



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Youth Wellness & Inclusion

This Booklet "**Youth Wellness & Inclusion**" was developed by participants of the Youth Exchange project "**Achieving Inclusion through Youth Wellness**" in 2024 in the context of "Erasmus Plus" Programme of European Commission.

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1. Introduction

Welcome to *Youth Wellness & Inclusion*, a booklet created by participants of the Erasmus+ project "Achieving Inclusion through Youth Wellness." This guide is the result of collaborative learning experiences during youth exchanges in Armenia and Poland, and of local wellness actions conducted across Poland, Armenia, Georgia, and Romania.



This booklet is a resource for anyone working with or supporting young people—youth workers, educators, volunteers, and young changemakers themselves. It reflects the lived experiences, challenges, and creative solutions young people developed throughout the project. From mindfulness sessions in Armenia to inclusive wellness campaigns in rural Romania, the shared stories and practices here aim to inspire further action.

Our hope is that this guide will empower youth to become more aware of their wellness, build inclusive communities, and create a ripple effect of positive change.

2. Understanding Youth Wellness

Youth wellness is more than just the absence of illness. It's a dynamic process of growth, learning, and balance across multiple dimensions of life. When young people thrive emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually, they are better equipped to engage with their communities and fulfill their potential.

Wellness during adolescence and early adulthood lays the foundation for lifelong well-being. However, youth often face pressures such as academic stress, digital overload, economic uncertainty, social exclusion, and identity




struggles—all of which can affect their mental, emotional, and physical health. These challenges are often compounded for those coming from disadvantaged or marginalized backgrounds.

Understanding wellness holistically allows young people to reflect on the full spectrum of their needs—beyond just health or fitness. It helps them identify imbalances, prioritize self-care, and seek support when needed. Holistic wellness also encourages habits that promote long-term resilience, self-awareness, and a positive outlook.

The concept of youth wellness encourages a proactive and holistic approach to personal development. It invites young people to care for their bodies, minds, relationships, and surroundings while fostering resilience, purpose, and community connection.

Wellness is also relational—it grows in spaces where young people feel valued, included, and safe. In families, schools, youth centers, or peer groups, the culture of care and respect directly influences wellness outcomes. That's why embedding inclusion and participation in wellness practices is so vital.



This project promoted youth wellness as an inclusive, empowering journey—one that is accessible to all regardless of background or life circumstances. By nurturing all eight dimensions of wellness, we foster not only healthier individuals but also more inclusive, compassionate societies. The aim is not perfection, but progress: enabling every young person to take meaningful steps toward a more balanced and fulfilling life.

3. The Link Between Wellness and Inclusion

Wellness and inclusion are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. A young person's sense of wellness can be directly impacted by whether they feel accepted, seen, and supported in their community. Conversely, youth who feel excluded—whether due to ethnicity, disability, refugee status, economic hardship, or lack of access to education—are more likely to experience stress, isolation, and long-term health consequences.

Inclusive wellness is about creating environments where every young person, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity to flourish. It means removing structural and cultural barriers to participation and well-being, while actively designing activities that reflect diverse needs and perspectives.



For example, mental health workshops that take into account trauma experienced by refugee youth, or wellness campaigns that are linguistically and culturally accessible, are essential for true inclusion. This approach ensures that wellness is not a privilege for the few, but a right for all.

In the "Achieving Inclusion through Youth Wellness" project, inclusion was not treated as an add-on—it was a foundational principle. Youth from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds played central roles as participants, co-creators, and leaders in shaping the project. Their contributions highlighted that inclusive practices not only support individual well-being but also enrich the entire community by fostering empathy, diversity, and mutual learning.

4. The Eight Dimensions of Youth Wellness

Understanding wellness as a multifaceted concept helps young people recognize the interconnected aspects of their lives that influence their well-being.

