

Economy of **Wellbeing** of People

– Towards a collaborative platform
in the Baltic Sea Region



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Executive Summary

This report presents the outcomes of the Feasibility Study on the “Economy of Wellbeing of People” (EWP), conducted by the Norden Association from July 2024 to July 2025, with funding from the Swedish ESF Council. The study lays out the conceptual, strategic, and methodological foundations for a future flagship initiative under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), jointly promoted by Policy Area Education and Policy Area Health.

The study explores how the EWP, understood as a central condition for sustainable labour markets, inclusive societies, and resilient economies, can be enhanced through transnational cooperation. It addresses urgent regional and global trends, including demographic shifts, extended lifespan, reduced birth rate, mental health challenges, digital transformation, and the green transition. In light of these transformations, the report argues that traditional growth indicators such as GDP are insufficient to capture the quality and sustainability of societal progress.

Drawing on current academic and policy literature, the report outlines how the wellbeing economy paradigm offers a holistic alternative that centers on human and ecological wellbeing. It reviews leading frameworks and practices from the EU, OECD, and pioneering countries such as Finland, Scotland, Iceland, and New Zealand. It also highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement and participatory governance, drawing on methodologies like the Quadruple Helix and Sustainable Value Mapping and Analysis.

The project involved structured stakeholder mapping across eight EU Baltic Sea Region countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden), plus Norway and Åland, and engaged key actors through an online survey, deep interviews, and co-creative workshops. Two high-quality co-creative workshops, complemented by 92 survey responses and interview contributions, were used to pilot and test the co-creation model and meet the study’s objectives.

Six workshops were initially planned, but GDPR-related access procedures and the time required to identify and engage the most relevant participants across the region meant that a comprehensive and inclusive mapping process took longer than anticipated. This investment ensured that the right mix of stakeholders was included, and the quality and representativeness of participation were safeguarded.

The study concludes that a macro-regional collaborative platform is both necessary and feasible. It recommends developing a long-term structure for joint action, knowledge exchange, and policy innovation that can strengthen the Baltic Sea Region’s contribution to the European wellbeing economy agenda.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Study

The concept of an “Economy of Wellbeing of People” reflects a growing shift in how we understand progress and prosperity in light of today’s evolving social and technological landscape. Rather than relying solely on traditional economic indicators such as GDP, this approach emphasizes human and social capital, equality, inclusion, and long-term resilience. It calls for policies that promote lifelong learning, mental and physical health, social cohesion, and opportunities for meaningful participation in society, leaving no one behind.

This feasibility study explores the concept in the context of the rapidly changing labour market, ageing workforce, extended lifespans and capacities of educational systems to embrace these challenges across the Baltic Sea Region. Driven by forces such as the green transition, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and emerging work models like remote and hybrid arrangements, individuals are increasingly required to adapt, reskill, and remain engaged across longer working lives.

At the same time, demographic shifts including an aging population and declining birth rates pose significant challenges to workforce sustainability. Mental and physical health have become essential not only for individual well-being but also for maintaining a capable, engaged, and resilient labor force. A well-functioning economy depends on the wellbeing of its people; these are interdependent and mutually reinforcing goals.

By situating the “Economy of Wellbeing of People” within the context of these ongoing transformative trends, this study aims to survey and critically examine the potential of cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation to contribute to the development of more inclusive, healthy, and resilient societies. It does so by analyzing how diverse forms of expertise and collaborative innovation may address shared societal challenges.

Hence, the study addressed the challenges of a rapidly evolving labor market shaped by an ageing population, digitalization, advancements in AI, and emerging new forms of work. These transformations highlight the need to integrate lifelong learning policies into workplaces, provide targeted mental health support, and create more inclusive environments that can accommodate ongoing change. At the same time, there is growing recognition that traditional indicators such as GDP must be complemented by broader measures of human and social wellbeing.

The objective of the feasibility study is to survey and investigate, in greater detail, the diverse stakeholder responses to the concept of economy of wellbeing of people in the Baltic Sea Region countries to identify the main (perceived) challenges, opportunities, the currently existing best practices to collaborate around these issues. On this basis the goal and objective of the study are to lay the groundwork for a macro-regional cooperation platform (flagship) initiative under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), where the policy areas of Education and Health join forces to promote a wellbeing-oriented economy and sustainable working lives, in cooperation with the diverse stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region, specifically relating to the question of how to create sustainable working lives.

The study focuses on three key topics, which are integral to the concept:

- **Ageing Population:** Tackling ageism and promoting intergenerational dialogue.
- **Education & Skills Development:** Advancing lifelong learning (reskilling & upskilling) and workplace health.
- **Mental Health & Social Isolation:** Addressing the rising challenges of mental health and combating loneliness.

These topics were initially introduced as thematic entry points to guide stakeholder engagement and discussions. However, the scope of conversations was not limited to these alone; additional ideas and perspectives also emerged organically as stakeholders reflected on the broader concept of sustainable working lives and the wellbeing economy. This inclusive and exploratory approach ensured that the study remained open to novel insights beyond predefined categories.

1.2 Conceptual and Policy Foundations

Introduction and Conceptual Foundations to the concept

The concept of the "Economy of Wellbeing of People" (EWP) indicates a paradigm shift from traditional economic metrics such as GDP to broader and more human-centered indicators of prosperity. Emerging from critiques of neoliberal economic models and accelerated by global challenges such as the climate crisis, social inequalities, and demographic shifts, the EWP promotes policies that place human and ecological wellbeing at the center of development (Raworth, 2017; Jackson, 2009).

Institutional efforts, including the OECD's Better Life Index (OECD, 2011), the Stiglitz–Sen–Fitoussi Commission (Stiglitz et al., 2009), and the European Council's 2019 Conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing (Council of the European Union, 2019), have reinforced this perspective. These initiatives argue for embedding wellbeing into the very fabric of governance, budgeting, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Finland's leadership

in championing this agenda at the EU level is particularly notable, with a strategic focus on integrating health, education, inclusion, and work-life sustainability into policymaking (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2022).

Global and EU Policy Context

The OECD's multidimensional wellbeing frameworks, along with the WHO's emphasis on health as a driver and outcome of wellbeing (WHO, 1948), have influenced EU policy directions. The 2019 Council Conclusions adopted under Finland's EU Presidency emphasize systemic approaches to wellbeing: integrating it into economic and social policymaking, investing in early childhood education and lifelong learning, and enabling healthy, inclusive labor markets (Council of the European Union, 2019).

Several national efforts complement this EU trajectory. Finland's policy documents, including *Paths to a Wellbeing Economy* (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2022) and SOSTE's national frameworks (SOSTE, 2021), advocate for structural reforms rooted in wellbeing principles. These policy shifts signal a growing consensus that economic and social policy must be co-designed with wellbeing outcomes in mind.

Iceland has also emerged as a leading advocate for wellbeing-centred governance. The Icelandic government defines a wellbeing economy as one that “ensures that individuals and communities can thrive within sustainable ecological boundaries.” It has developed a national indicator framework to guide policymaking, reflecting priorities such as health, education, housing, environment, and work-life balance. Iceland hosted the international *Wellbeing Economy Forum* in May 2025, bringing together policymakers, researchers, and civil society actors from across the globe to explore how wellbeing-oriented policies can shape resilient and inclusive societies.

Complementing these national and international efforts, the *Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll)*, a global network of governments, researchers, businesses, and civil society organizations, has continued to promote a transition toward economies designed to serve human and ecological wellbeing. WEAll supports the development of collaborative models that challenge conventional growth paradigms and embed wellbeing as the guiding goal of economic systems.

Theoretical and Scientific Underpinnings

Academically, the wellbeing economy intersects with post-growth economics, ecological economics, and human development theory. Key contributions such as Tim Jackson's *Prosperity Without Growth* (Jackson, 2009) and Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* (Raworth, 2017) argue for economic systems that operate within planetary boundaries while securing social foundations.

Sandra Waddock's research categorizes wellbeing economy narratives into four dimensions: transformational (critiquing neoliberalism), nature-centric (focused on ecological boundaries), good life (people-centered), and integrated perspectives (Waddock, 2021). These narratives reinforce the multidimensional and intersectional nature of wellbeing, underscoring the need for participatory governance.

Stakeholder Participation as a Pillar

A recurring theme in both academic and policy literature is the need for inclusive stakeholder engagement. Models such as the Quadruple Helix, Sustainable Value Mapping and Analysis (SVMA), and Q-methodology (Stephenson, 1935; Brown, 1980) provide tested frameworks for capturing diverse stakeholder perspectives (Fioramonti et al., 2022).

Health economic modeling studies and environmental governance literature affirm that participatory processes lead to more legitimate, resilient, and context-sensitive outcomes (Mitton et al., 2009; Domecq et al., 2014). This supports the methodological foundation of the EWP project: engaging actors from public authorities, academia, civil society, and business to co-create wellbeing-oriented frameworks.

Operationalizing and Measuring Wellbeing

While conceptual progress is strong, measurement remains a challenge. Tools like the OECD Better Life Index (OECD, 2011), WEAll's Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide (WEAll, 2020), and the Circles of Sustainability (James, P. 2015) framework provide pathways to operationalize wellbeing. These tools typically integrate domains such as health, income, education, environment, participation, and work-life balance.

However, critiques remain. Scholars warn against technocratic or overly narrow interpretations of wellbeing indicators that fail to capture structural determinants or contextual differences across regions and populations (Fioramonti et al., 2022). Participatory development of indicators is thus essential.

Institutional Uptake and Emerging Models

Scotland, New Zealand, and Finland provide examples of countries incorporating wellbeing into national budgeting and strategic frameworks (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2022). These initiatives demonstrate that the wellbeing economy is not merely a theoretical construct but a viable model for governance.

In the Baltic Sea Region, this project represents an effort to translate these high-level frameworks into regional practice through cross-sectoral cooperation, policy experimentation, and multilevel dialogue.

Gaps, Risks, and Critiques

Despite momentum, several gaps persist:

- Lack of integration between sectoral policies (e.g., education, health, labor)
- Insufficient inclusion of marginalized or underrepresented voices
- Risk of co-option by pro-growth agendas
- Measurement and data standardisation challenges

These gaps highlight the relevance and timeliness of the EWP project.

Why This Project, Why Now?

In light of escalating demographic pressures (e.g., ageing populations), digital and green transitions, and mental health challenges, existing economic models are inadequate. The wellbeing economy offers a people-centric, coherent, socially adaptive, and future-oriented alternative. Yet, its implementation requires locally adapted, stakeholder-driven models.

This project fills a critical gap by:

- Translating high-level wellbeing economy principles into actionable, context-specific approaches
- Engaging a broad range of stakeholders across the Baltic Sea Region to identify shared values and priorities
- Laying the groundwork for a transnational, collaborative platform that bridges policy, practice, and research.

By doing so, the project contributes both conceptually and practically to the evolution of the wellbeing economy. It enables the development of a long-term ecosystem for cooperation, co-creation, and policy learning that can be scaled and adapted across regions.

1.3 Methodology

Methodological Foundations

This project is grounded in the principle that policymaking for a wellbeing economy must be socially responsible, inclusive, context-sensitive, and evidence-based. Drawing from academic literature and practice-oriented frameworks, the project methodology emphasizes participatory approaches, cross-sectoral engagement, and iterative design (Domecq et al., 2014; Mitton et al., 2007).

Frameworks such as the Quadruple Helix and SVMA (Sustainable Value Mapping and Analysis) informed the multi-level stakeholder mapping. These models recognize the interdependencies between policy, practice, research, and citizen perspectives (Fioramonti et al., 2022).

Stakeholder Mapping and Selection

Stakeholders were identified across four main domains: public authorities (local, regional, national), civil society and NGOs, the education and employment sectors, trade unions and health and social care. The mapping process was guided by criteria including:

- Relevance to wellbeing-related outcomes
- Institutional role in shaping economy, education, labor, or health policy
- Representativeness across sectors and countries in the Baltic Sea Region
- Diversity in scale (local to transnational) and perspective (strategic to operational)

This was operationalized through desktop research, national-level stakeholder lists, recommendations from partner institutions, and snowball sampling techniques.

Rationale for Stakeholder Engagement

The selected stakeholders bring both thematic relevance and system-level insights. For instance:

- Education and employment actors highlight skill needs and labor sustainability
- Civil society voices raise inclusion and justice concerns
- Health and social care actors link wellbeing outcomes to social determinants
- Trade unions bring vital perspectives on the interlinkages between work, economic security, social justice, and collective wellbeing.

Engaging this mix allowed the project to explore interlinkages and tensions across systems and ensured that proposed models are informed by real-world conditions.

Engagement Process and Method Design

Stakeholders participated through surveys, interviews, and co-creation workshops. Each engagement phase was tailored:

- **Surveys** gathered general perceptions of the wellbeing economy and sectoral priorities
- **Interviews** explored strategic challenges and institutional dynamics
- **Workshops** enabled structured dialogue, testing co-creation, and shared visioning

Integration of Co-creative Workshops

As part of the participatory approach, two co-creative online workshops were conducted in June 2025 to test and apply an adapted model for cross-sectoral collaboration, originally developed by the Public Health Association of Latvia based on lessons from the Interreg “Healthy Boost” project. These workshops gathered a diverse group of stakeholders from government agencies, trade unions, employer organisations, research institutions, and adult education providers across the Baltic Sea Region. The first session explored issues related to population ageing and skills development, while the second focused on mental health, social isolation, and the added value of transnational collaboration.

