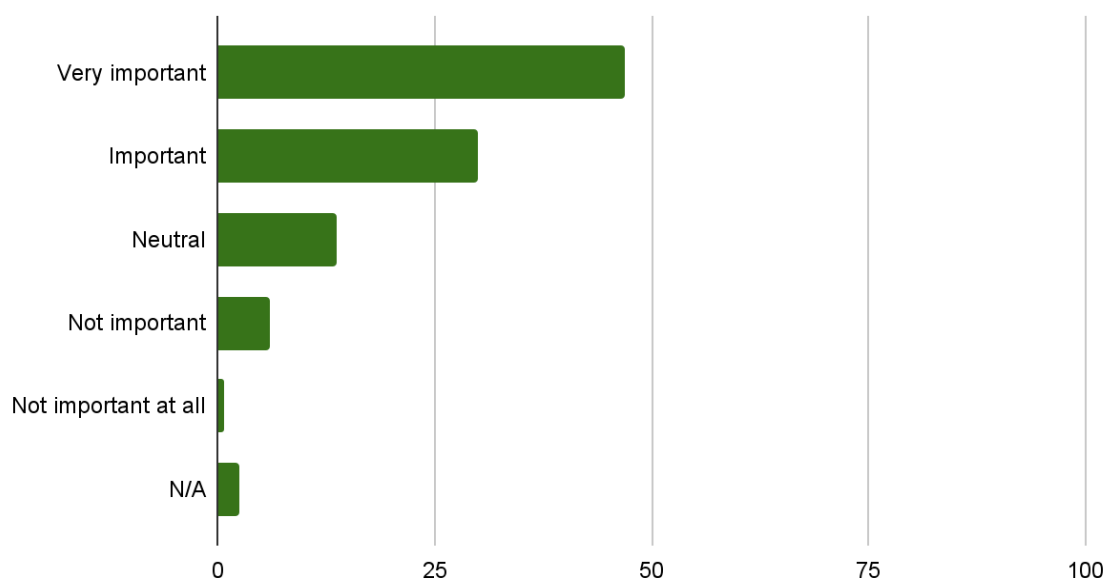
Difference between HEI and students answers

As we just discussed, the following activities are considered as being important or very important for student, in HEI's opinion: eating at the student restaurant or cafeteria, going to the library, doing sports on campus, volunteering in different university related activities, participating in student associations or societies, participating in cultural activities offered by your university, relaxing in spaces provided on campus and going abroad in student mobility programs (such as Erasmus+).

Compared to the results obtained for the Student Survey, it seems that representatives for HEI value almost all described activities more than students do. This finding can suggest that HEIs have not appropriately evaluated the needs of students for increasing well-being.

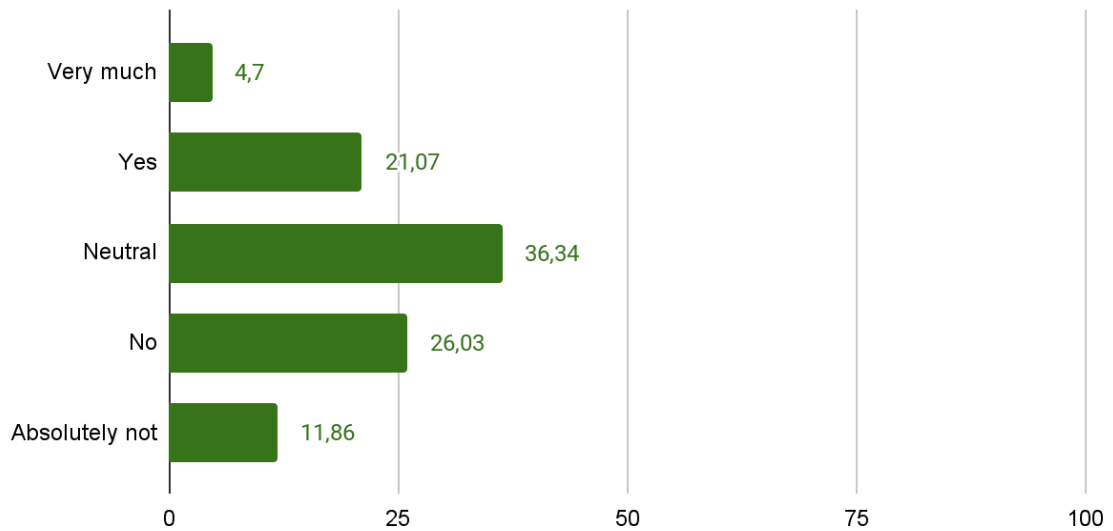
Another relevant difference between HEI and students point of view is **volunteering** (in different university-related activities or participating in student associations or societies) and **participating in cultural activities offered by the university**. These two are perceived as more important by HEIs than students, as the previous section of this report showed (only 22% of students believe that participating in student associations or societies contributes to well-being”.