Eight Dimensions of Youth Wellness



Physical



Emotional



Intellectual



Social



Environmental



Occupational



Spiritual



Financial

Here are the eight dimensions of youth wellness explored throughout the project, along with real-life examples and activity suggestions:

1. **Emotional** – This dimension emphasizes self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience. Activities such as journaling, breathing exercises, or creating emotion wheels help youth identify and process their feelings. For example, a group session could focus on how to recognize stress and practice self-soothing techniques using guided meditation.
2. **Spiritual** – Spiritual wellness involves discovering one's values and purpose, which may or may not be tied to religion. Reflection walks in nature, storytelling circles, or exploring personal beliefs through creative writing can help youth connect with their inner selves. For instance, youth can share poems or quotes that resonate with their life values.
3. **Intellectual** – This includes stimulating curiosity, developing new skills, and expanding one's perspective. Debate games, group puzzles, or cultural exchange sessions promote critical thinking. A practical example might include organizing a quiz night based on youth rights or wellness topics.
4. **Physical** – Physical health includes exercise, nutrition, and sleep. Youth can learn about healthy habits through cooking workshops, fitness challenges, or group sports. A sample activity is organizing a "Wellness Olympics" that combines fun physical tasks with awareness about hydration and healthy eating.
5. **Environmental** – This encourages young people to be mindful of their surroundings and impact on the planet. Eco-crafts, recycling projects, or local clean-up drives promote this wellness dimension. An example is conducting a group challenge to reduce plastic waste over a week.
6. **Financial** – Financial wellness is about understanding how to manage money, make responsible choices, and feel secure. Youth can benefit from role-playing budgeting scenarios or creating simple saving plans. For example, a budgeting simulation where participants plan an event with limited resources can be both educational and fun.

7. **Occupational** – This involves finding fulfillment in tasks, work, or volunteering. Activities could include career exploration sessions, resume workshops, or volunteering days. A youth group might hold a “Future Vision Board” activity where participants visualize and share their career or creative aspirations.
8. **Social** – This dimension supports building inclusive and supportive relationships. Icebreakers, team-building games, or peer-led support groups can strengthen this area. One idea is a “Cultural Potluck” where everyone brings a story or item from their background, encouraging bonding and intercultural understanding.

By recognizing and nurturing these eight dimensions, young people can develop a more holistic sense of wellness that empowers them to lead balanced and purposeful lives. These examples are just starting points—young people are encouraged to adapt and expand them based on their interests and community needs.

5. Tips for Promoting Inclusive Youth Wellness

Promoting inclusive youth wellness means designing programs and environments that are welcoming, responsive, and empowering to all young people—especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Here are several strategies, inspired by the project's

experience, that youth workers, educators, and community leaders can use:



- **Use non-formal learning tools** like games, storytelling, simulations, and creative expression. These methods are accessible, engaging, and adaptable to diverse learning styles. They help youth open up, learn actively, and reflect deeply.
- **Involve youth with fewer opportunities as co-creators**, not just participants. Empowering them to help design, lead, or evaluate activities fosters ownership, boosts confidence, and ensures relevance. Their voices and perspectives enrich the entire group experience.
- **Provide safe and inclusive spaces** where every young person feels valued and respected. This includes physical safety, emotional support, and zero tolerance for discrimination. Techniques like inclusive language, open dialogue, and conflict mediation build a sense of belonging.
- **Integrate eco-friendly habits and community service** into wellness activities. Encourage practices like recycling, mindfulness in nature, and community clean-ups. These not only improve environmental well-being but also reinforce responsibility and connection to the community.

- **Promote peer mentoring and local leadership.** Young people learn best from peers. Structured peer-led workshops, buddy systems, or youth advisory boards give participants leadership experience and reinforce mutual learning and solidarity.
- **Ensure cultural and linguistic accessibility.** Use translation or interpretation services when needed. Celebrate cultural diversity through food, music, language, and traditions, making sure everyone sees their identity reflected and respected.
- **Apply trauma-informed practices.** For youth who have experienced displacement, violence, or discrimination, sensitivity and support are key. Train facilitators to recognize signs of distress and to respond with care, empathy, and appropriate referral.
- **Include structured reflection.** Tools like Youthpass, daily journaling, or creative feedback sessions help participants understand and articulate their growth. Reflection makes learning visible and meaningful.

By applying these strategies, youth initiatives can ensure wellness is inclusive, impactful, and sustainable—fostering both personal development and social transformation.

6. Highlights from the "Achieving Inclusion through Youth Wellness" Project

The project was implemented in three stages, involving dynamic learning experiences and youth-led community action across four countries.

- **Youth Exchange in Yerevan, Armenia (23 February – 3 March 2024):** Hosted by Catalyst Educational NGO, this 10-day exchange brought together 35 individuals from Armenia, Poland, Georgia, and Romania. Participants explored the eight dimensions of youth wellness through non-formal education methods such as storytelling, creative arts, role-play, movement-based learning, and peer reflection. Special focus was placed on understanding how wellness contributes to inclusion and equity. Youth also began designing local campaigns tailored to their own communities.

