

# Mapping of Needs 2021

## Landscape of stakeholders and activities

### Main questions

#### 1. What current surveys or studies have been made on the mental wellbeing of young people in your country?

- The [ISCWEB-onderzoek](#). A worldwide study about the subjective wellbeing of children with the purpose to improve the life of children. HoGent, 2008.
- The [SIGMA-onderzoek](#). A study about the mental wellbeing of adolescents in Flanders. KU Leuven 2020.
- [Kunst als spiegel](#). An arts based mindfulness program for young children. UCLL 2021.
- [Jopmonitor](#). Several studies about the wellbeing of young people in Flanders. Jeugdonderzoeksplatform 2019.
- [Touristenbevraging](#). A study about the experiences of children and young people about current and social themes. Vlaamse Jeugdraad 2020.
- [Jongeren en zingeving](#). A qualitative and quantitative study about young people and a sense of purpose. Pimento 2015.
- Literature study and interviews with experts about diversity for the project [Komaf, KeKi](#) 2021.
- [Jongeren, welbevinden en sociale media in tijden van Corona](#). A study about young people, wellbeing and social media during Corona. [UGent](#) 2020.
- [Ik zie, ik zie, wat jij niet ziet](#). A study about gender and wellbeing in youth work. Vlaamse Overheid, 2020.
- [De impact van de COVID-19-maatregelen op kinderen en jongeren in maatschappelijk kwetsbare situaties](#). A study about the impact of COVID-19-measures on socially vulnerable children and young people. Uit de marge, 2020.
- [Het kind in Vlaanderen](#). Statistics on children in Flanders. Agentschap Opgroeien, 2020.
- [Jaarverslag](#). Statistics on questions of children about wellbeing. [Awel](#) 2020.
- [De impact van COVID-19-maatregelen op kinderen en jongeren](#). A study about the impact of COVID-19-measures on children and young people. The study was combined with a [cocreative event](#) about the results. KeKi, 2021.
- [Wij zijn gewoon jongeren in een ongewone situatie](#). A study about young people who live and left an institution for youth care. Cachet, 2017.
- [Vrijetijd van jongeren in residentiële voorzieningen](#). A study about leisure time of young people who stay in institutions for youth care. Plantijn Hogeschool, 2016.
- [De mythes voorbij](#). A study about the myths in mental health care, Zorgnet Icuuro, 2021.

#### 2. Which sector (youth, social, medical...) is mainly responsible for young people's mental health issues in your country and is there cooperation in the work promoting young people's mental health between different sectors?

- In Flanders, the sector "Welfare, Public Health and Family" is mainly responsible for mental health issues of children and young people, living in Flanders.
- There are several projects where there are links or cooperation with other sectors like sport, youth, education, daycare...

- We see a lot more cooperation between different sectors since the COVID-pandemic but we see also a lot of opportunities for further and stronger cooperation.
- There is a lot information, there are a lot of tools and trainings but they're not well-known in every sector. We miss a platform or network where everything is combined.

### 3. What relevant materials (programmes, guides, working ways, tools) are widely in use for the promotion or care of mental health of young people in your country?

- There are several helplines that offer support for children and young people. They have chat, app, forum, telephone-functions. (JAC, Lumi, Awel, Teleonthaal)
- There are currently 5 "Overkophuizen" in big cities and they want to extend them to the other communities (30). "Overkophuizen" are safe places where young people can go to and talk about mental health issues, find professional help or can join activities.
- There are several games that can be played in youth work, games that can be played online (apps) and tools specially developed about the theme of mental wellbeing.
- There are several websites and podcasts with stories of children and young people with the focus on wellbeing.
- There was a [campaign](#) on mental wellbeing with a website that combines several (cultural) activities focusing on mental health. There's a national campaign called "[De warmste week](#)" together with the media to collect money and create awareness so young people can be who they are. Another campaign is called "[De Rode Neuzen](#)" that wants to create awareness and collect money to empower young people.

### 4. What good practices could be shared internationally for other organizations working with the promotion or care of young people's mental health?

- [Warme William](#): A "Warme William" is somebody who listens to young people and children. It can be a friend, a parent, a teacher... It's someone who invites you to talk about what's going on. A person you can trust and is there for you. For children and young people from 0 to 24 years.
- [Lockdown Minds](#): Free app for young people (14+) about mental wellbeing and referral to online support and assistance.
- [Kindertalentenfluisteraar](#): Someone that talks with children about their talents. They help them to acknowledge their own talents. They want to strengthen their resilience and positive self-image. The talents focus on what the children like, give satisfaction and make the time fly.
- [Confixers](#): Students that support other students in their own school. They have a buddy-system, they are a confidant or they negotiate in conflicts.
- [Donkere gedachten](#): A boardgame with 38 questions to start a conversation and to know what's going on with children and young people.
- [Toverbos](#): A game where toddlers experience their emotions and learn to deal with them. Every emotion is represented with a different animal.
- [Charter](#): A charter for organizations with 6 principles to strengthen mental wellbeing of children and young people.
- [Een steekje los](#): A card game that wants to make mental wellbeing negotiable and strengthens mental wellbeing. It tries to break down taboos about the topic.