The original project plan foresaw six co-creative workshops across the Baltic Sea Region. During implementation, however, the process of identifying and engaging the most relevant individuals and organizations proved more time-consuming than anticipated. This was primarily due to GDPR requirements, varying national regulations, and the complexity of institutional landscapes. To ensure quality and representativeness, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping process was prioritized. As a result, two carefully designed workshops, together with survey and interview findings, provided deep insights, successfully tested the co-creation model, and fully achieved the intended objectives of the workshop format.

Design principles were adapted from participatory governance literature and health policy engagement models (Mitton et al., 2007; Domecq et al., 2014).

Ethical Considerations and Inclusion

Special attention was paid to informed consent, accessibility (language and format), and balance across member states. Due to GDPR constraints, stakeholder outreach often required intermediary facilitation and open calls through institutional channels.

Limitations and Challenges within Stakeholder Outreach

The process of identifying and engaging stakeholders across EU Baltic Sea Region countries plus Norway and Åland, proved more time-consuming than anticipated. GDPR requirements, varying national regulations, and the complexity of institutional landscapes often delayed access to relevant contacts or limited the availability of information. In several cases, reaching the right individuals within organisations required multiple steps and extended correspondence.

These challenges meant that a greater share of project resources had to be invested in ensuring that the most relevant and representative actors were ultimately included. While this limited the number of workshops that could be organised within the project timeframe, it ensured that those carried out were of high quality, brought together the

right mix of participants, and achieved the intended objectives. Although only two workshops could be organized, this was balanced by the survey and interviews, which together engaged 92 stakeholders across Baltic Sea Region countries plus Norway and Åland. In this way, the project ensured broad and representative participation, and the objectives of the feasibility study were fully met.

Toward a Collaborative Platform

This feasibility study is more than a standalone assessment. It is a pilot effort toward creating a sustained collaborative platform. The methodology tested here lays the foundation for ongoing cooperation and co-creation. Future iterations can build on this model, expanding the stakeholder base, deepening engagement, and moving from dialogue to policy action.

Such a platform can serve as:

- A regional hub for evidence and practice exchange
- A mechanism for aligning funding with shared priorities
- A voice for the Baltic Sea Region in the broader European wellbeing economy discourse

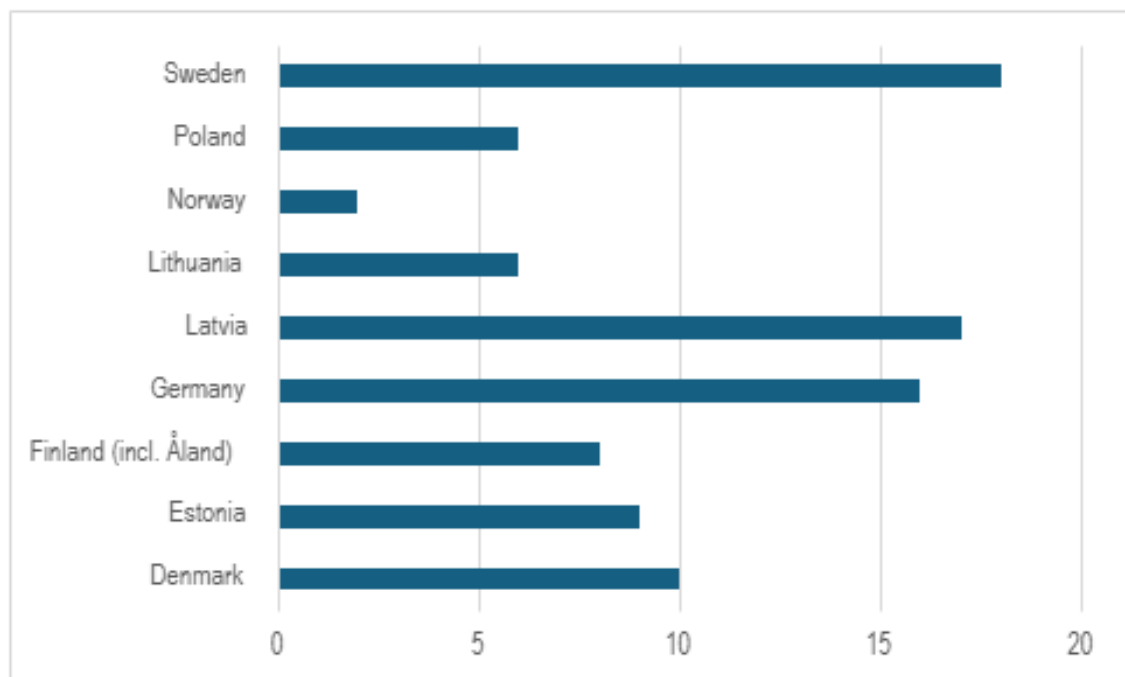
Implementation Steps

The Feasibility Study has been carried out in six steps using qualitative methods:

1. Development of a methodology for stakeholder mapping and cross-sectoral and multi-level collaboration covering eight EU Baltic Sea Region countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden), plus Norway and Åland, searching within sectors and branches interconnected with labour market issues, health and health prevention, wellbeing, demographic changes, education, vocational training, up- and reskilling, elderly and ageing population; representing governance/policy levels: local, regional, national, pan-Baltic, international as well as non-governmental/governmental.
2. Stakeholder engagement was carried out through the design and dissemination of an online survey, complemented by individual interviews in the Baltic Sea countries: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, as well as Norway and Åland. Relevant stakeholders were identified through a careful and extended investigation process. In total, individual participation requests were sent to **684** contacts, of which **92** responded either to the survey (see Annex 1) or through interviews (see Annex 2).
3. Analysis and organizational design of the flagship structure, including identification of key actors and formulation of thematic focus areas.

4. Strategic meetings with Policy Area Health and the Steering Group for Policy Area Education to discuss content, progress, and stakeholder outreach.
5. Two co-creative workshops bringing together diverse stakeholders to explore challenges and co-develop ideas for joint action.
6. Discussions on proposals for future implementation projects, including thematic working groups and transnational collaboration formats.

Figure 1: Number of respondents per country. Total: 92.



2. Study Results

This chapter summarizes the results of the stakeholder engagement activities conducted across the Baltic Sea Region. Insights were gathered through a qualitative survey, targeted interviews, and co-creation workshops, involving stakeholders from a wide array of sectors and governance levels. The following sub-sections explore how these actors understand and interpret the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) and identify key thematic areas for future action.

2.1 Understanding the EWP Concept

Stakeholders across the Baltic Sea Region, including representatives from trade unions, employer and cluster organisations, authorities at local, regional and national levels, education and research institutions, civil society, and private companies, were invited to reflect on what the EWP means in their specific contexts.

Some respondents were familiar with the concept as a strategic or policy framework, while others encountered it for the first time through this study. Yet across the diverse perspectives, a shared recognition emerged: that economic systems must evolve to place human wellbeing; spanning health, education, employment, inclusion, and dignity at the centre.

Participants interpreted the EWP concept through the lens of their own sectoral responsibilities and experiences. While some offered systemic or even philosophical reflections on economic progress, others focused on practical and sector-specific issues such as workplace mental health, access to education, or inclusion of marginalized groups. Affected populations identified in the responses included older workers, youth, persons with limited access to services, and those at risk of social exclusion.

The following section presents a thematic analysis of these insights, clustered into key perspectives that highlight how stakeholders understand the EWP and the priorities they associate with it across the region:

A Paradigm Shift in Economic Thinking

A prominent theme across stakeholder responses is a redefinition of the economy itself; a shift from traditional, output-focused metrics like GDP toward a more human-centered and values-driven approach. Many respondents described the EWP as a paradigm that places individual and societal wellbeing at the heart of economic planning, where policies are assessed not only for their fiscal impact but also for their contribution to quality of life, inclusion, and resilience.

Several participants viewed EWP as a “*new mindset*” or “*a new way of thinking*”, where wellbeing is no longer seen as a byproduct of economic growth but a primary objective. As one municipal authority in Estonia put it: *“The EWP means creating an economy that helps people live good, healthy lives and ensures everyone has what they need to thrive, now and in the future... balancing human needs with environmental limits.”*

Others emphasize that such a framework helps rebalance competing priorities in policymaking, as noted by a former representative of a national health authority in Denmark: *“It’s a way of thinking and prioritizing among different initiatives and interests. For me, EWP provides a platform for working cross-sectorally.”*

A few respondents linked this transformation to global frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the Doughnut Economy, reinforcing the idea that economies should serve people and planet alike. This was echoed by a Nordic cooperation office in Latvia: *“It means a necessary change of mindset; a new angle of viewing and understanding the economy... involving all population groups, not only those of the working age.”*

Several contributions also pointed to the need for better measures of progress. A civil society organization in Germany proposed: *“Wellbeing, happiness, and sustainability indicators should guide decisions, because what we measure shapes what we value.”*

This reimagining economic purpose provides a conceptual foundation for the feasibility study itself. It justifies the need for a macro-regional flagship platform where social, educational, environmental, and economic policies are aligned around the shared objective of advancing human wellbeing.

Lifelong Learning and Skills for the Future

A second key theme emerging from stakeholder responses centers on education, skills development, and the evolving role of lifelong learning in shaping sustainable working lives across the Baltic Sea Region. Many respondents emphasized that continuous competence development is vital in navigating the transitions brought by digitalization, climate adaptation, and demographic change.

Lifelong learning was not only viewed as an economic necessity, but also as a public good that **promotes inclusion, empowerment, mental wellbeing, and resilience**; key pillars of a wellbeing-oriented economy. *“People need to study new things, trends, and competencies through their whole life. New skills are essential for both working and everyday life.”* -Adult education provider, Finland

“Education must continuously upskill the workforce for new specializations and a sustainable economy.” -Public education authority, Estonia

"Education is not only about enabling individuals to contribute to society, but also about making the educational journey life-changing for each person." -Vocational education institution, Denmark

Stakeholders pointed to several key needs and challenges:

- Stronger alignment between formal education, vocational training, and workplace needs, especially in growing sectors.
- Inclusive and flexible learning environments that support intergenerational and adult learning.
- Better access to lifelong learning opportunities for rural populations and marginalized groups.
- Integration of wellbeing and mental health into educational settings to support learners and educators alike.

"EWP should address the accessibility of lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, and the link between workplace wellbeing and development." -Higher education institution, Estonia

These perspectives converge on the idea that lifelong learning is foundational to the EWP, enabling individuals to adapt to a changing world while ensuring dignity, inclusion, and purpose across the life course.

Mental Health and Social Resilience

Stakeholder responses consistently emphasized that mental health is not a peripheral issue but a cornerstone of the Economy of Wellbeing of People. Across the Baltic Sea Region, rising psychological stress, burnout, and social disconnection were identified as pressing concerns. These issues span work, education, healthcare, and community life, requiring proactive, cross-sectoral solutions.

In addition to clinical and community concerns, stakeholders also emphasized the importance of **employment conditions and workplace wellbeing**. Respondents highlighted the role of fair wages, job security, social dialogue, and healthy work environments in promoting mental wellbeing and preventing burnout; particularly in sectors like education, health care, and platform-based work.

The following four themes summarize stakeholder perspectives on the issue of mental health and social resilience:

Theme 1: Mental Health at Work – A Strategic and Economic Priority

Mental wellbeing was described as both a human right and an economic imperative. Long-term stress, burnout, and psychosocial risks were cited as barriers to sustainable

employment and workforce resilience, especially in sectors experiencing structural strain.

“Wellbeing at work is important as such, but it also has a great economic impact; both at workplace and societal level.” -Trade union, Finland

“Mental health and health in general should be considered a cross-cutting priority in all aspects of people’s lives, not just in healthcare, but also in education, employment, housing, and community development.” -Public health institution, Estonia

Key Takeaways:

- Investing in preventive mental health support at the organisational level
- Strengthening occupational health systems and psychosocial risk assessments
- Recognizing mental wellbeing as central to economic performance

Theme 2: Addressing Loneliness and Social Disconnection

Some of the stakeholders raised concerns about rising social isolation, especially among older adults, unemployed individuals, and youth. While the pandemic was identified as an accelerator, many emphasized that loneliness stems from deeper societal fragmentation. *“Unemployment, especially when it stretches over a long period, can create feelings of isolation, loss of identity, and a profound sense of being disconnected from the rhythm of society.”* -Public employment agency, Sweden

“A wellbeing economy must reduce material and emotional inequalities by investing in families’ ability to thrive, not just survive.” -Civil society organisation, Latvia

Key Takeaways:

- Recognizing loneliness as a public health concern
- Promoting community-based initiatives and social spaces
- Supporting policies for people with limited social capital

Theme 3: Mental Wellbeing in Education and Learning Environments

High levels of stress, anxiety, and alienation among students and educators were identified as growing concerns. Educational institutions were seen both as arenas for early mental health promotion and as environments requiring reform to mitigate burnout and foster inclusion.

