

Building Sustainable Community Well-being Through Collaboration

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In a world facing complex social, environmental, and technological challenges, fostering well-being has become more important than ever. Coming from a sustainability background, our three-year involvement with the topic of well-being through the SWEPPP project has taught us a great deal. It has been a journey of exploration, learning, and development. Today, we are excited to see the first fruits of this journey emerge through new collaborations and initiatives, including our growing partnership with RIIB.

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Sustainable Well-being – Education for Personal, Professional and Planetary Well-being (SWEPPP) is a three-year project in the higher education field, co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme. The project is coordinated by Gdańsk University of Technology (Poland) and implemented together with Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania), Turku University of Applied Sciences (Finland), and our organizations, Education Mobility Grid (EMG) and the Steinbeis School of Sustainable Innovation and Transformation (SIT), joining the consortium from Berlin.

The aim of the project has been to establish a holistic approach to well-being that integrates personal, professional, and planetary health, framed by sustainability principles and values. One of the guiding ideas behind the project - and our work on sustainable well-being more broadly - has been that responsibility starts with oneself. It is difficult to expect people to care for their communities, society, or the environment if they do not first care for their own physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Over the course of the project, we have explored the connections between personal, social, digital, and environmental well-being. Through research, educational resources, training activities, and stakeholder engagement, the consortium has developed valuable learning materials, including an online course and an Everyday Guide for Sustainable Well-being*. These resources encourage individuals to reflect on their daily habits and make informed choices that support their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Examples include fostering healthier digital habits, strengthening resilience through mindfulness and self-reflection practices, building meaningful social connections, and adopting lifestyle choices that benefit both personal health and the environment. More importantly, the project has helped raise awareness of the importance of adopting sustainable lifestyles while strengthening individual and community resilience.

Infobox:

* Visit the project website for open-access materials:

www.wellbeing4sustainability.eu

SWEPPP - Sustainable Well-being – Education for Personal, Professional and Planetary Well-being
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However, sustainable well-being is not only about individual choices and habits. It is also about relationships, belonging, and participation.

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Today, loneliness and social isolation are increasingly recognized as major societal challenges, with significant impacts on both physical and mental health. Research consistently shows that meaningful social connections are among the strongest predictors of happiness and well-being. Connections with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours form the foundation of a healthy and fulfilling life. Beyond these personal relationships, people also need a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves - a community, a culture, a shared identity, or a common purpose.

Strong communities create resilient individuals, and resilient individuals contribute to stronger communities. This ripple effect of well-being is one of the most important insights we have gained through our work.

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It is also one of the areas that we, together with RIIK, are particularly interested in exploring further in the coming years. How can we bring the concept of sustainable well-being, which we have so far developed largely within educational contexts, closer to grassroots communities and adult learners? How can we translate research findings, practical insights, and everyday well-being practices into community spaces where people already gather and connect?

We believe that community organizations have an important role to play in this process. Libraries, cultural centres, neighbourhood initiatives, community hubs, and civil society organizations can all become places where conversations about well-being are integrated into daily life. Together, they can create an ecosystem that supports healthier lifestyles, stronger social connections, and more sustainable and resilient communities.

This commitment is reflected in our joint efforts to develop new initiatives and seek third-party funding for projects that explore exactly these questions. At the same time, we are joining forces to bring training opportunities on sustainable well-being to wider and more diverse audiences.

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Our collaboration with RIIK has demonstrated the value of combining different perspectives, expertise, and community networks to address shared challenges. Such cooperation enables us to reach wider audiences, develop innovative approaches, and build stronger support systems for individuals and communities alike.

As societies continue to navigate rapid transformation, partnerships between educational institutions, civil society organizations, cultural actors, and local communities will play an increasingly important role in shaping a sustainable future. We look forward to continuing this journey together and creating new opportunities for learning, inclusion, participation, and collective well-being - because well-being, when nurtured and shared, creates a ripple effect that extends far beyond the individual.