Volunteering in different university related activities



Also, the survey asked students “to what extent do you think well-being is taken into account in your university?” **Only a small percentage of the students (25%) believe that their university takes their well-being into consideration or is sensitive to it.** This result serves as an alarm signal for universities, urging them to either initiate initiatives to support student well-being or to make their existing initiatives known. Campuses should contribute to improving academic performance, retention, and graduation rates, in parallel to sustaining the well-being of students, by demonstrating improved cultural awareness, sharpened critical thinking abilities, active participation in community service, and a greater likelihood of being compassionate and involved citizens.

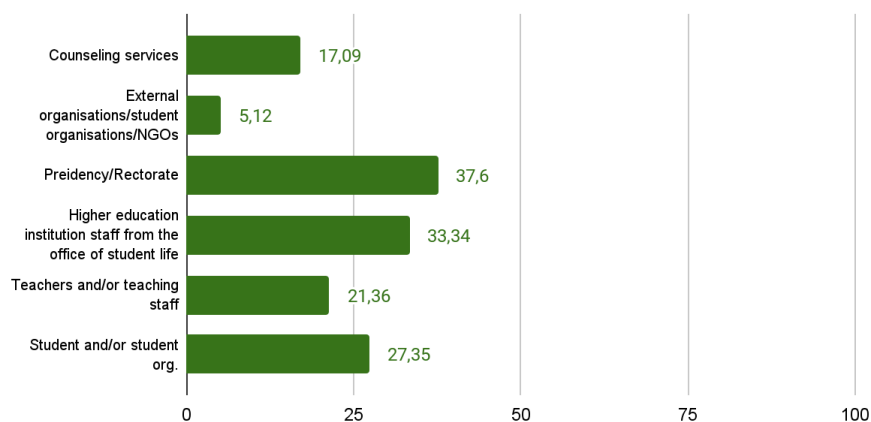
To what extent do you think well-being is taken into account in your University?



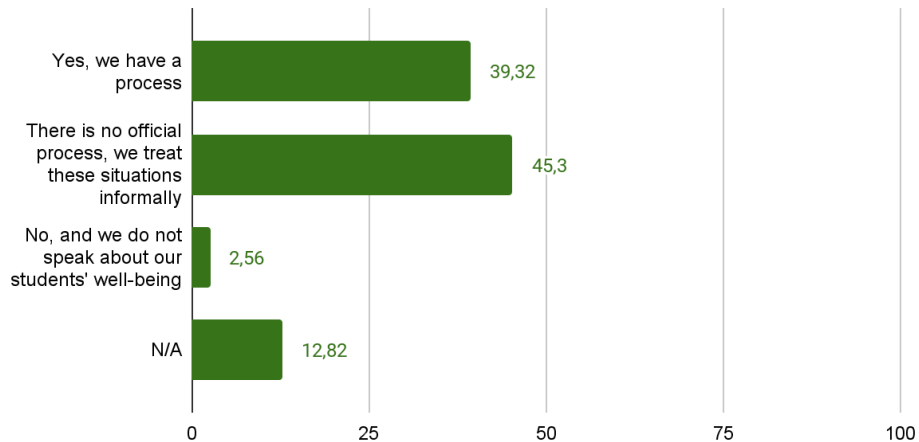
Strategy and process to improve well-being

Most of the respondents stated that their institutional strategy includes the issue of student well-being (55.56%). Most HEIs answered they do not have an official process for addressing student well-being and treat such issues informally, while some have a process in place. When asked who initiated the work on student well-being strategy and processes, most respondents mentioned the presidency or rectorate of the HEI, staff from the office of student life and students and/or student organisations. External organisations, student organisations and NGOs seem to be less involved in designing interventions in HEI.

Who initiated the work on student well-being strategy? (multiple choice)



Does your institution have specific processes regarding students' well-being?