“We must foster school and research environments that promote mental and physical health... from reducing stress and workload to improving organisational culture.” - Ministry of Education, Estonia

“Low wellbeing of children and youth translates to lower education rates and achievements.” -Educational institute, Poland

Key Takeaways:

- Embedding mental health support structures in educational institutions
- Training teachers in wellbeing-sensitive approaches
- Creating emotionally safe and inclusive learning environments

Theme 4: Cross-Sectoral Mental Health Strategies and Prevention

Respondents called for system-wide responses that integrate mental health into policymaking across health, education, employment, housing, and social care. There was consensus on the need for long-term investment and shared frameworks to support mental wellbeing.

“Mental health requires cross-sectoral cooperation, long-term investment, and new ways of measuring success.” -Government ministry, Estonia

“The Economy of Wellbeing of People must integrate health and social services and recognize mental wellbeing as essential to societal cohesion and resilience.” - Employer umbrella organisation, Germany

Key Takeaways:

- Developing cross-sectoral frameworks between public services, civil society, and employers
- Shifting from reactive to preventive models of mental health care
- Measuring mental wellbeing indicators alongside traditional economic metrics

Ageing Population and Intergenerational Dialogue

Addressing demographic change and promoting inclusion across generations

As societies across the Baltic Sea Region experience significant demographic shifts, the ageing population presents both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development. Stakeholders in our study highlighted the need to shift the narrative around ageing, from viewing older adults as a burden to recognizing their untapped potential as active contributors to society and the economy. Intergenerational dialogue,

flexible work models, and inclusive lifelong learning were frequently emphasized as critical pathways to tap into this potential and mitigate age-related exclusion.

Thematic Focus and Findings

- **Challenging Ageism and Stereotypes**

Many respondents underlined the persistence of age-based discrimination in the workplace and public discourse. They stressed the need to combat ageism through awareness, education, and policy. *“I believe that age discrimination should be addressed first and foremost.”* -Adult Education Institution, Lithuania. *“Older people are still seen as passive and dependent. That needs to change.”* - Local Government Representative, Sweden

- **Recognizing the Role of Older Adults in Society**

There was strong consensus that older generations hold a wealth of knowledge, experience, and capacity that should be leveraged in workplaces and communities. *“It is essential to develop strategies that support the continued participation of older individuals, both in the labor market and in other areas of society.”* -Research Institute, Germany. *“We need to create jobs that suit older workers, not push them out.”* -Policy Expert, Denmark.

- **Flexible Employment and Lifelong Learning**

Respondents recommended flexible work options, upskilling initiatives, and opportunities for older adults to contribute meaningfully beyond retirement age. This includes intergenerational mentoring, part-time roles, and volunteer-based knowledge-sharing. *“Opportunities for residents to change professions at any age... to feel fulfilled and receive a decent salary.”* -Secondary School, Latvia. *“Intergenerational learning is key—older people have much to teach and learn.”* - Educational Organisation, Estonia.

- **Demographic Transition as a Driver for Innovation**

Several contributions noted that the ageing population could serve as a catalyst for social innovation, particularly in care services, age-friendly infrastructure, and inclusive policy design. *“Ageing is not just a problem, it’s an opportunity to redesign systems for everyone.”* -Intergovernmental Organisation, Baltic Sea Region

Key Takeaways

- Promote active ageing policies that encourage employment, volunteering, and civic participation among older adults.
- Address structural ageism through legal protections, workplace policy reforms, and awareness campaigns.

- Support intergenerational learning and mentorship programmes within education systems and workplaces.
- Invest in age-inclusive lifelong learning systems that provide relevant and accessible upskilling opportunities.
- Encourage social innovation and entrepreneurship tailored to ageing societies, especially in health, housing, and mobility.

Equity, Inclusion, and Participation

Across the survey and interviews, stakeholders emphasized that an EWP must proactively address social inequalities and ensure that everyone—regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, health condition, or ethnic background—has the opportunity to live a meaningful, healthy, and fulfilling life. Respondents pointed out that gaps in education access, digital literacy, labor market participation, and healthcare disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including youth from minority backgrounds, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, and older adults.

Equity was not only framed as a matter of fairness, but also as a prerequisite for resilient societies. Inclusive systems were seen as those that allow all individuals to participate fully in learning, working, caregiving, and civic life. Several stakeholders stressed the importance of recognizing and valuing unpaid care work, especially that done by women, while others called for better integration of non-formal education pathways to empower adults who may not thrive in traditional systems.

“The possibility for all people, regardless of educational, health, or environmental differences, to be included in societal processes.” -Social Enterprise Association, Latvia.
“We must make education accessible to everyone, even those who haven’t followed traditional paths. This is not only about employment, but about giving people a life-changing experience.” -Adult Education Centre, Denmark

These reflections point to the need for deliberate inclusion strategies such as targeted support for disadvantaged groups, promotion of lifelong learning for all, and reforms that align services with people’s lived realities as core elements of any wellbeing-oriented economy.

Key Takeaways

- Equity and social justice are foundational to a wellbeing economy, with multiple stakeholders emphasizing the need to reduce disparities in access to education, healthcare, and employment.

- Inclusive lifelong learning systems must consider the needs of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups (e.g., minorities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the elderly).
- Participatory governance is seen as central to wellbeing, emphasizing democratic involvement, empowerment, and agency.
- Language and cultural barriers, particularly for migrants and minority populations, were highlighted as obstacles to education and labor market access.
- Trust in institutions and strong community ties are considered critical to fostering equitable wellbeing and civic engagement.

Public Sector and Governance Perspectives

Reframing governance as a driver of inclusive wellbeing

A recurring theme across stakeholder responses was the crucial role of the public sector in enabling and sustaining a wellbeing-oriented economy. High-quality, accessible public services, including healthcare, education, employment support, and social care, were seen as the backbone of equitable and resilient societies.

Stakeholders from ministries, public agencies, and trade unions emphasized that the public sector should not be viewed as a cost driver, but as a **strategic investment** in human capital and social cohesion. Several stressed the importance of stable funding, adequate staffing, and good working conditions within public institutions to ensure sustainability and service quality.

At the same time, many respondents called for more **coordinated and people-centered governance structures**. They advocated for breaking down silos between policy areas; such as health, education, and labor, and moving toward integrated approaches that reflect the complexity of people's lived realities. Transparent governance, inclusive participation, and trust in institutions were repeatedly highlighted as critical enablers of successful wellbeing policies.

“The Economy of Wellbeing requires a strong, well-resourced public sector... essential to social cohesion and equal opportunities.” -Trade Union Confederation, Germany.
“People’s wellbeing should be the goal of economic policy—not an afterthought. That requires cross-sectoral cooperation, long-term investment, and new ways of measuring success.” -Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia.

Other respondents underscored the role of public administrations as **employers**, with a responsibility to model fair employment practices, support mental health, and ensure

sustainable careers in public service. Governance innovation, including **new indicators of progress**, participatory policy development, and integrated planning across government levels, was widely seen as essential to enabling this shift.

Key Takeaways

- The public sector is seen as a **foundation for the wellbeing economy**, delivering essential services and promoting inclusion.
- **Cross-sectoral coordination** across health, education, labor, and social policy is necessary to align governance with people's lived needs.
- A **well-resourced, stable, and fair public sector workforce** is key to delivering high-quality, sustainable services.
- **New governance tools**, such as wellbeing indicators and participatory approaches, are needed to improve accountability and long-term impact.
- The public sector should lead by example in fostering **sustainable employment and institutional trust** across society.

Environmental Sustainability and Interconnectedness

Linking planetary boundaries and human wellbeing

Although not the most frequently cited theme, several stakeholders emphasized the deep and essential connection between environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of people. These responses stressed that ecological health, climate resilience, and sustainable development are not separate from human prosperity, but **foundational** to it.

Stakeholders urged that a wellbeing economy must **respect planetary boundaries** and embed sustainability into all sectors of policy, from education and urban planning to employment and healthcare. The climate and biodiversity crises were framed not just as environmental concerns, but as direct threats to public health, economic stability, and intergenerational equity.

“Wellbeing depends on a healthy environment. Climate action and nature protection must be part of every policy.” -Local Authority, Estonia.

“We must take a long-term perspective on leaving the planet for future generations in a way that does not limit their possibilities for good lives.” -Think Tank, Denmark.

Some contributors drew on existing frameworks; such as the Doughnut Economy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, as **conceptual anchors** for aligning environmental protection with social wellbeing. The green transition was widely seen as an **opportunity**

to create meaningful, future-proof jobs, improve living environments, and reduce inequalities.

Health-environment linkages were especially emphasized. Stakeholders pointed to air quality, access to green spaces, and sustainable mobility as critical to both physical and mental health. Environmental education, particularly among youth, was seen as key to fostering long-term responsibility and collective resilience.

Key Takeaways

- **Human wellbeing is inseparable from environmental health;** climate action, biodiversity protection, and resource sustainability must be core to a wellbeing-oriented economy.
- Stakeholders support **long-term, intergenerational thinking**, ensuring today's wellbeing strategies do not compromise the prospects of future generations.
- Frameworks like the **UN SDGs** and the **Doughnut Economy** were cited as guiding models for integrating ecological and social priorities.
- The **green transition** should be inclusive and just, providing support for vulnerable groups and investing in **green skills and jobs**.
- **Urban planning**, access to nature, and climate-resilient infrastructure were identified as vital levers for promoting health, equity, and resilience.

Concluding Reflections on the Understanding of the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) Concept

The diverse and nuanced responses to the first survey question suggest that the *Economy of Wellbeing of People* is broadly understood as a departure from traditional economic paradigms; one that places **human dignity, inclusive participation, health, and intergenerational justice** at the centre of policymaking.

Three cross-cutting priorities consistently emerged across sectors and countries:

- The centrality of **lifelong learning and skills development** as a foundation for personal agency and societal resilience.
- The urgent need to invest in **mental health and social connection**, especially amid rising isolation and evolving forms of work.
- The imperative to build **age-inclusive societies**, where older adults are recognized as contributors, not burdens; to social and economic life.

Together, these themes reflect a **shared vision of a wellbeing economy** that is inclusive, future-oriented, and values-driven. While levels of familiarity with the concept and stages of implementation vary across the region, there is strong alignment on the idea that **economic resilience and social wellbeing must be pursued hand in hand**.

This common ground provides a strong foundation for the next phase of the report: an exploration of the challenges and systemic risks that stakeholders consider most urgent in building a sustainable working life across the Baltic Sea Region.

2.2 Those most affected by EWP challenges

Following discussions on the EWP concept, we ask ‘Who is Most Affected by the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) Challenges?’. Stakeholder input across the Baltic Sea Region underscores that EWP challenges disproportionately affect already vulnerable or structurally marginalized populations. While the entire society is ultimately touched by wellbeing-related policies, recurring patterns emerged across country contexts and sectors.

Vulnerable Groups in the Labour Market

Many public authorities, trade unions, and research institutions emphasized the difficulty of long-term unemployed individuals, people with disabilities, low-educated adults, and those in precarious jobs. *“Vulnerable groups are most affected. Progression can be measured by how far from the labour market they are.”* National Employment Agency, Sweden *“Low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed face exclusion and emotional barriers to participation.”* -Adult Education Platform, Latvia. Progress is often tracked through employment and unemployment rates, outcomes of adult learning programs, and participation in upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

Youth at Risk of Exclusion

Education ministries and youth-focused organizations pointed to young people, especially early school leavers, NEETs, and those in rural or disadvantaged communities, as among the most affected. *“Young people who do not complete secondary education face greater difficulties finding sustainable employment.”* -Ministry of Education, Estonia. *“Youth in peripheral areas must adapt to dynamic labour market changes without sufficient preparation.”* -Regional Government Authority, Poland. Suggested metrics include dropout rates, participation in lifelong learning, and differentiated tracking of gender, region, and ethnic background.

Older Adults and Ageing Workers

The challenges of an aging workforce were widely discussed, with particular attention to digital exclusion, employment discrimination, and social isolation among retirees.

“Seniors are at risk of both social and digital exclusion.” - Regional Policy Institution, Poland. *“Older workers and retirees require flexible work arrangements to maintain dignity and financial security.”* -Local authority, Estonia. Indicators proposed include employment rates of older adults, participation in reskilling programs, and civic or social engagement levels post-retirement.

Women and Gender Inequality

Numerous stakeholders highlighted how women, especially those in education, care, and health sectors, are impacted by gender pay gaps, care burdens, and high job stress. *“Women in healthcare, elderly care, and education face high stress and difficult work conditions.”* -Work Environment Authority, Sweden. *“The gender pay gap remains one of the highest in the EU and affects women’s long-term wellbeing.”* -Strategic Management Office, Estonia. Measuring progress involves disaggregated pay and employment data, survey-based health and satisfaction measures, and analysis of time-use and care responsibilities.

Rural and Peripheral Communities

Regional disparity emerged as a cross-cutting concern. Individuals in rural or remote regions often struggle with limited mobility, fewer job opportunities, and inadequate public services. *“Rural residents struggle with limited mobility and access to services.”* - Regional Development Department, Poland. *“Youth and elderly in small communities are especially vulnerable to EWP challenges.”* - Intergovernmental Secretariat, BSR. Relevant indicators include access to transport, service coverage maps, and regional breakdowns of employment and wellbeing outcomes.

