



Booklet of recommendations

14 recommendations

The project's overarching goal is to support European students' well-being as a factor in academic success and the attraction of higher education institutions. In the project, "well-being" was initially understood as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", following the WHO's definition.

After years of research, we came up with an extended definition. The consortium quickly understood it was not easy to come up with a common definition of well-being. Regarding the different definitions, we've decided to accept a broad definition of well-being which covers social, economic, physical, emotional and psychological aspects.

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.

THE PROJECT HAVE BEEN PURSUING THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Promote, enhance and advocate for a better consideration of student well-being toward national and European public authorities

Gather and disseminate accurate information on programs and best practices for student well-being in European nations and institutions

Provide engaged students and higher education institutions with the resources and assistance they need to develop innovative approaches to student well-being

INTRODUCTION

The following guide is an advocacy tool addressed to local, national and European policy makers but also to student organisations and higher education institutions.

Following the pandemic, the policy makers have been informed that student well-being is a major issue at stake. They are more and more implicated in improving student well-being. Indeed, numerous initiatives and measures have been implemented all around Europe.

This guide is designed to propose 14 recommendations to policy makers, student organisations and higher education institutions in order to improve student well-being based on the results of the WISE project.

THIS GUIDE PROPOSES 14 RECOMMENDATIONS TO APPLY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS :

LOCAL, NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN
AND TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER 1

THE MAIN LESSONS FROM THE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDIES OF WISE

In our reports, many figures appeared to be significant.

First, studies 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%).

Based on the quantitative data we learned that almost 70 % of the respondents consider that studying in class is important and very important for their well-being.

Results showed that students value relaxing areas on their campus: more than 50% consider these areas important or very important to their well-being. It's also interesting to see that 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).

We can also 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.

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).

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.

In the quantitative study we also asked a series of questions to higher education institutions and how they deal with student well-being. Compared to the results obtained for the Student Survey, it seems that representatives for HEIs 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.

Only a small percentage of the students (25%) believe that their university takes their well-being into consideration or is sensitive to it.

Finally, based on the questions asked to volunteers in student associations we noted that almost half (47%) of the student organisations consider the well-being within their associations as very important and 34,5% as important. 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. This result differs from student answers who stated that 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.

CHAPTER 2

A SERIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

PREAMBULE

In formulating and implementing the following policy recommendations, it is essential that all decisions are made in close collaboration with both subject matter experts and the representatives of the student community. The well-being of students is a multifaceted issue that requires insights from professionals in health, education, and social sciences, as well as the lived experiences of students themselves. By engaging these key stakeholders, we ensure that the policies are not only evidence-based but also reflective of the real needs and challenges faced by students. This collaborative approach is vital for creating sustainable, effective solutions that truly enhance the well-being of students across Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Recommendation 1

Expand the definition of Student Well-being

Adopt a holistic definition of student well-being that encompasses physical, mental, and social health, aligning with the WHO's comprehensive definition.

Incorporate this expanded definition into institutional policies and practices to ensure a well-rounded approach to student support.

Recommendation 2

Include Student Well-being in academic policies

Integrate student well-being considerations into academic policies, including curriculum design, assessment methods, and support services with the help of experts and student representatives.

Develop flexible academic schedules and provide accommodations to reduce stress and promote a healthy work-life balance.

Recommendation 3

Dedicate staff to Student Well-being

Appoint dedicated staff members responsible for overseeing student well-being initiatives and providing personalised support.

Ensure that these staff members are adequately trained in mental health, counselling, and student support services with the the help of experts and student representatives

Recommendation 4

Allocate more funds to health, cultural, and social services

Increase funding for on-campus health services, mental health counselling, cultural activities, and social support services. Ideally, there should be one therapist for 2,500 students on every campus in Europe.

Ensure that these services are easily accessible, adequately staffed, and responsive to the diverse needs of the student population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

Recommendation 5

Support student initiatives and peer-to-peer actions

Encourage and support student-led initiatives aimed at promoting well-being, such as peer counselling programmes, support groups, and wellness workshops.

Provide resources and training for student elected representatives to effectively manage and sustain these initiatives.

Recommendation 6

Campaign for student mental health

Launch awareness campaigns to reduce stigma around mental health issues and promote the importance of seeking help.

Collaborate with university administration and external organisations to provide comprehensive mental health resources and support.

Recommendation 7

Advocate for Inclusion and Diversity

Promote inclusion and diversity within student organisations by creating safe spaces for underrepresented groups and advocating for their needs.

Organise events and activities that celebrate cultural diversity and foster a sense of belonging for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Recommendations for National Decision Makers

Recommendation 8

Include Student Well-being in health policies

Recognize student well-being as a critical public health issue and include it in national health policies and programs.

Ensure that students have access to affordable healthcare services, including mental health support, both on and off-campus.

Recommendation 9

Allocate financial resources to support student life

Provide financial support for student housing, food security, and transportation to reduce financial stress and improve overall well-being.

Offer more grants and subsidies to universities to enhance their well-being services and infrastructure.

Recommendations for EU Decision Makers

Recommendation 10

Promote Student Well-being at the EU level

Add the inclusion of student well-being in EU policies and initiatives related to education, health, and youth.

Allocate more EU funds to support transnational projects and research on student well-being.

Recommendation 11

Conduct surveys on Student Well-being

Conduct regular surveys to assess the well-being of students, identify emerging issues, and monitor the effectiveness of well-being initiatives.

Use survey data to inform policy decisions and improve support services.

Develop and implement a standardised method for assessing student well-being across institutions to ensure consistent and comparable data.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Recommendations for EU Decision Makers

Recommendation 12

Facilitate European best practices sharing

Create platforms for higher education institutions across Europe to share best practices, resources, and innovative approaches to student well-being.

Organise EU-wide conferences and workshops to disseminate findings and foster collaboration.

Recommendation 13

Support cross-border services during learning mobilities

Promote the development of cross-border services to support students studying abroad, ensuring they have access to continuous care during their mobility including students with disabilities.

Encourage member states to harmonise mental health regulations and services to facilitate this process.

Encourage member states and higher education institutions to harmonise procedures to ensure an equal access to student services during mobility.

Recommendation 14

Enhance Student Well-being researches

Fund and support researches on the various aspects of student well-being, including mental health, physical health, and the impact of workload.

Use research findings to inform EU policies and initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of students across Europe.