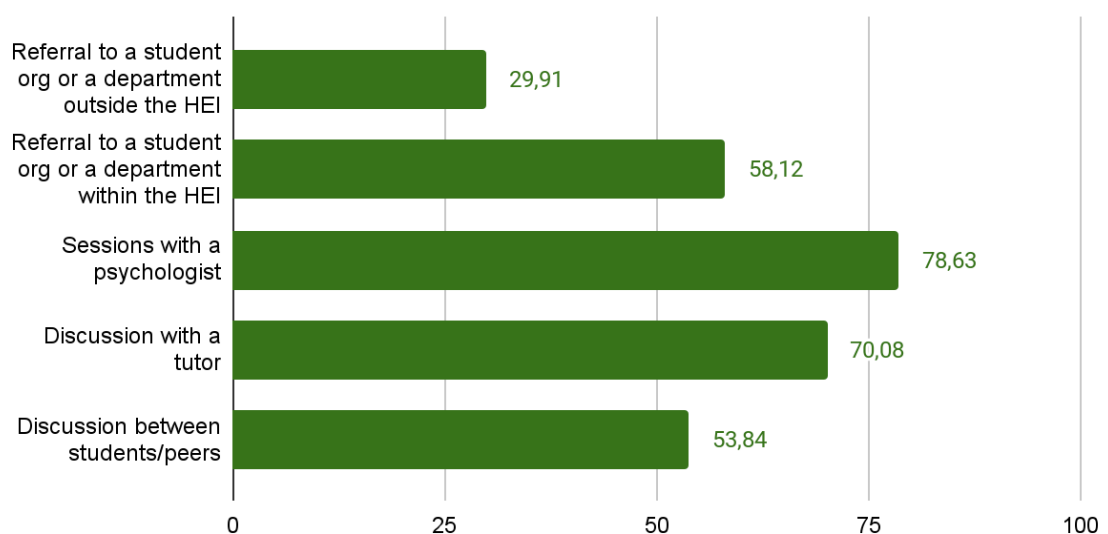


Operational action, activities, and facilities

Most respondents (39,32%) chose not to answer the question whether their HEI has a unit or department dedicated to student well-being. 35,89% stated that their institution has such a structure, while almost 24,78% of respondents mention not having one.

Most HEI offer students sessions with a psychologist and discussions with a tutor, while some provide a referral to a student organisation or a department or discussion between peers. The least of respondents mention referring students to organisations or departments outside of their HEI.

What does your organisation offer to help students? (multiple choice)



VI. Improving student well-being by student organisations

In this part we propose a summary of the results of the studies addressed to students' organisations.

Profile of respondents and response shortcomings

55 associations answered the survey completely.

All the partners disseminated this questionnaire to student associations, networks of associations, student unions and universities that relayed the information to their associations, etc. That's why in these 55 answers, **we can observe an overrepresentation of the countries which are part of the project consortium.** Indeed 40 answers come from France, Czech Republic, Portugal, Romania or Greece. This is obviously due to our dissemination which was naturally done in the areas where our contacts and partners are located. However, we also received responses from Norway, Switzerland, Italy and Ukraine.

With this in mind, it did not seem relevant to us to make analyses by country, as these analyses would not have been representative of the geographical reality.

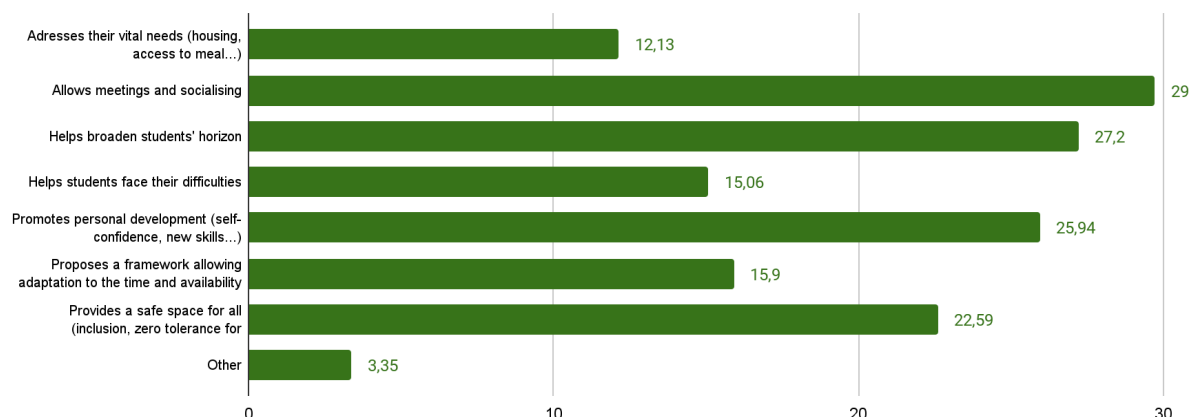
The needs of associations to ensure the well-being of their volunteers: In order to improve the well-being of volunteers in associations, more than half of the respondents (58.18%) would need training on well-being and health and better communication with the medical and social services and mental health consultation services of their universities or cities capable of supporting volunteers in difficulty.