People Facing Mental Health Challenges

Mental health surfaced across all sectors; especially among those with chronic conditions, addiction, or long-term stress due to socio-economic pressures. *“Vulnerable groups with chronic mental health conditions often face multiple disadvantages.”* -Mental Health Hospital, Latvia. *“Workplace mental health prevention is underdeveloped and requires more attention.”* -Health Promotion Institute, Estonia. Suggested measurement tools include wait times, quality of care, preventive services, relapse rates, and integration between health and social support systems.

Migrants, Minorities, and Non-Native Speakers

Respondents emphasized language, cultural adaptation, and systemic discrimination as core challenges for migrant and minority populations. *“Migrants face significant challenges including language barriers and cultural adaptation.”* -Adult Education Coordination Body, Latvia. *“Youth from minority language backgrounds are at higher risk of school exclusion and job insecurity.”* -Ministry of Education, Estonia. Progress could

be tracked using data on language acquisition, educational attainment, employment integration, and civic engagement.

Public Service Employees

Civil servants, teachers, and healthcare workers face the double burden of supporting public welfare while often working under stressful or underfunded conditions. *“Public service employees are on the frontlines, bearing the brunt of underfunded systems.”* - Public Service Union, Germany. *“Older educators face retirement pressures and health-related stress due to staffing shortages.”* -Education Ministry, Estonia. Monitoring tools should include staffing ratios, burnout levels, job satisfaction surveys, and service quality metrics.

Conclusion: Mapping Vulnerability for a Resilient EWP Transition

Stakeholder input points to a clear reality: EWP challenges disproportionately affect people already navigating structural barriers. Vulnerability is not only economic but also relational, geographic, gendered, and institutional.

Measuring progress requires a dual focus on objective indicators (employment, health, income, access) and subjective measures (wellbeing, agency, satisfaction). Disaggregation by age, gender, location, education level, and socio-economic status is essential.

Several stakeholders also called for composite wellbeing indices, civic participation tracking, and better cross-sectoral data sharing. Only with this layered, inclusive approach can EWP policies target those who need them most, and ensure no one is left behind in the transition to a wellbeing economy.

2.3 Challenges to Wellbeing in the Workplace

Building on the diverse understandings of what the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) entails, this section turns to the lived realities and systemic barriers that stakeholders identify as threats to achieving wellbeing in working life. In response to the question “What are the biggest challenges or risks to achieving the wellbeing of people in relation to a sustainable working life in your sector?”, contributions from across the Baltic Sea Region reveal how deeply interconnected challenges such as mental health, skills mismatch, aging demographics, and structural inequalities are experienced on the ground. This section synthesizes these insights to illuminate the complex, cross-cutting obstacles that must be addressed to realize a people-centred and future-resilient wellbeing economy.

Framing the Risks to Wellbeing at Work

As stated in the introduction to this section, in the survey we have been asking the question ‘What are the biggest challenges or risks to achieving the wellbeing of people in relation to a sustainable working life in your sector?’

Stakeholders name a number of issues ranging from global trends to specific barriers experienced by marginalized groups. Seen from a broader perspective, respondents realize structural challenges within the systems: labor market, education and health as well as individual challenges faced by the people who are part of these systems.

For many respondents, these challenges and sectors are interlinked and influence each other. As a local authority member from Lithuania puts it: "The well-being of one sector is closely linked to that of others. It is inseparable". *“Health and education are important keys. Further, lifelong learning is becoming more important in times of digitalization”* - Researcher, Germany.

In the following we summarize and group challenges to wellbeing at the workplace seen by the respondents:

Mental Health

According to most of the respondents, the number one risk to wellbeing at the workplace is mental health. Mental health has impacts on work ability, leading to sick absence and early retirement. Stress and burnout are widely mentioned as risk factors. Workers within so-called ‘contact professions’(in education, healthcare and social services) are perceived extra vulnerable to stress. Factors behind mental health issues are changes in the work environment, job insecurity, lack of acknowledgment, poor work-life balance, incompatibility of family and work, and discrimination based on sex/ethnicity.

High workload caused by (growing) workforce shortage jeopardizing wellbeing at the workplace has explicitly been mentioned by representatives from different levels and sectors from Poland, Sweden and Germany. Some respondents highlight mental health issues due to high expectations and demands among young professionals in the beginning of their career and young people under education (students). *“The wellbeing component is often not integrated into the educational process”* -National authority, Latvia).

Preventive Health Measures

Respondents mainly from the Baltic States deplore limited funding for and a lack of awareness of preventive health measures. Also, the unequal access to health services is an issue mainly mentioned by respondents from the the Baltic states.

“One of the biggest challenges to achieving wellbeing and sustainable working life in our sector is the generally low level of awareness and limited interest among employers regarding issues like healthy ageing, mental health, and continuous learning. Preventive

approaches are not yet widely integrated into workplace practices” -Researcher, Estonia.

Consequently, ensuring health (both physical and mental) and healthy aging is seen as important adjustment parameters to keep workers active in the labor market and decrease pressure put on social systems. This requires equal and systemic support for people at risk and investments in preventive and holistic health approaches and most importantly *“a shift from reactive healthcare to prevention and health promotion across the life course, starting early, but continuing through all working-age stages and into older adulthood”* -Researcher, Latvia.

Education and Lifelong Learning

Respondents generally stress the importance of education and lifelong learning for wellbeing at the workplace and point out challenges as following. *“It’s a balancing act: between staying healthy and satisfied, and keeping up with the challenges of transformation. Without education or further training, it often isn’t possible anymore!”* - Employer organisation, Germany.

Representatives from governmental organisations at national level from Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany, research institutions from Sweden and Estonia as well as education associations from Finland and Denmark underline the need for lifelong learning and reskilling/upskilling opportunities for workers generally and elderly workers specifically. Training opportunities need to be accessible and relevant to rapidly changing skill requests, according to the respondents. *“In terms of education and lifelong learning, there is often insufficient access to structured, supported opportunities for retraining or upskilling - especially important as digitalization transforms public sector roles. A sustainable working life requires continuous investment in training, better career development pathways, and recognition of the increasing demands placed on public employees. Addressing these risks is essential not only for the wellbeing of individual workers but also for the long-term functionality of the public sector”* -Trade union, Germany.

Education systems are perceived inflexible to changing demands and wellbeing needs. *“Staff shortages in key sectors (e.g. IT, aviation industry, medicine), requiring retraining and education programs”* -Regional authority, Poland). *“Modernizing educational systems to keep pace with technological advances and enabling adult learning for new skills or career changes”* -National authority, Latvia. Insufficient availability and accessibility of education is an issue especially mentioned by Latvian respondents. They describe regional and social inequalities regarding access to (relevant and high quality) education.

Additionally, a researcher from Estonia, reports challenges in the higher education and research sector such as precarious employment, insecurity, workload, lack of support for lifelong learning and career transitions. *“These challenges affect not only academic staff but also the broader mission of education as a public good”*.

Skills Obsolescence and Mismatch

Specific issues in this respect, mentioned by Swedish and Latvian respondents, are *“lacking skills demanded by the labor market”, “mismatch between education and future job market needs”* and *“skills obsolescence and the need for reskilling: rapid changes in the labor market (digitalization, green transition, artificial intelligence) demand continuous skill updating”*.

Besides these issues, according to a national authority representative from Latvia, *“adults often do not know which skills will be needed in the future. There is a perception that ‘education is for young people’, which discourages seniors and middle-aged individuals from participating. Many adults do not know how to learn more effectively or how to develop their learning skills, which further lowers motivation to engage in education.”*

Ageing Workforce

Demographic change leading to an ageing population and older workers who pose special needs for the education system and labor market is a frequently raised issue among respondents from all countries. *“The biggest threat against wellbeing in my sector is the ageing population, the working life has to adjust to an older workforce”* - Respondent, Norway. A researcher from Sweden and a governmental representative from Latvia stress the need for flexible, *“age-friendly workplaces”*. *“In the context of healthy and active aging, many civil servants face longer working lives without adequate support for maintaining health or balancing work and private life. Preventive health measures, flexible working models, and age-appropriate workplaces are still lacking in many areas”* -Trade union, Germany. A regional representative from Poland lists *“age discrimination and difficulties in professional activation of seniors as well as a lack of adapted educational programs for people aged 50+”* as risks to wellbeing at the workplace in connection to ageing workforce.

Respondents from Latvia and Estonia name *“workforce shrinkage as a challenging consequence of an ageing workforce”*. *“Estonia’s health and care workforce is aging rapidly, with not enough younger professionals entering the field”*. Additionally, Latvia faces *“youth migration and brain drain: talented young people often leave for better opportunities abroad, creating long-term gaps in local labor markets and innovation ecosystems”*.

Another issue that has been mentioned in this respect: *“lack of proactive, community-based support for older adults limits their ability to work longer or engage meaningfully in society. Preventive care and health literacy programs are underdeveloped, especially among older or lower-income populations”* -National authority, Estonia.

Inequalities

Inequalities in income between different groups as well as geographical disparities in terms availability of jobs has been mentioned by a governmental representative from Latvia.

A non-governmental representative from Latvia adds *“lack of systemic, long-term support that enables families - particularly parents with young children, to combine caregiving responsibilities with personal development, stable employment, and lifelong learning”* as disadvantageous to achieving the well-being of people in relation to a sustainable working life. *“Without accessible and flexible services such as mental health support, high-quality early childhood education, and trust-based career guidance, many parents - especially mothers or those in vulnerable situations - face burnout, career stagnation, or forced withdrawal from the workforce, which not only undermines their well-being but also limits broader social and economic resilience”*.

Another issue was raised by a trade union representative from Germany: *“In recent years, the supply of affordable housing has also become an increasingly pressing problem, which negatively affects the well-being of many people”*.

Long-term Perspective

From the study results, we understand that the concept of “Economy of Wellbeing of People” is perceived as a long-term policy goal which requires commitment, leadership and mind shift. *“The biggest challenge is to get politicians to take long term decisions that take the sustainable development of the earth into consideration”* -Think tank, Denmark.

“Demographic change and healthy aging, skills mismatch and lifelong learning, work intensification and psychosocial stress, insufficient prevention cultures. Sustainable working life must be supported by evidence-based policy, inclusive work environments, and lifelong learning frameworks that enable all individuals to remain healthy, skilled, and motivated throughout their working years” -National authority, Germany.

Resistance to change, restructuring and fragmentation of sectors due to restructuring as well as cuts in fundings are challenging the concept according to governmental and research institutions in Sweden, Latvia and Estonia. Besides, *“institutions mainly focus on economic aspects, and argue that without economic progress other dimensions of well-being cannot rise”* -Researcher, Germany.

“In Latvia’s business sector, key risks to sustainable working life include workforce aging, skill mismatches, and regional inequalities, which strain both employee well-being and economic growth. Insecure jobs, digital exclusion, and poor work-life balance further erode job satisfaction. Without inclusive policies and investment in reskilling and regional development, long-term workforce sustainability and well-being are at risk” - National authority, Latvia.

“Addressing these challenges requires a holistic and preventive approach, integrating occupational safety and health policies with broader labor market and education strategies. It also demands cooperation among policymakers, employers, and workers to ensure that well-being and sustainable employment are mutually reinforcing goals” - National authority, Germany.

Global Trends and Systemic Changes

Macro changes on global level such as climate change, weakened geopolitical and economic situation are perceived challenging to the EWP concept. *“The overall socio-economic wellbeing is the biggest challenge that the civil society sector itself cannot solve - it is the responsibility of the government. CSOs should be professional and loud, strategic in their advocacy work to raise such matters and support people in their demands for better living quality, etc. This again needs (ideally) support to CSOs of vulnerable groups from the government, but at the moment it seems that due to security reasons in the world, less resources are given to the civil sector”* -NGO, Estonia.

A few respondents see a risk factor in digitalisation and artificial intelligence. *“Growing importance and role¹ of artificial intelligence in the services that previously included the personal and face-to-face contacts. The use of the AI in the name of efficiency makes the "human factor" increasingly unnecessary, thereby the understanding of wellbeing may shift towards even greater reliance of the individual self and not on the community in which one resides”* (pan-Baltic organization). *“The biggest challenges are due to the forced digitalisation, because workers are losing their social features as human beings”* -Trade union, Estonia.

From a slightly different perspective: *“Emerging risks from digitalisation and new forms of work: rapid technological changes and new work formats (e.g., remote work, platform work) can bring new ergonomic, psychosocial, and organizational risks, potentially affecting job security, work-life balance, and occupational health”* -National authority, Germany.

“One of the biggest challenges is balancing rising healthcare demands with financial sustainability. Demographic change, such as an aging population and workforce shortages, increases pressure on both funding systems and healthcare delivery. Additionally, mental health issues among healthcare professionals threaten long-term

workforce resilience. Digital transformation, while promising, also brings risks of inequality in access and data privacy concerns. To ensure well-being, the sector has to invest in prevention, support healthy work environments, and adapt flexibly to societal and technological changes” -NGO, Germany.

2.4 Data Needs

Because data is essential to understanding and discussing wellbeing, we ask experts: “What kind of data would help make better decisions and policies in this field”?

Generally, respondents request both quantitative and qualitative data within the sphere of EWP and related sectors. Experts already utilise various international studies, databases and monitoring systems that are primarily used in the fields of education, health, social affairs, and the labour market¹.