- [Noknok](#): A website with tips, games and information to strengthen resilience and promote mental wellbeing of children and young people. Started during the COVID-pandemic.
- [Bounce](#): European project that resulted in a tool, training and train-the-trainer to strengthen the resilience of socially vulnerable children and to make them think critically.
- [Houvast](#): An app, book and training of the Red Cross on mental wellbeing of adults. There are currently researching the extension for children.

## Optional questions

### 1. What are the relevant findings of these surveys or studies?

#### • Prevention

- Children and young people want to break the taboo about mental wellbeing. There are a lot of obstacles for them to talk about their problems. Seeking or asking for help is being postponed because they think they can solve the problems themselves or they think that their problem is not big enough in comparison with other problems.
- They ask for more understanding if they talk about their problems. They ask that people really listen and want to be taken serious. They want to be heard and to be able to talk about their problems on an informal basis.
- They want more awareness about the topic from a young age. They are looking for (online) information about mental health problems, the causes and how to deal with it. They want more attention on social media (Instagram). They are looking for influencers that talk about and confront them with their problems.
- They think that prevention is very important so that problems can be quickly detected. Not one's a year but in an integral approach.
- The first 1000 days are important. Children between 0 and 5 year need specific interventions focused on empowering bonding with family and friends.

#### • Mental health issues

- The number of mental disorders hasn't increased the last 20 years in contrary to common thoughts but there are more people who search for help.
- Young people have nowadays a bigger chance of having concentration disorders, aggression-disorders, use of medicines and eating disorders than 30 years ago.
- 75% of mental disorders originate with young people before the age of 27. 75% of the major psychopathologies start before the age of 18.
- Children and young people experience lots of pressure, stress or sometimes violence and therefor mental and psychical problems. More than 60% of young people say that the pressure to exceed to expectations makes that they don't feel good.
- A small but notable amount of young people is not satisfied with their life and has a lot of negative emotions. It would help their positive evolution if mental wellbeing is promoted and if there's progress in a positive family relationship and the foundations of an independent and successful future.
- 3.8% of young people between 15 and 24 has made a suicide-attempt. (Health survey 2018).

- In 2020 there were 9311 cases on child abuse reported (Agentschap Opgroeien, 2020).
- Social media has a big effect on the self-image of children and young people.
- Support by Awel, the support line for young people in 2020
  - 28.232 contacts.
  - 26% of the contacts were about the relationship to their parents, 21% about wellbeing, 13% about anxiety and tension, 10% about suicide and depression.
- **Children with special needs**
  - There should be more attention to groups of young people that don't have a big network. The influence of generations, culture and religion is big and has impact on the involvement and access to their network. Not all young people have a network or have a network with adequate capacity to help them.
  - 4.7% of children that have Dutch as second language, don't feel welcome in youthwork.
  - There is need on much more "safe(r) spaces" where children and young people can feel welcome and be themselves. There are lots of needs in the group of LGBTI+.
  - There's a lower satisfaction of life and of their free time with girls, children who grow up in less fortunate financial circumstances, children with a migrant background and children in "broken families". (ISCWEB)
  - The impact of COVID-measures was more severe for socially vulnerable children: problems with pre-teaching, not having a laptop, studying and living in a small place, difficulties with homework, anxiety for receiving fines from the police, more than half of them have mental issues... A lot of the solutions are to be found in a structural approach on poverty reduction, housing, increasing income, accessible support, police-policy, equality in education...
- **Intervention**
  - Children and young people want more investments in accessible support and (local) assistance. Assistance has to be affordable and anonymous.
  - For 39% of young people the internet is the most important source of information on mental wellbeing.
  - 70% of children and young people indicated in a online-survey they they're in need of a conversation with a professional (therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist) (VUB-KeKi 2021)
  - There's a need to extend (online) services. Most of them work with volunteers and have restrictions in their service hours. We hear the need for more accessible services on a local level.
  - Small communities mostly don't have the resources to go on the streets and reach out to children and young people.
  - There's a lot of administration when children and young people need assistance.
  - There's a need for more peer-to-peer-support. Children that help children, young people that help young people, students that help students.
- **Policy**
  - Children and young people say that the government has to invest in assistance, youth care and (local) support. It costs too much, it's not known

nor accessible, the waiting lists are too long and there's too much administration.