Value of well-being and how associations contribute to it

More than half of the associations (58%) consider that well-being is a subject that they value and on which the association acts. However, 20% of the respondents value the subject but do not specifically act on it, and for almost 13%, well-being is not a subject that is tackled head-on but is discussed under another subject.

To the question “How does your student organisation contribute to the well-being of the students you reach?”, here are the answers:

How does your student organisation contribute to the well-being of the students you reach?



According to the responses, **more than 90% of associations** affirm that their student organisation contributes to the well-being of the students they reach through the **socialising dimension of the association**. This is consistent with other studies which also emphasise that socialisation is crucial to students' well-being.

At the second place, **76%** of the respondents consider that their association contributes to the well-being of students by **opening up their horizons and promoting their personal development**. We can therefore state that the intellectual development and acquisition of new skills offered by voluntary work is, according to the associations, **the second most important criterion of well-being**.

The well-being of the students engaged in the associations

Regarding the well-being of the volunteers in the associations, **almost half (47%) of the student organisations consider the well-being within their associations as very important and 34,5% as important**.

The associations that responded consider well-being as important or very important which means that this issue is very well taken into account by the associations, at least theoretically.

Also, all the respondents consider that the involvement of volunteers in their association has a positive impact overall. Indeed, **74% of the student associations consider volunteering has an important or very important positive impact on student's well-being**.

These results are in compliance with the previous result on how students feel they can act on well-being: **the strongest dimension was “everyday actions”**, being useful to the local community.

The needs of associations to ensure the well-being of their volunteers

Through this survey, we also inquired about the capacity of the associations to face a situation of a student in distress. We questioned them about their needs to deal with these situations in the best possible way. **72,71% of associations have already been in contact with students in ill-being**: 82,5% of them declared they knew what to do when the rest did not know how to react.

Another interesting figure is that **22.5% of the volunteers who had already been in contact with students experiencing difficulties were in this situation on a recurring basis**, which is a significant proportion.

We investigated how the “82,5% knew how to react” reacted: the most common way was to **refer to university services (75,75%), followed by "offering them activities that can help"** and redirecting them to medical/social services. Finally, only 39,39% considered it relevant to redirect the person in ill-being to other associations.

Eventually, we also investigated what kind of help associations miss to support better students in distress. In order to improve the well-being of students, more than half of the respondents declared **they would need training on well-being and health (58.18%) and better communication with the medical and social services / mental health consultation services** of their universities or cities (56.36%). However, a large proportion of respondents would **also like to have more resources for associations and better equipment for their association** (47%). Thus, for them, the lack of resources is a factor that can be harmful for the well-being of volunteers

Over 47% of respondents would also like to see better promotion of volunteering on campus. This shows the added value on well-being recognized by the associations, which is, according to them, not sufficiently promoted in the university environment.

VI. Conclusion and implications

Our results highlight specific needs for various student categories, which could be important for the implementation of well-being initiatives. We know that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the well-being of students, given the fact that they were not able to fulfil some of their academic needs.

Significant connections to family, teachers and other students are important factors for increasing the well-being of university students. Almost 3/4 of them were greatly or significantly affected by the absence of meeting other students, which is in line with the statement regarding sources of well-being. In descending order, connections are also important with fellow students, teachers, and non-academic staff.

Another important distinction refers to **group differences in well-being**. The following categories tend to have slightly lower levels of well-being: female students and undergraduate students.

The results of our study confirm that aspects such as going on to campus, belonging to the university or being part of the university are considered very important by the students, which confirms their high attachment to the university and the high sense of belonging. **HEIs have an important role to play and must offer clear guidance on the steps students can take to seek help**, whether it's through on-campus resources or external support. It is crucial for educators to stay informed about current resources and procedures to ensure the accuracy of the information they provide.

Supporting HEI and associations in integrating well-being into their activities is very important. That's why **our consortium worked on several recommendations: Workshops, resources, partnerships in order to improve student mental health and well-being**. For example, Strategies to promote student relationships and social relations, to promote mental health and wellness, Academic Support Services and Mental Health Services, Financial Aid and Assistance and Curriculum adjustment to promote well-being and increase awareness about mental health. At the end of the project we'll also have a guidebook of recommendations addressed to the HEIs and policy makers.