Data is needed to understand current challenges to achieving wellbeing at the workplace, to represent both employers' and employees' perspectives and to inform policy- and decision-making processes. There is a need for data on different levels ranging from national and regional to “SDG level” -NGO, Latvia. Several respondents call for longitudinal data in order to evaluate the long-term effects on well-being and employment, also in the light of Return of Investment (ROI).

Respondents emphasize the need for **data that reflects the holistic nature of the concept**. *“Improving decision-making and policy impact in an Economy of Wellbeing requires holistic, cross-sectoral, and disaggregated data that goes beyond economic performance to reflect real-life experiences and human flourishing. Should build on existing survey studies at population level” -Researcher, Sweden.*

Some countries lack this kind of data or existing data suffers from “*inadequate data quality, limited availability, and incompatibility between datasets*” -National authority, Latvia.

“Since Estonia does not apply the principles of the Economy of Wellbeing (EWP) in policy design and implementation, relevant data is also not collected or analysed. Therefore,

¹ PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment, PIAAC: Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, TALIS: Teaching and Learning International Survey, OSKA: Occupational and Skills Needs Assessment (Estonia), OECD database: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Database, EUROSTAT: Statistical Office of the European Union LMP database: Labour Market Policy Database, ESSPROS: European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics, EHIS: European Health Interview Survey, ETIS: European Transport Safety Information System or Education and Training Information System (depending on context), HSPA: Health System Performance Assessment.

all EWP-related data and sources are important for us in order to move toward a more people-centered economy approach” -Local authority, Estonia.

Respondents also underline that **data needs to be usable for policy and decision-making**. *“What is important here is that data needs to be accessible and understandable to decision-makers at all levels: from Ministry officials adjusting national strategy, to school principals planning support programs. Enhancing data literacy and tools (dashboards, reports) will help translate this data into real action” -National authority, Estonia.*

“To improve decision-making and policy impact related to the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) (particularly in the higher education and research sector) we need robust, multi-layered data that goes beyond economic outputs and includes social, psychological, institutional, and career-related dimensions. Most valuable data needed types are: employment and career data, wellbeing and mental health metrics, DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) indicators, mobility data, organizational culture and climate data, policy impact and outcome tracking” -NGO, Latvia.

Finally, data is needed not only to forecast but also **to monitor and evaluate policy measures**. It is important to be able to assess and measure the impact of such policy implementations, according to the respondents. *“Finally, data should be used not just for monitoring but for evaluating policy impact – whenever we implement a reform (be it a new curriculum or a training subsidy), we should build in data collection to later analyse outcomes and cost-effectiveness. In a knowledge-based economy of wellbeing, closing the feedback loop with solid data is what will enable continuous improvement and accountability” -National authority, Estonia.*

Additionally, respondents list the following thematic data needs:

- **Labour market and needs:** Labour market trends, Inequality and social inclusion, Client outcomes after participation in activities, Number of unfilled positions across sectors (education, healthcare, police, etc.), Projected retirement rates and demographic trends, Skills mismatch & future skills forecasting data, Labor market indicators by region, Labour market participation and employment trajectories, Work organisation and job design indicators, Occupations in demand, employers' projections of labour needs, Workforce capacity and staffing data, Ratios of staff to service users (e.g., students per teacher, patients per nurse)
- **Statistics for certain groups:** Seniors in the labour market and education, Data on the task level for (older) workers, in order to analyse how tasks are adapting to digitalization, Aging workforce stats, More detailed information on the working conditions, risks, and labor market participation of vulnerable groups such as

older workers, people with disabilities, migrant workers, and those in precarious employment is needed to design inclusive policies, Employee turnover in certain sectors, Increase of people's earnings, Capability to change jobs, User and staff experience data, collected through surveys or feedback loops, to inform human-centered service design, Employer-population data, foresights

- **Education data:** Education outcomes, Training and skills development data, Dropout rates from requalification programs, Identified learning needs of individuals at different stages of their career and life cycles, Firstly Early Childhood Education data (enrollment, quality, and outcomes of early childhood education programs, crucial for shaping long-term educational success), Pupils/students performance data, Pupils/students demographics, Access to education, School resources, Participation rates, especially for marginalized or underserved groups, Granular data on lifelong learning participation & access, Information on access to training, upskilling, and reskilling opportunities and how these impact employment trajectories is key to supporting sustainable careers
- **Economic data:** Analyze cost data related to healthcare spending, program implementation, and potential savings due to reduced turnover and absenteeism, Economic indicators by region, Economic growth comparisons over periods 5 years long or longer
- **Health data:** Health indicators, Big scale impact analysis of smaller projects to improve health inequity in areas of low health, Company-level prevention and health promotion practices, Number of sick leaves, Large-scale, representative surveys on working conditions (e.g., exposure to physical, chemical, ergonomic, and psychosocial risks) provide crucial insights into current challenges and emerging risks, Systematic data on work-related diseases, mental health outcomes, and injury rates, ideally linked with occupational exposure data, help identify high-risk groups and workplaces,
- **Occupational health data:** Workplace health and safety statistics, Evidence on how companies implement occupational safety and health measures, workplace health promotion, and diversity and inclusion strategies would help in assessing the effectiveness of interventions, Early warning systems and horizon scanning for emerging occupational risks, particularly in the context of technological innovation and climate change, are essential for proactive prevention
- **Mental health data:** Psychosocial risk and mental health data, Pre- and post-program health data that could include mental health scores, stress levels, and overall health assessments, Mental health data of young people who are not in education or employment, Invisible burden of unpaid care work, Waiting times for mental health support, Feedback from service users, especially children and families, Early warning indicators, such as stress levels, job dissatisfaction, or

digital skill gaps, that can inform preventive action, Data on the level of mental health and loneliness

- **Societal data:** Demographic and socioeconomic data, Data on early childhood development, family stability, access to preventive services, parental mental health, and the quality of caregiving environments, Reduced social assistance, Poverty and inequality statistics, Level of accessibility of public services in the region, Birth rates, Cross-sectoral data that connects health outcomes with employment, social protection, and education systems, Data that can demonstrate the link between social policy measures and economic growth
- **Work environment & Wellbeing:** Statistical data on work environment and sick leave, More knowledge on how to implement change in the work environment following provisions and policies, Data on well-being, Data that supports System Dynamics Models, Individual data that can show important relationships between well-being and individual characteristics, Correlate well-being data with performance metrics like productivity scores, quality of work, and absenteeism rates to assess the business impact of well-being initiatives, Workload, willingness to change, job satisfaction, desired working hours, work-life-balance, Workplace wellbeing & learning culture indicators, Employee Wellbeing and Workplace Condition, Measurement of students' sense of mastery in their own lives; before, during, and after their education
- **Impact assessments:** Policy impact assessments, Stakeholder feedback, Data on the economic and social impacts of occupational health and safety policies and preventive interventions (e.g., cost-benefit analyses) can support evidence-based policymaking, Analyses on the effectiveness of professional retraining programmes
- **Longitudinal data:** Case examples providing information of ROI at company level, Cohort studies that follow workers over time can reveal the long-term effects of working conditions on health, employability, and retirement decision
- **Cross-border data:** Respondents highlighted the urgent need for more compatible, cross-border data systems in the Baltic Sea Region. Current fragmentation in data collection, legal frameworks, and indicator definitions limits the ability to compare trends or design coordinated policy responses. Shared data infrastructure, both technical and institutional, is seen as critical for addressing transnational challenges such as ageing, labour mobility, and mental health. Without better alignment, the region risks duplicating efforts and missing opportunities for joint action in building a wellbeing economy.

2.5 Sustainability of Efforts

In the following we summarize stakeholder responses to the question ‘How can efforts in this area stay sustainable?’.

Long-term Strategy

Researchers, representatives from national authorities, employer organisations and NGOs from all countries say that applying a long-term perspective in policy-making, budgeting and planning is crucial for the sustainability of EWP efforts. A long-term perspective entails political will, institutional commitment, investments in societal infrastructure and an adaptive approach to wellbeing-related benefits and rewards. *“Wellbeing must be recognized as a core objective of public employment policy, not as a temporary initiative, but as a guiding principle in workforce planning, budgeting, and organizational development”* -Trade union, Germany.

A researcher from Estonia adds *“Ensuring that efforts to improve the Economy of Wellbeing of People (EWP) remain sustainable requires a strategic, long-term, and participatory approach. Sustainability in this context means not only maintaining programs over time but embedding wellbeing into the culture, structures, and values of institutions. Actions that needs to be taken are: institutionalize wellbeing as a core strategic priority, engage stakeholders in co-design and ownership, build evidence-based, measurable interventions, secure long-term resources and capacity, promote leadership development and cultural change, foster cross-institutional and international learning and align wellbeing with broader agendas, like the UN Sustainable Development Goals”*.

“Defining wellbeing (beyond economic progress) as a policy goal” and *“embedding EWP principles into national and regional strategies”* have been stated by researchers and NGO representatives from Germany, Latvia and Estonia. A national representative from Estonia goes even further by saying: *“Maybe by building wellbeing objectives into the DNA of our policies and institutions. We aim to make any efforts ‘the new normal’ rather than special initiatives”*.

The ‘Economy of Wellbeing of People’ requires economically, ecologically and socially balanced decisions with future generations in mind in order to stay sustainable. This includes allocating stable funding and investments in health and education, taking into account environmental effects as well as individual perspectives on safety, trust and belonging. *“Efforts stay sustainable by ensuring long-term funding, strong stakeholder collaboration, continuous monitoring, and adapting policies based on feedback and changing needs”* -National authority, Latvia.

However, *“it is not enough to just have politically correct slogans. We need to put everything we are talking about into practice: educational opportunities, working environment, healthcare (Latvia is critically poor), increasing average wages and pensions, scholarships for those who retrain”* -Educational institution, Estonia.

Structural Changes

Some respondents see structural changes as important to achieving sustainability of wellbeing efforts. Sustainable cooperation involving different levels (national and regional) and relevant sectors (including NGOs) is seen as key. *“There is a need to define sectoral goals and clarify who is responsible for what”* (Researcher from Estonia). Not only does the culture within companies need to change towards wellbeing but also *“a preventive mindset at all organizational levels, focusing on anticipation rather than reaction, is essential. This includes risk assessments, health promotion, and inclusive work design”* (National institute from Germany). An idea is to have an *“occupational health professional in companies”* (Researcher from Lithuania). *“To ensure sustainability, alignment of them with organizational goals, actively involve employees, continuously evaluate and adapting based on feedback, and provide diverse offerings to meet varied needs. We lack ability to calibrate and evaluate qualitative outputs, results”* -National agency, Latvia.

The role of public administration

Public administration plays a critical role in anchoring the EWP in systemic change. As highlighted by stakeholders and experts, including those working with “Inner Development Goals” frameworks, sustainability in this area requires not only political leadership but a profound shift in administrative culture, competence, and structure.

Institutions must become learning organizations, fostering a mindset of responsiveness, humility, and openness to complexity. This implies developing the internal capacities, emotional, cognitive, and relational, needed to navigate interconnected challenges such as mental health, aging societies, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

In this light, public servants are not merely implementers but active shapers of societal transformation. They must be equipped with new kinds of leadership skills rooted in empathy, long-term vision, and systems thinking. “Wellbeing policy requires more than program design; it’s about how we see ourselves as public actors,” emphasized one expert from an NGO in Sweden.

Embedding these competencies calls for investment in public sector learning and development infrastructures. Moreover, national administrations must enable collaboration across silos, align regulatory frameworks with wellbeing outcomes, and champion participatory governance practices that build public trust and accountability.

Cooperation and Involvement of Target Group

Cooperation between the public and private sector, interaction between stakeholders and the active involvement of target groups as end users and/or providers of services may sustain wellbeing efforts. *“Central to sustainability is a strong system of social dialogue, where public employers, trade unions, and policymakers work together to shape working conditions, career development, and health policies. Only through genuine employee participation can solutions be found that are both effective and widely accepted”* -Trade union, Germany. *“The efforts will stay sustainable if all stakeholders remain committed to achieving the goals and share ways of reaching them”* -Nordic cooperation, Latvia.

Monitoring

Continuous learning, evaluation, monitoring and assessment *“help maintain the relevance and effectiveness of policies and interventions”* and make sure wellbeing efforts match wellbeing needs, according to some respondents. *“By embedding well-being indicators into performance frameworks, maintaining multi-annual funding, ensuring inclusive policy design, and building institutional capacity for cross-sector cooperation and learning”* -National authority, Latvia.

2.6 Cooperation Benefits

Building a collaborative platform, we asked ‘How can collaboration, including transnational, cross-sectorial and multilevel efforts, help address EWP challenges, and what value would a shared platform bring to your organization?’. Respondents recognize the added value of collaboration for their own work in various ways:

Knowledge Exchange and Learning

Many respondents mention sharing experiences and best practices as an important benefit for their organisation. Transnational cooperation can facilitate mutual learning about what works and what does not work and may even avoid doublework. It can bring additional information or new ideas to the organisation leading to more innovative and comprehensive solutions. Respondents see benefits in accessing comparative data, tools and evidence-based interventions, cost-benefit analysis and widen knowledge about effective strategies in the Economy of Wellbeing of People - all valuable for developing more coherent, human-focused policy. *“Transnational collaboration allows for sharing best practices and innovation across borders (ministry is involved in different international thematic working groups); cross-sectoral collaboration ensures education, health, social services, and employment policies are aligned for better overall well-being; multilevel collaboration ensures local, regional, and national policies are coherent, and resources are allocated efficiently”* -National authority, Lithuania.