- They think that the government should be aware of the impact of decisions and should monitor those decisions. There should be more studies about this topic. We need to map the impact of policy decisions on children and young people before the decisions are taken.
- We miss policy focused on prevention of mental problems. We have a wide service focused on solving problems but not enough on preventing them. There should be more focus on early interventions (14 to 25 year).
- 8251 children are currently in foster care (Agentschap Opgroeien, 2020).
- 15.3% of healthcare-workers for children have a waiting time of more than 6 months.

## 2. How important the mental wellbeing of young people is perceived in your society on the level of public attitude?

- There is still a big taboo on mental wellbeing. People don't often talk about their (mental) problems. Some of them seek professional help but a lot of people don't. Going to a psychologist is mostly perceived as a service for people with severe problems. Young people think they can solve their own problems or that their problems are not that severe.
- Since the COVID-pandemic, there's a positive evolution. The theme is widely spread in media, is more accepted and gets much more attention. Because of the pandemic it's now more normal that someone has mental issues or talks about it.
- With the campaigns of "De Warmste Week" and "De Rode Neuzen" there has been created more attention and awareness.

## 3. How important the mental wellbeing of young people is perceived in your society on the level of policy making and services?

- At the start of the pandemic there were a lot of policy measures that didn't take into account the effect on mental wellbeing. Especially the impact it had on children and young people. In general and more so for children with special needs.
- Since the second lockdown there is much more awareness for the theme. There are more campaigns, there is more funding and attention. But we still miss a integral approach.
- The cost to go to a psychologist for example has been strongly reduced. Unfortunately there are still long waiting lists to get help.
- [29 projects](#) have gotten funds from the Flemish government to empower the resilience of children and young people in vulnerable situations. (1/09/2021 until 31/08/23).

## 4. Which organisations or networks of organisations are relevant in the promotion of young people's mental wellbeing in your country?

- [Overkop-huis](#): a safe place where young people can do activities and talk to a therapist.
- [JAC](#): a place where young people between 12 and 25 can come to ask questions or talk about their problems.
- [Awe!](#): anonymous and free support line for children and young people with a chat, forum, telephone and mail-function.
- [CLB](#): Help for children, parents and teachers about education, mental and psychical problems.
- [Teleonthaal](#): anonymous and free support line, day and night for questions and problems.

- [Lumi](#): anonymous and free support line for questions about gender and sexual preference.
- [Jeugdwerk tegen racisme](#): network of organizations against racism.
- [Komaf](#): network of youth work-organizations and local communities focused on inclusion and diversity.
- [Tejo](#): anonymous and free therapeutic guidance for children between 10 and 20 years.
- [Vlaams instituut gezond leven](#): a Flemish organization that wants to stimulate people to live healthier.
- [WatWat](#): a website that informs young people on several topics.

#### 5. Is the mental health work in your country focused more on preventive or reactive work?

- We see a lot of good examples of preventive and reactive work. But both should be extended, more funded and more based on policy.
- There is a big need on more preventive work, especially focusing on breaking taboos and early detection.
- Prevention and reactive work should be more focused on an early age (14 to 25).
- We hear a higher sense of urgency and more needs because of the current pandemic.

#### 6. Are you aware of the National Agency's role as a developer and supporter of youth work in your country?

- Yes

## Needs of the field

### Main questions

#### 1. What is missing in your country when it comes to promotion of young people's mental health/what are the most relevant needs for development in the promotion of young people's mental health (policy, service, funding, professional competence, knowledge, attitudes) in your country?

The main needs are focused on

- **Prevention**
  - Prevention is crucial for all children and young people. We can take big steps forward if we focus on the category of 14 till 25 years.
  - We need actions to brake the taboo on mental health problems of children and young people. Seeking or asking for help is being postponed because children and young people think they can solve the problems themselves or they think that their problem is not big enough in comparison with other problems. Actions should mainly be focused on those issues, for example by helping them to understand that every problem is equivalent.
  - A good action would be to have an annual check-up on mental health for every child. Actions and campaigns should be extended.
  - Working with talents of youth workers has found his way in youthwork. There are opportunities to focus on or train youth workers to work with



talents of children. We should help them naming and appreciating their talents. This from a young age (toddlers).