- **Local Wellness Campaigns (March – July 2024):** Following the exchange in Armenia, participants returned to their home countries and implemented a total of 16 wellness campaigns—four per country. These varied from outdoor yoga sessions and digital wellness talks to eco-education days and mental health awareness events. Each campaign responded to local needs and involved a mix of online and in-person elements. Many campaigns reached disadvantaged youth, including refugees, NEETs, and youth from rural or underserved communities.
- **Youth Exchange in Boszkowo, Poland (24–29 August 2024):** Organized by NeuroN Foundation, this follow-up exchange allowed participants to reconnect, share experiences from their wellness campaigns, and strengthen their learning through collaborative sessions. Activities included creative presentations, thematic workshops on inclusive leadership, and the co-creation of the *Youth Wellness & Inclusion* booklet. The exchange fostered a strong sense of solidarity and inspired participants to plan future initiatives under Erasmus+.

The project empowered young people to become active agents of inclusion and wellness, while also increasing the international capacities of the partner organizations involved.



7. Local Wellness Campaigns: Ideas for Action

If you're planning to organize your own wellness campaign, here are some adaptable ideas to get you started. These approaches can be shaped by the needs and realities of your local context, and can focus on one or more dimensions of youth wellness:



- **Mindful Mornings:** weekly gatherings that combine mindfulness practices, movement, group dialogue to promote emotional and spiritual wellness.
- **Green Wellness Days:** Organize outdoor events such as tree planting, recycling drives, or eco-walks that highlight the connection between environmental care and personal well-being.
- **Mobile Wellness Events:** Bring wellness to underrepresented or rural communities using mobile pop-up events. Activities can include yoga sessions, art therapy, or health education.
- **Safe Spaces for Expression:** Create inclusive environments where youth can share stories, create art, or participate in open discussions on topics like mental health and self-esteem.
- **Digital Detox Workshops:** Help young people reflect on their screen time habits and explore offline alternatives such as journaling, nature walks, or team games.
- **Budgeting and Life Skills Sessions:** Offer informal learning on managing money, goal setting, and navigating transitions from school to work.
- **Peer-Led Support Circles:** Facilitate spaces where youth mentor one another, share coping strategies, and build strong social connections.

- **Wellness & Culture Fairs:** Celebrate diversity through interactive booths, cultural performances, and food tastings that promote social and spiritual connection.

These ideas are not exhaustive—use them as inspiration to develop creative wellness actions tailored to your community’s needs.

8. How to Get Involved: Erasmus+ and Beyond

There are many ways for young people to stay engaged with wellness and inclusion beyond this project. Whether you want to lead your own initiative, join an existing program, or explore further opportunities for growth, here are some starting points:

- **Join local NGOs or youth initiatives** that promote wellness, inclusion, mental health, or sustainability. Volunteering with such groups can offer hands-on experience and meaningful connections.
- **Apply for Erasmus+ opportunities**, including Youth Exchanges, Training Courses, or volunteering under the European Solidarity Corps. These programs are open to young people and youth workers and offer a chance to travel, learn, and collaborate across cultures.
- **Start your own wellness campaign or social initiative** in your community. Use the ideas from Section 7 to design something relevant to your local needs. Even small actions—like starting a discussion circle or organizing a clean-up day—can have lasting impact.
- **Use Youthpass** to document and reflect on your learning. It’s a valuable tool that helps you recognize personal development through non-formal education and can strengthen your CV or educational portfolio.
- **Connect with your national Erasmus+ agency** to find out about open calls, support services, and funding opportunities for youth-led projects.
- **Stay informed and network** through platforms such as the European Youth Portal, SALTO Resource Centres, and local youth info centers. These provide news, resources, and connections with peers and mentors across Europe.

By taking the next step—however big or small—you become part of a broader movement working toward a healthier, more inclusive, and empowered generation of young people.