Mutual Partnerships

Some respondents see a value in new (international) contacts and cooperation possibilities with international experts within social and economic policy. Partnerships between institutions may be established. Some respondents highlight the benefits of transnational cooperation, especially in the complex and holistic field of wellbeing. Sharing experiences can help develop common standards and bring innovative ideas from one country to stakeholders and sectors in another that may lack such competences. *“For instance, Finland and Sweden have considerable experience with ‘wellbeing economy’ policies; engaging with their experts helps us discover tested approaches (such as Finland’s experiments with basic income or wellness education in schools). Likewise, Estonia’s strengths in digital education can benefit others”* -National authority, Estonia. A transnational platform can also strengthen cross-border networks, foster joint initiatives and help align national efforts with broader regional wellbeing goals.

Policy Alignment and Impact

Transnational, cross-sectoral and multilevel collaboration can play a crucial role in addressing EWP challenges and support raising awareness by putting the topic on the (higher) agenda. It facilitates joint strategic responses to a complex policy issue that might otherwise be met with fragmented and short-term solutions. Transnational cooperation brings together stakeholders from cities to regions to EU across borders, sectors and governance levels. Thus, cooperation may enable better policy alignment and enhance policy coherence and synergies. *“Multilevel collaboration between cities, national governments, and the EU is essential. To apply the EWP successfully at the local level, we need a supportive EU policy framework, and the EWP must become mainstreamed at both EU and national levels. This would help cities like Tallinn align their actions, access resources, and increase their impact”* -Local authority, Estonia.

Sharing Resources and Collaborative Funding

According to the respondents, a shared platform could enhance communication, streamline efforts, and amplify impact. It could map initiatives and stakeholders and facilitate joint data tools and peer support mechanisms. Sharing resources across sectors and borders and expertise help tackle complex, interconnected problems. In addition, joining forces may lead to common (research) projects and facilitate access to international funding opportunities. Collaborative funding models can make EWP projects more sustainable and resilient. Transnational monitoring projects could provide valuable insights.

Multi-level and Cross-sectoral Cooperation

In addition to transnational cooperation, some respondents highlight that multi-level and cross-sectoral cooperation ensures that EWP initiatives are implemented more effectively, by promoting coherence across different levels of governance and better aligning the needs of relevant sectors. *“Cross-sectorial cooperation, linking health, education, labor, and environment, ensures a more holistic approach, while multilevel collaboration connects community-driven solutions with national strategies. A shared platform enhances these efforts by integrating data, promoting transparency, and supporting preventive, person-centered care”* NGO, Germany. It can help develop public-private partnerships and facilitate benchmarking and comparative analysis. According to one respondent working at an educational institution, cooperation enables implementation of lifelong learning.

Capacity Building

Collaboration contributes directly or indirectly to knowledge and capacity building within organisations. *“Many EWP challenges, such as demographic change, digital transformation, climate change, and labor market inequalities, are transboundary and require coordinated, multi-level responses beyond national or sectoral borders. Collaborative platforms provide a space for horizon scanning, foresight activities, and joint innovation efforts, allowing stakeholders to better anticipate and prepare for emerging risks and opportunities”* -National authority, Germany.

Limits and Concerns

Respondents mention different kinds of concerns regarding transnational cooperation. According to some respondents, limited resources are restricting participation opportunities. Depending on their role, some organisations may not be able to participate in such a platform. For instance, “small businesses often don’t dare to participate” while governmental authorities are bound by laws and regulations and thus do not participate, according to two respondents. Besides, transferability across borders and sectors can be difficult, according to two respondents. And another respondent states that it is important to integrate these efforts into existing structures rather than creating something entirely new.

2.7 Organisational Engagement

In order to map stakeholder interest and possibilities of organisational engagement in a collaboration platform, we asked ‘What are the opportunities and barriers for your organisation to engage with and contribute to a collaborative platform?’.

Despite overall great interest in collaboration and engagement in a platform, one respondent from Sweden mentions that his/her organisation is already joining other networks that are more relevant to their work. A Finnish respondent's organisation is aiming at influencing decision-making and thinks that such a platform is not the right forum to do so. The engagement of three organisations from the Baltic States depends on activities, relevance and expectations and will be thoroughly considered upon invitation.

However, the vast majority of respondents express a positive attitude towards a collaboration platform, while acknowledging opportunities and barriers.

“While there are some challenges to consider – chiefly resource allocation and ensuring meaningful engagement – we view them as solvable with proper planning and commitment. The opportunities clearly outweigh the barriers from our perspective. We are confident that with a focused strategy (setting priorities for what we want from the platform and dedicating a team to it), we can maximize the benefits and minimize the hurdles. Recognizing these barriers upfront means we can address them: for example, seeking additional project funding to hire a coordinator, or establishing internal processes for sharing platform knowledge across units. Our experience with past collaborations (like Erasmus+ networks or OECD working groups) has taught us that initial investment of effort yields significant returns in improved policy and innovation, justifying the costs. Therefore, we approach the idea of a collaborative platform with optimism but also realism about what we need to contribute and manage internally” - National authority, Estonia.

Opportunities

- **Knowledge and Innovation:** Access to diverse insights and best practices, Knowledge sharing across sectors and countries, Development of new methodologies and solutions, Trend identification, gap analysis, and innovation support, Access to cross-country data for evidence-based policy, Centralized information hub for EWP resources
- **Funding and Resources:** Access to EU funding (e.g., ESF+) and resource-sharing, Joint project funding and initiative leadership, Funding for dedicated positions
- **Capacity Building and Development:** Development of staff competencies, Institutional strengthening and innovation, Professional learning and upskilling, Enhanced student opportunities: exchanges, internships, guest lectures, Broader database
- **Collaboration and Networking:** Cross-sector and transnational partnerships, Stronger regional voice and coordinated participation, Knowledge exchange with complementary partners, Building relationships with new experts and

stakeholders, Strengthening NB8 (Nordic-Baltic Eight Cooperation Format), Access to a wider network of regional and international partners for knowledge exchange and joint initiatives

- **Strategic Impact and Policy Alignment:** Strategic value, Maintain momentum, enable resource-sharing, and strengthen national and cross-border efforts to advance workplace wellbeing as a public health priority, Contribution to regional and EU policy goals, Shared priorities in public health and wellbeing, Improving coordination between foreign policy and wellbeing agendas, Development of unified quality standards and pilots
- **Visibility and Representation:** Amplified voice of public sector and civil society, Improved institutional reputation and internationalization, Showcasing regional expertise, Identify trends, gaps and opportunities in EWP interventions

Barriers

- **Resource Constraints** due to human resource shortages and other obligations, and lacking skills, time constraints
- **Financial Limitations** also in terms cost of participation and limited project-based funding
- **Institutional Barriers** due to official procedures, bound by laws and regulations, national mandate and scope limitations, unclear mandates, fragmented planning, delays from multilateral decision-making and institutional resistance
- **Structural Barriers:** Fragmented responsibilities, lack of coordination, insufficient inter-institutional cooperation, differing national systems and legal structures, policy misalignment
- **Administrative Burden:** Lack of understanding and motivation, low awareness of the EWP concept, unclear added value, general political resistance, not a current focus
- **Technical Barriers:** Language (English) barrier, technical requirements, data comparability, cultural and structural difference, data privacy and security concerns, IP protection concerns

2.8 Institutional Interests and Possible Contributions

Here we ask ‘How can your institution benefit from or contribute to such a platform, and are you interested in participating? If yes to the previous question, what thematic area, or challenges would you like to address?’.

Advantages and disadvantages of participation seen by the respondents have already been discussed from different perspectives in previous chapters. In the following, we only present interests and contributions that have not been mentioned before or are formulated in a very specific way.

Institutional Interests

- **Social Progress**

- *“Intersection of child and family wellbeing, mental health, and the design of trust-based, preventive public services. In particular, we are interested in exploring how care systems can become more relational, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of vulnerable families”* -NGO, Latvia.
- *“Loneliness and digital exclusion (including now with AI) remain issues; there are still people who cannot log in to their online banking. Should civil society play a role in civil preparedness? Is there a need for European cooperation and collaboration in the neighboring region?”* -National agency, Sweden.
- *“Active ageing and intergenerational policies, Combating social isolation and supporting mental health, Lifelong learning and professional retraining in the context of demographic change”* -Regional authority, Poland.
- *“Tapping into the benefits of digitalization to enhance health and wellbeing”* -Research institute, Sweden.
- *“How to integrate mental health into workplace risk assessments, how to support employers in preventive planning, and how to build local capacity for health promotion in areas with fewer resources?”* -National authority, Estonia.
- *“Occupational safety and health, sustainable working conditions, and the promotion of well-being across the working life”* -National agency, Germany.

- **Specific Topics**

- *“Our main interests are to get more attention in policy about this topic but also to address important "gaps" in Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) within societies to give policy advice. We are interested in researching SWB within the population”* -National institute, Germany.
- *“Health care, social protection, productivity and competitiveness”* -Employer organisation, Poland.
- *“Teacher workforce sustainability and wellbeing, Cross-sector support for at-risk youth (NEET reduction), Student mental health and wellbeing in education settings”* -National authority, Estonia.

- *“AI at work, working hours, workplace innovation and stakeholder, mental and physical wellbeing”* -Trade Union, Finland.
 - *“Financing of the welfare system and demographic development”* -Trade Union, Sweden.
 - *“Lifelong learning, learning and development opportunities for disadvantaged people, mental health issues”* -NGO, Germany.
 - *“Enhancing regional security and resilience and promoting sustainable development and climate diplomacy”* -National authority, Latvia.
- **Measuring and Data**
 - *“How other countries use the ESF+ and how they measure the effect of the projects (with economic tools) -State agency, Sweden.*
 - *“Benefit in a strategic level, increase our ability to make a political point with good data. Data-mining exercise before collecting data. Someone else may have already collected the data. Understand how and why data is collected, it can help who to ask and about what. Education and civil society participation”* -Cluster organisation, Denmark.
 - *“Wage inequality, poverty, in-work poverty”* (Trade union from Lithuania).
 - *“Data regarding workforce wellbeing, such as absenteeism, burnout, and staffing shortages”* -Trade Union, Germany.

Possible Contributions

- *“Participating in pilot projects and co-creating regional strategies for active ageing and adult education”* -Regional authority, Poland.
- *“Sharing data on curricula, job market trends, and skills gaps”* -National authority, Lithuania.
- *“Experience in communication, platform development, and content creation, as well as ensure knowledge exchange with adult education implementers”* - Educational organisation, Latvia.
- *“Long-term experience in workplace health promotion, including data, tools, and an established Network of Health-Promoting Workplaces in Estonia. We can share practical insights, tested methods, and lessons learned from implementing preventive approaches in diverse organizational settings”* - Research institute, Estonia.
- *“Practical insights from working with families, frontline professionals, and public systems, as well as tools for implementing relational and trauma-informed approaches”* -NGO, Latvia.

- *“Governance coordination experience and benefit from others' technical expertise”* -National authority, Latvia.
- *“Competence development”* -NGO, Sweden.

2.9 Keywords for Partnerships: Insights from Stakeholder Reflections

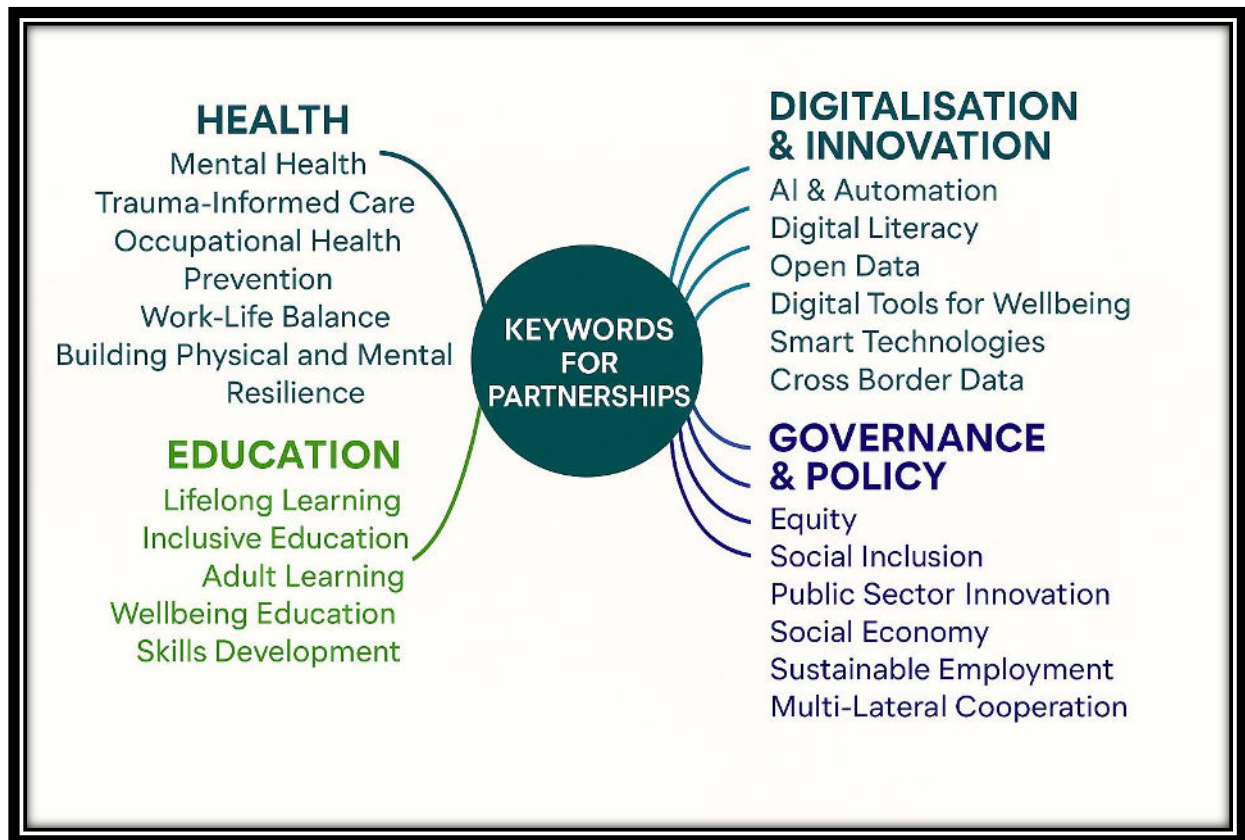
In the survey, stakeholders were asked to share the keywords they would use when searching for new partners to advance the goals of the EWP. Their responses offer valuable insight into thematic priorities, emerging interests, and possible strategic alignment across sectors.