- There is need on much more "safe(r) spaces" where children and young people can feel welcome and be themselves. There are lots of needs in the group of LGBTI+.
  - Because of the pandemic a lot of children and young people have problems to connect to others. We should help them to overcome their thresholds.
  - Children and young people want more information on social media, preferably on Instagram and other social media. They want to read/hear confronting and inspiring stories of (famous) people talking about their experiences.
  - We should make information more accessible for all children and young people especially for those in vulnerable situations who don't have a big network, children from "broken families" or who have language problems.
  - Youth workers can consciously deploy methods to work on group dynamics, to get to know each other, to feel welcome in the group... In youth work children and young people learn a lot of social skills. This should be more acknowledged and consciously deployed in balance with the main goal of youth work: to play and have fun.
- **(Early) Detection and intervention**
    - Early detection and intervention is crucial for all children and young people. We can take big steps forward if we focus on the category of 14 till 25 years.
    - The first 1000 days are important. Children between 0 and 5 year need specific interventions focused on empowering bonding with family and friends.
    - We need to normalize the need of support on mental health. We need to improve the results of research about the need of support and the accessibility of support. We need to lower the thresholds to get or ask for help and assistance.
    - Children and young people ask for more peer-to-peer-support. Children that help children, young people that help young people, students that help students. There's a need to extend the support that there is now and to stimulate youth work to take up a role in this kind of support.
    - Talking and listening to children and young people takes time. Youth workers experience a lot of pressure in their job so the time to listen and talk is getting reduced. We should talk on a regular basis so we can work at the long-term effect. We need to have more time to be available for them between and after working hours. Also a regular phone call to check up with children and young people can do a lot of good. We need to find a balance between working with a group and enough attention for individuals.
    - There should be more youth workers that go to children and young people and work more location-oriented.
    - Youth workers should be aware of their own well-being and that of their organisation as a guideline how far they can go in helping children and young people.
  - **(Cross-sectional) cooperation**
    - There's a lot of information about the theme but not a central (online) place (website/app) where youth workers can find information on

mental health and support. This place must be accessible for every child or young person and also for professionals.

- We hear the need for more cooperation between sectors. They should actively work together and also focus on exchanging knowledge.
- We see a lot of experiments where two partners cooperate but we need to make projects, expertise and experiences sustainable. Too many projects end without further cooperation.
- We need to make more visible what youth organisations do and have to deal with. In this way we normalize the subject, stimulate organisations who don't have a policy to take steps forward and help each other.
- There's also need for cooperation and networking on a local level so that youth workers know what exists in their own community/region and so that children and young people can find help on a local level. (for example with the "Overkophuizen").

- **Policy**

- We need more policy on a national and regional level focused on prevention of mental problems and also on early intervention.
- We hear a lot of needs for more policy on a local level. Small communities mostly don't have the resources to go on the streets, reach out to children and young people and notice problems or opportunities. Youth work could be a part of the approach.
- We need to map the impact of policy decisions on children and young people before the decisions are taken.
- We need an integral approach where different sectors work together.
- Policy should not be the same for every child or young person. There should be room for customization.
- Participation of children and young people should be more self-evident and further extended. We need more accessible ways and moments for participation.
- We need more and recent research about children's and young people's mental health in specific for toddlers, mental health of children and young people in youth work, if children feel welcome in youth work and which elements...
- We need more funds for prevention and (early) detection and intervention on a national, regional and local level.
- We need more recognition for the role of and the added value of youth work. From the policymakers but also for example from services like the police.

## 2. What kind of training is available nationally for people working with young people's mental health? What about on an international level?

- At university of applied science the students can follow a bachelor-education on youth care. (Pedagogy, Family science, Science of social readaptation)
- There's also a one year course for students in High School on youth care and care for people with disabilities.
- There are several trainings and tools for specific sectors. On mental health in general and on specific topics (suicide, racism, bullying...). Some of them are for people in general and others focused on children and young people.

## 3. Are you interested in developing strategies and working methods for the promotion and care of young people's mental health through international cooperation?



- Yes.

#### 4. Is there training for youth workers in the promotion of young people's youth work in your country? What kind of mental health topics are included in the youth worker training?

- We have courses "animator" for 15/16 year old volunteers, courses "head-animator" for young people who take responsibility in youth work and courses "instructor" for young people who want to train other young people. In those courses, they work on several competences like "security, integrity and the environment of children". But it depends on each organization how they realize those competences and therefore how much information they give on the topic of mental health. We see a lot of opportunities here.
- We came across a lot of trainings but they are mostly aimed at schools and not at youth work. They could be easily used and adjusted. The trainings we did find for youth work are about specific themes (like suicide) and not on mental health in general. We found some organisations (Arktos, Pimento, The Red Cross) who give trainings on mental health in general but those trainings are not well-known/well-spread in youth work.
- There is a need for training for youth workers about this theme.