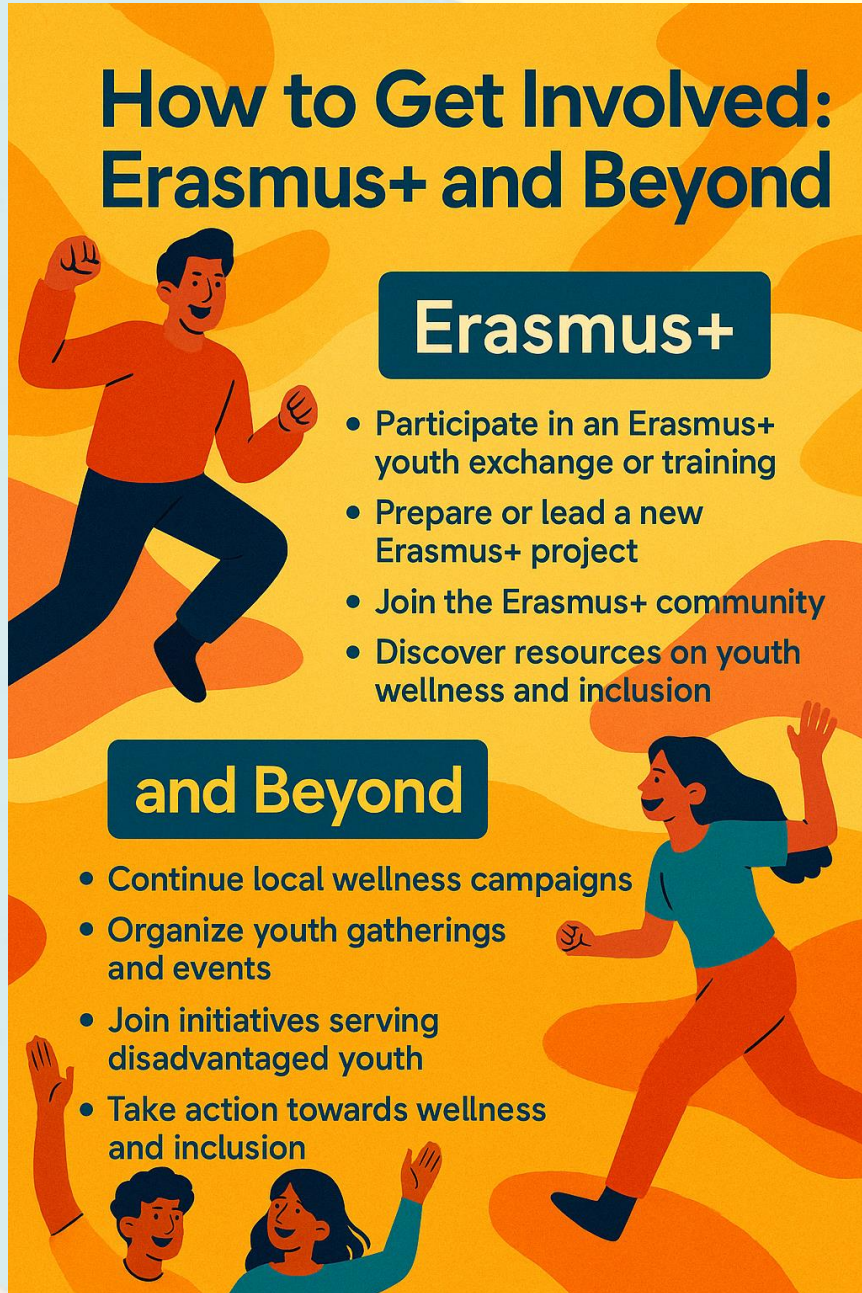
How to Get Involved: Erasmus+ and Beyond

Erasmus+

- Participate in an Erasmus+ youth exchange or training
- Prepare or lead a new Erasmus+ project
- Join the Erasmus+ community
- Discover resources on youth wellness and inclusion

and Beyond

- Continue local wellness campaigns
- Organize youth gatherings and events
- Join initiatives serving disadvantaged youth
- Take action towards wellness and inclusion



9. Resources

Below are useful platforms, tools, and organizations that can support your journey in promoting youth wellness and inclusion:

- **Erasmus+ Programme Guide** – Learn how to access EU funding and mobility opportunities for youth projects. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide>
- **SALTO Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre** – Offers tools, publications, and support services for making youth projects more inclusive. <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/>
- **Youthpass** – A tool to reflect on learning outcomes in non-formal education and validate competences gained through Erasmus+ activities. <https://www.youthpass.eu>
- **European Youth Portal** – A central hub for youth opportunities across Europe, including volunteering, learning, and civic engagement. <https://youth.europa.eu>
- **Mental Health Europe** – A leading European network working to advance mental health and well-being. <https://www.mentalhealtheurope.org>
- **Local NGOs and Youth Centres** – Contact youth organizations in your region for workshops, peer mentoring, volunteering, and support.
- **Social Media Platforms** – Follow Erasmus+, SALTO, and European youth organizations on Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn to stay updated on opportunities.