The variety of keywords illustrates the breadth of expertise, missions, and operational contexts represented in the stakeholder group, from public health and education to digital innovation, social protection, labor markets, and environmental sustainability. At the same time, recurring terms signal shared areas of concern and opportunity, including **lifelong learning, mental health, inclusive employment, digital transformation, and social innovation.**

To better understand these patterns, the keywords have been grouped into clusters, visually represented in the following mind map. These clusters reflect common thematic fields such as policy and governance, education and skills, wellbeing and health, labor market integration, and technological innovation.

This visualization not only captures the thematic diversity among potential partners but also serves as a practical resource for designing future collaboration platforms, matchmaking tools, and project development strategies under the EWP initiative.

Figure 2: Mindmap showing keywords for possible partnerships. Own illustration.



3. Towards a Collaboration Platform

The “Economy of Wellbeing of People” (EWP) is not only an increasingly important topic but also a complex concept. Mental health issues, elderly workers and education demands are challenging the social and economic systems in all EU Baltic Sea Region countries, plus Norway and Åland. Social progress in education, health and employment requires a shift in mindset and adaptive measures on a policy level. At a more practical level, the EWP requires increased awareness of the topic, as well as cross-sectoral and multilevel cooperation. Stakeholders within these systems find this work challenging and therefore seek transnational exchange and cross-border cooperation with counterparts in similar positions.

The study results support the establishment of a collaboration platform in the Baltic Sea Region focused on the “Economy of Wellbeing of People” by highlighting shared workplace wellbeing challenges, the benefits and opportunities of cooperation, and potential contributions.

3.1 Strong Call for Transnational Collaboration

Collaboration across borders, sectors, and levels of governance emerged as a recurring priority in stakeholder responses. Many contributors emphasized that no single institution or country can effectively address the complex, interlinked challenges associated with promoting an EWP alone. Instead, sustained cooperation is needed to share good practices, align strategies, build capacities, and co-create impactful solutions.

Stakeholders stressed that **transnational collaboration** supports mutual learning, policy coherence, and innovation. It allows actors to avoid duplication, benchmark progress, and learn from successes and failures elsewhere. As one respondent from the health sector in Latvia expressed: *“Transnational collaboration allows us to learn from other countries’ innovations and failures, helping to avoid duplication and accelerate solutions.”* -Health sector, Latvia.

A **shared platform** was widely seen as a necessary enabler of this collaboration. For many, such a platform would not only facilitate peer learning and evidence-based practice, but also help amplify voices in policy dialogue, particularly for smaller institutions. As noted by a civil society organization in Latvia: *“A shared platform would offer access to evidence-based practices, peer learning, and strategic alliances that*

amplify our voice in policy dialogues and enhance our capacity to create systemic, people-centered change.”

Several stakeholders highlighted the **value of cross-sectoral collaboration**, especially linking health, education, labor, and environment, to ensure a holistic approach to wellbeing. Others stressed the importance of **multilevel cooperation** that connects local and national efforts to broader EU frameworks. A respondent from a public health insurance organization in Germany reflected: *“Cross-sectorial cooperation ensures a more holistic approach, while multilevel collaboration connects community-driven solutions with national strategies.”*

Importantly, stakeholders also emphasized practical benefits of collaboration:

- Exchange of knowledge and best practices
- Access to comparative data and tools
- Support for joint initiatives and innovation
- Policy alignment and coherence
- Access to EU and international funds

As a representative from a municipal authority in Estonia put it: *“To apply the EWP successfully at the local level, we need a supportive EU policy framework, and the EWP must become mainstreamed at both EU and national levels.”*

Not all responses were unreservedly enthusiastic. Some flagged concerns about **platform fatigue**, resource constraints, and the complexity of coordinating across multiple actors. For example, a representative from a business and employer association in Germany stated: *“There are already too many platforms... Small businesses often don’t dare.”*

Despite this, the overall message was clear: **collaborative governance and infrastructure are essential** to operationalize the EWP, ensuring its principles become embedded in practice rather than remaining rhetorical.

3.2 Common Wellbeing Challenges

The results of the study strongly indicate three main challenges to achieving wellbeing in the workplace. It is obvious that these challenges mutually influence each other and can hardly be seen separable in the context of wellbeing at the workplace. Given their demand for cross-sectoral and multilevel coordination, the challenges should be carefully considered in the design of the collaboration platform.

Firstly, the most central is **mental health issues**. Stress due to heavy workload caused by workforce shortage is seen as the main risk factor to wellbeing at the workplace throughout sectors and countries. Mainly in the Baltic States, mental health prevention services are perceived as insufficient with negative consequences for the mental health of workers.

Secondly, due to demographic changes (lower birth rates and an ageing population), workers need to stay longer in the labor market. In order to retain **elderly workers** active, healthy and relevant, the education systems and labor markets need to adjust and address their special needs. This includes vocational training possibilities, preventive health measures and measures against age-discrimination.

Thirdly, it is crucial for the wellbeing of workers to keep up with transitions and changes in the job market. As these changes progress quickly, national education systems need to adapt accordingly. This requires **adjustments to the education systems** and lifelong learning processes offering reskilling and upskilling possibilities, especially for elderly workers. Skills obsolescence as well as a mismatch between training possibilities and demands for skilled labor is a challenge that also needs to be addressed.

In addition to the three main challenges, study results draw attention to the long-term perspective that is required in the process towards the “Economy of Wellbeing of People”. This long-term perspective is challenged by macro changes on the one hand and lacking policy frameworks and funding on the other hand.

3.3 Stakeholder Participation

Overall, the study results show a great interest among stakeholders from all countries, representing different sectors and governance levels. Only a few declined or were hesitant. Often final participation depends on the content of the platform and relevance to their work. Overall we received great interest from **trade unions, national authorities (especially from the Baltic States), research and educational institutions and NGOs**. Trade unions were partly surprisingly hesitant due to lack of human resources. Employer organisations were comparatively underrepresented; reasons were not always specified

Interested stakeholders recognize **building capacity and learning benefits from exchange experiences** as collaboration benefits. They also recognize opportunities in **networking, pooling resources, and generating policy impact** as a result from these efforts.

However, stakeholders also mention barriers such as resource constraints and structural challenges that may delay or complicate implementation.

Additionally, stakeholders are interested in addressing **social progress, collaborate on very specific topics involving certain target groups and measuring data** (see chapter 2.7). They also offer to contribute with their **expert experiences and data** in certain fields such as occupational health, job market trends, education and social issues.

In the following, we present a list of stakeholders who **explicitly expressed their interest in participating**.

Trade Unions

- Council of Nordic Trade Unions, Sweden
- Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation & Saco, Sweden
- Akava and SAK, Finland
- Ålands arbetsmarknads- och studieservicemyndighet (AMS), Åland
- Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH), Denmark
- Deutscher Beamtenbund und Tarifunion (DBB) & German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB), Germany
- Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, Lithuania
- Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia, Latvia

Employer Organisations

- Employers of Poland, Poland
- Arbetsförmedlingen & Arbetsförmedlingen Haparanda, Sweden

Cluster Organisations

- Tehnopol HealthTech Ecosystem , Estonia

National, Regional and Local Authorities

- Danish Health Authority & Ministry of Senior Citizens, Denmark
- Ministry of Education and Research (HTM) & City of Tallinn, Strategic Management Office, Estonia
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA) & Hamburg Ministry of Social Affairs, Germany
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Welfare, State Chancellery, The Parliament of Latvia (the Saeima), Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, EPALE National support service (Erasmus+ programme project), State Education development agency, State Employment Agency of Latvia & Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Latvia

- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport & Lithuanian Association of Municipalities, Lithuania
- Marshal Office of the Podkarpackie Region departament RR-VI, Regional Social Policy Centre of the Municipal Office of the Capital City of Warsaw & Marshal Office of Silesia Region, Poland
- Swedish Work Environment Authority (Arbetsmiljöverket), Svenska ESF-rådet & Västervik Framåt, Sweden

Educational and Research Institutions

- Danish Adult Education Association (DAEA) & University of Southern Denmark, Denmark
- Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science, Finland
- Tallinn University Haapsalu College & Tallinn University, Estonia
- IU International University of Applied Sciences, Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) & German Centre of Gerontology (DZA), Germany
- Riga Stradins University & Strenci psychoneurological hospital, Latvia
- RISE-Research Institutes of Sweden
- Medards Čobot University of the Third Age (MČTAU) & Lithuanian University of Health Science, Lithuania
- Folkbildningsrådet & Mälardalen University, Sweden

Civil Society Organisations

- The Association of Finnish Adult Education Centres, Finland
- Network of Estonian Non-Profit Organisations, Estonia
- Bildungswerk der Wirtschaft (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Business Education Center), Arbeit und Leben DGB/VHS Hamburg e.V., KWB e.V./Das Demographie Netzwerk DDN Hamburg , Hamburgische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Gesundheitsförderung e.V. & BKK Dachverband e. V., Germany
- Inner Development Goals (IDGs), Sweden

Private Companies

- Manufacturing Innovation Valley DIH, Lithuania
- Om Growings, Sweden

Pan-Baltic Organisations

- Council of the Baltic Sea States
- Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS)

4. Recommendations

Based on stakeholder's insights and in order to generate added value, sustainable results and policy impact, the collaboration platform should incorporate the following recommendations.

Common Understanding of the Concept

“Economy of Wellbeing of People” (EWP) is a complex issue including different topics. The understanding of what EWP actually means differs between the stakeholders. They all represent their own perspective on the concept and focus on the topics relevant to their daily work. Thus, it is important to work towards a common understanding and maybe even definition of EWP for the platform. Even related topics should be clearly defined to avoid misunderstandings during ongoing work.

Multidimensional Approach

Fostering social progress and achieving wellbeing in the workplace requires cross-sectoral and multilevel cooperation among institutions and organisations. Facilitating collaboration across sectors, such as health, education, and labour, through the involvement of different levels of governance is fundamental to the platform's content. This multidimensional approach should serve as the guiding principle in establishing the platform.

Active Stakeholder Involvement

The study identified a variety of stakeholders relevant to the topic of EWP. Many of them actually participated in the study and showed interest in the platform. This variety should be maintained on the platform and stakeholders actively involved from the very beginning. Trade unions are key stakeholders when discussing wellbeing at the workplace. It might be worth putting emphasis on trying to mobilise them once the platform is in place.

Allocation of Resources

In regard to participating in the collaboration platform, many respondents mention limited capacities and financial resources. This should be taken into account when designing the working groups and structure of the platform. As part of external communication, the platform activities should aim at raising awareness of the EWP platform among relevant policy- and decision-makers. By doing so, the platform gains political momentum and eventually supports key experts in allocating funding required for active and sustainable engagement in the platform.

Clear Purpose and Well-defined Working Areas

According to some respondents, whether their organization will be joining or not depends on the overall purpose and goal defined for the collaboration platform. They also state

that activities connected to the platform need to be relevant and add value to their daily work. Thus, the platform should put emphasis on clearly defining its purpose as well as working areas and activities. Naturally, this would happen in close collaboration with the partners involved but should also include external perspectives.

Realizing Benefits

As said before, the EWP concept is widely recognized as a complex policy issue. Transnational, cross-sectoral and multilevel cooperation is seen as key to addressing this issue and shaping well-informed social progress. Respondents clearly see various benefits and added values of such a collaborative platform (see chapter 2.5). Thus, the platform needs to make sure that these benefits are realized through collaborative activities.

Generating Policy Impact

The platform should continuously ensure policy relevance across diverse national contexts. Through transnational learning and dialogue, its activities and outcomes should aim to generate tangible policy impact.

Being Adaptive to Changes

Major changes at higher levels will most likely impact collaboration efforts and social progress. The platform should incorporate such developments whenever necessary and relevant. It is essential to integrate key trends, such as digitalisation and artificial intelligence, and ensure they are strategically utilized.