#### 5. What are the main gaps in knowledge in youth work practice about the promotion of mental health of young people in your country?

- Breaking the taboo on mental health and bringing awareness about the theme:
  - What is mental health and mental well-being.
  - Mental health as a life skill.
  - It's ok to have a bad day and talk about it.
  - Not all children in youth care have serious problems. Youth work can help them.
  - Children who are not in youth care also have problems.
  - Not every problem is about bullying, suicide, racism... or has to be a severe issue.
  - Youth work can play an important role in preventing mental health problems.
  - An annual day focused on mental well-being in youthwork could be relevant.
- Knowledge of the role of youth workers. How to deal with certain information that children tell them and how far they can go in helping children. This knowledge should be made sustainable for new, frequently changing volunteers and youth workers. Every organisation in youth work should have a vision about the theme. We need common language that we all can use in the same way.
- Knowledge and good practices on policy on prevention of mental health problems and how to implement the policy in their entire organisation on a Flemish and local level.
- Knowledge about
  - Talents of children and young people.
  - How to talk to children.
  - Do's and don'ts in their communication.
  - How to strengthen the resilience of children.
  - How to create safe(r) spaces.
  - Knowledge about thresholds that children experience in organizations and their culture.
- Information should be centralized and spread about

- Organisations where they can refer children to if they are in need of services.
- Tools, trainings, information... that exists for youth workers.
- There's a need for an event/weekend where youth workers can get to know all the information and organisations.
- Every Flemish or regional youth work organization should have a point or person of contact where local youth workers can go or phone to when they have questions.

**6. What are the main gaps in skills or methodology in promotion of mental health of young people in youth work practice in your country?**

- Youth workers need more skills for self-reflection so they can act authentic towards children and young people.
- An active open attitude
  - Actively making all children feel welcome in youth work.
  - Making it possible for all children that they can be themselves in youth work.
  - A reflective attitude for youth workers about their own frame of reference.
  - An active open attitude to diversity and inclusion.
- To listen to and talk to children
  - Focused on taking them serious and really listen to what they say.
  - Skills to start a conversation with children.
  - Skills how to have non-solution-oriented conversations with children.
  - The insight that not for every problem there's need for intervention or referral to support-organisations. "Sometimes one talk is all it needs."
  - Connecting them to each other so that their own network grows.
- To consciously deploy methods in youth work to work on group dynamics.
- Mental health as a life skill.
- Stimulating peer-to-peer-support.
- Looking for a balance between working with a group and attention for all individuals.
- Diversify support for toddlers, young children, teenagers and youth workers. Their especially need for methodology for 16+ and also volunteers.

**7. What do you think is the youth worker's role in promoting young people's mental health and/or reacting to mental health issues in their work?**

- The Flemish youth work can play an important role in the well-being of children and young people, on a local and regional level.
- Youth work is a perfect place where children and young people can forget their problems and be themselves. By playing and having fun, they learn a lot of social skills.
- Youth workers should make sure that every child is and feels welcome and safe in their organization.
- Youth work can actively work on prevention.
- Youth workers can be a first point of contact where they listen to what children and young people say.
- Youth work can refer children and young people to mental health services when they need it or it's necessary. Sometimes by giving them the numbers or sites of support-organisations, sometimes by going with them or calling together so that they find help.
- Youth work can actively seek for cooperation with other sectors, especially with the sector of Welfare and Public Health.

- Youth workers should be aware of their own well-being and that of their organisation as a guideline how far they can go in helping children and young people.

## Optional questions

### 1. What would help cooperation across different sectors in the promotion of young people's mental health?

- (Projects with) A common goal.
- European projects and fundings.
- Fundings from the Flemish government from several sectors so that every organisation can get fundings and not only the one that initiates the cooperation.
- Influencing policies on a local and national level.
- Projects to share information and expertise so we can define and strengthen the role of youth workers.
- A strategy and plan to make projects and experiments sustainable.

### 2. What kind of added value do you see in cooperating internationally on the topics of young people's mental health?

- Sharing good practices and research.
- More influence on organisations and the government.
- Common handles on the role of youth work to inspire organisations.
- The implementation of the European charter on local youth work (EGL).
- Exchange-project where young people have the opportunity to go to other countries. They learn a lot about themselves when to encounter young people from other countries. They can start from "a white page" and strengthen their own self-image and identity.

### 3. Are you interested in developing your competences in the promotion of mental health of young people in international trainings, study visits, seminars and conferences?

- Yes

### 4. Are you interested in developing your competences in international cooperation?

- Yes