4.1 Possible Structure

The structure of the collaboration platform should be flexible and reflect the holistic approach towards EWP. In order to attract all relevant stakeholders to engage actively, the platform needs to have a clearly defined purpose. Study results suggest aiming at influencing policy- and decision making as one main goal for the platform.

Again, efforts towards an 'Economy of Wellbeing of People' can only remain sustainable if wellbeing becomes a **long-term policy objective**, supported by sustained funding and specific structural changes. Involving the target group and mainstreaming the concept throughout sectors and policies may support social progress and help institutionalize its efforts.

Furthermore, the study results highlight the need for **cross-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders representing different levels of governance** in each country, facing three main challenges to achieving wellbeing at the workplace. The three challenges are mental health issues, elderly workers and education (see chapter 3.2).

Thus, the platform should foster cooperation on these challenges by facilitating the exchange of experience and learning from each other.

According to the study results, there is a clear added value in cooperating transnationally on the EWP concept. Transnational cooperation and mutual learning could be moderated in flexible **working groups** (see below) and policy forums. Beyond the working groups, **policy forums** could engage policy advisors to raise awareness of the EWP concept and promote its integration into policy-making. This could be the starting point for a sustainable policy dialog.

The collaboration platform should also address the need for data on labour market, health, education and vulnerable groups as well as **longitudinal data and impact assessments** (see chapter 2.4).

4.2 Possible Working Groups

As noted before, the concept of EWP is complex and spans over different sectors and challenges which are interlinked. The platform should therefore go beyond sectoral challenges. Instead, the platform should focus on facilitating cooperation on multidimensional topics and bringing stakeholders together in a thematic area (see below).

Working groups should remain flexible both in terms of thematic focus and participants' needs. They should provide an open space for exchange of expert knowledge and discussions on common ground aimed at defining collaborative co-creation activities.

In addition to the four key themes reflected in chapter 2.1, we suggest the following examples of working groups on multidimensional topics:

- **Mental health prevention and healthy ageing in the workplace**
 - Participants: Governmental agencies and research organisations working with occupational health, trade unions, NGOs within the theme representing the target group
 - Addresses: National ministries for social affairs, labor market, interior, welfare especially in the Baltic States
- **Mental health in 'contact professions' in the light of workforce shrinkage**
 - Participants: Trade unions representing 'contact professions', employers, employer agencies, regional level authorities and research organisations working with mental and/or occupational health, NGOs
 - Addresses: National ministries for social affairs, labor market, education and interior and welfare

- **Ageing workforce and the labor market**

- Participants: Employer organisations, trade unions, educational institutions, governmental and research organisations focusing on the labor market and education, NGOs and research institutes working with lifelong learning
- Addresses: National and regional level authorities responsible for education and labor market, employment agencies, employers, education providers

The combination of surveys, interviews, and co-creative workshops has shown that even within limited timeframes, broad and representative stakeholder engagement is achievable. This provides a solid foundation for building a future collaborative platform on the Economy of Wellbeing of People in the Baltic Sea Region and indicates that the project objectives were achieved within the feasibility study's scope.

5. Concluding remarks

This feasibility study has demonstrated both the strong need and the broad interest in developing a transnational collaborative platform on the Economy of Wellbeing of People in the Baltic Sea Region. Stakeholders across policy, research, civil society, and the private sector recognize that addressing wellbeing as a driver of sustainable development requires cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation.

The study confirms that such a platform can provide real added value: connecting existing initiatives, reducing fragmentation, and enabling joint learning and innovation. It can become a catalyst for translating wellbeing into practice, supporting the EU's cohesion objectives, the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision of becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world, and the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Importantly, the platform can also act as a bridge between levels of governance from local to national, and regional, ensuring that wellbeing is not treated as a policy add-on but as a guiding principle for social, economic, and environmental development.

Through structured stakeholder mapping, a transnational survey, individual interviews, and two high-quality co-creative workshops, the project successfully tested participatory methods for cross-sectoral collaboration. While the original plan foresaw six workshops, the process of conducting comprehensive stakeholder mapping took more time than anticipated, particularly due to GDPR-related procedures and the complexity of institutional landscapes. This investment ensured that the most relevant and representative actors were engaged across the region. Consequently, two carefully designed co-creative workshops, together with 92 survey responses and interview

contributions, were used to pilot and test the co-creation model to achieve the study's objectives, serving as testbeds for co-creation methods and confirming strong stakeholder interest in a future collaborative platform.

The findings underline the importance of building on existing expertise and fostering cooperation across policy areas, institutions, and countries. A long-term platform would provide a structure for knowledge exchange, joint innovation, and policy learning, enhancing the Baltic Sea Region's contribution to Europe's wellbeing economy agenda.

The results of this feasibility study indicate that its objectives were achieved and that it offers a strong basis for the next phase: moving from feasibility to implementation. To succeed, the platform will require political commitment, adequate resources, and the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders. The enthusiasm expressed during this study shows that these conditions can be met.

The Economy of Wellbeing of People is not only a shared vision but a call to act together, across borders, sectors, and generations to secure a more sustainable, inclusive, and humane future for the Baltic Sea Region.

Annex 1: Survey questions

Main information of the organization

1. Country
2. Organization/institution

Understanding Stakeholder Priorities and Perspectives

3. What does the 'Economy of Wellbeing of People' (EWP) mean to you, and what key issues should it address from your sector's perspective?
4. Who is most affected by EWP challenges in your sector, and how can we measure progress in this area?

Identifying Core Issues

5. What are the biggest challenges or risks to achieving the well-being of people in relation to a sustainable working life in your sector (for example, focusing on healthy and active aging or on education, such as formal education or changing specializations)?

Exploring Collaboration Opportunities

6. What stakeholders or experts are key in this area, and can you suggest contacts or relevant organizations?
7. Are there any successful cooperation models or cases we should learn from?

Understanding data and Resource Needs

8. What data would help improve decision-making and policy impact in this area?

Defining Impact and Sustainability

9. How can efforts in this area stay sustainable?

Building a Transnational, Cross-sectorial and Multi-level Collaborative Platform

10. How can collaboration, including transnational, cross-sectorial and multilevel efforts, help address EWP challenges, and what value would a shared platform bring to your organization?
11. What are the opportunities and barriers for your organization to engage with and contribute to a collaborative platform?
12. How can your institution benefit from or contribute to such a platform, and are you interested in participating?
13. If yes at the previous question, what thematic area, or challenges would you like to address?
14. If you were searching for new partners, what key words would you type in the finder?

Annex 2: List of interviews

Name	Organisation	Date	Interviewed by
Alex Caicics	Head of Sustainability and ESG Communications at IU Group, Germany	2025-01-21	Asli
Rebecca Lindblom	Campus Västervik; Sweden	2025-01-31	Asli
Inga Birgitta Tamminen	EURES-adviser at Arbetsförmedlingen / the Sweden-Finland-Norway Cross-Border Information Services, Sweden	2025-02-26	Asli
Kamil Sobolewski	Employers of Poland, Poland	2025-03-11	Asli
Milla Järvelin	NFS (Council of Nordic Trade Unions), Sweden	2025-03-12	Asli
Maria Wigenius Sjöberg	Growings, Sweden	2025-03-13	Asli
Niels Sandø	Former director of Danish health Authority, Denmark	2025-03-17	Asli
Fredrik Lindencrona	Inner Development Goals, Sweden	2025-03-18	Asli
Thor Rutgersson	Folkbildningsrådet, Sweden	2025-03-20	Elin
Løkke Noermark Fabricius Meyer	Ministry of Senior Citizens in Denmark	2025-03-21	Asli

Stian Slotterøy Johnsen	Frivillighet Norway	2025-03-26	Asli
Ulrik Kampmann	Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd, Denmark	2025-04-01	Elina
Ulrika Hynell	Campus Nynäshamn, Sweden	2025-04-11	Asli
Johanna Radelius	RISE, Sweden	2025-04-11	Elina
Carina Benjaminsson	SAKKUNNIG och INTERNATIONELL SAMORDNARE, Sweden	2025-04-11	Asli
Kai Schnackenberg	Hamburg Ministry of Social Affairs, Germany	2025-04-22	Asli
Niels Ploug	WELA (Wellbeing Economy Lab in Denmark)	2025-05-01	Asli
Olivia Trager	BDA Die Arbeitgeber, Germany	2025-05-27	Stefanie
Riikka Pellikka	Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland	2025-06-03	Asli
Olga Bogdanova	Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia	2025-06-05	Stefanie
Katrin Kärner- Rebane	Tervise-Arengu Institut, Estonia	2025-06-12	Asli
Lelde Adele	Vidzeme Planning Region	2025-06-17	Stefanie
Ari Ewvaraye	Ministry of Interior, Finland	2025-06-30	Asli

Päivi Mattila-Wiro	University of Turku, Finland	2025-06-30	Asli
Lara Fleischer	OECD	2025-08-12	Asli

Annex 3: Other relevant stakeholders and experts

We ask respondents to suggest stakeholders or experts who are key in this area, and if they can suggest contacts or relevant organizations?

Respondents recommended a great variety of stakeholders, experts, institutions and organizations who work with wellbeing at the workplace. Stakeholders suggestions range from policy makers to teachers and include all levels and sectors. Ministries and national agencies have explicitly been named as relevant within this context by respondents from the Baltic States and Germany while respondents from the Nordic countries list research institutes, employer associations, trade unions and think tanks as important players in this. Some respondents suggest EU and international organizations working with wellbeing as possible partners for this work. A detailed list of relevant stakeholders and experts is presented below.

Estonia

Government bodies and institutions

- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (Majandusministeerium)
- Ministry of Social Affairs (Sotsiaalministeerium)
- Ministry of Education and Research (Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Climate and Energy
- Labour Inspectorate of Estonia (Tööinspektsioon)
- National Institute for Health Development (Tervise Arendamise Instituut)
- Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL)
- The Estonian Employers' Confederation
- Unemployment Insurance Fund (*Eesti Töötukassa*)
- State Chancellery / Cross-Sectoral Coordination Department
- Statistics Estonia (*Statistikaamet*)

Associations and Networks

- Association of Adult Educators
- Estonian Schools' Student Union leadership
- Employer Association / Teachers' Union
- Responsible Business Forum Estonia - a leading network promoting corporate social responsibility and sustainability in business practices
- Network of Social Enterprises - supports social entrepreneurs and enterprises that directly contribute to social and community wellbeing
- Estonian Association of Enterprising Women-empowers and connects female entrepreneurs, and advocates for gender equality in business

- Tallinn Business Incubators-provides support for early-stage businesses, including socially responsible and female-led startups, and promotes inclusive entrepreneurship in the city

Denmark

Research Institutes and Organizations

- National Research Institute of OSH
- Danish Trade Union Confederation (FH)
- Wellbeing Economy Lab (WELA)
- Wellbeing Economy Alliance Denmark (WEALL)
- Happiness Research Institute
- Open Social Value Bank
- The Coalition for the Future (Fremtidskoalitionen)
- Tænketanken DEA

Finland

Institutes and Universities

- Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare
- Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
- Universities of applied sciences (polytechnics) in Finland

Germany

International Organizations and Research Bodies

- International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS)
- World Database of Happiness
- European umbrella organisation CESI
- Academic research in occupational health, labor economics, and demographic change – provides evidence-based insights for policy and practice

Federal and State Institutions

- Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)
- Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) – responsible for civil service policy, working conditions, and public administration reform
- Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) – central role in research and policy advice on working conditions, occupational health, and chemical safety
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) – responsible for labor market policies, including sustainable and healthy working lives

- Robert Koch Institute (RKI) – focuses on public health monitoring, health at work, and chronic disease prevention
- German Statutory Accident Insurance (DGUV) – promotes workplace prevention and rehabilitation programs for sustainable employability
- Federal and state-level public employers – influence employment practices, staffing, training, and working conditions

Trade Unions and Employer Associations

- DBB Beamtenbund und Tarifunion – represents over 1.3 million public sector employees in Germany
- Sector-specific unions under the DBB umbrella (e.g., teachers, police, healthcare workers) – key partners for dialogue and policy development
- Employers' Associations and Trade Unions

Networks and Conferences

- Das Demographie Netzwerk e. V.
- The National Disease Prevention Conference – working group of umbrella organisations of statutory health insurance (GKV), long-term care insurance (SPV), accident insurance (GUV), and pension insurance (GRV)

Latvia

Government and public institutions

- Ministry of Economics (*Ekonomikas ministrija*)
- Ministry of Welfare
- Ministry of Health (*Veselības ministrija*)
- Ministry of Education and Science
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (*Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija*) (*VARAM*)
- Ministry of Finance
- Society Integration Foundation
- State Education Development Agency
- State Employment Agency (SEA) (*Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra*) (*NVA*)
- State Labour Inspectorate
- Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
- Local governments and municipal institutions
- Regional governments (e.g., Riga Planning Region, Vidzeme Planning Region)
- Central Statistical Bureau (*Centrālā statistikas pārvalde*) (*CSP*)

Educational institutions and research

- University of Latvia
- Rīga Stradiņš University
- Riga Technical University
- Educational institutions implementing adult education programs
- Educational institutions offering lifelong learning
- Universities and research centers focusing on social policy and labour economics

Social enterprises, NGOs, and associations

- Social enterprises
- Non-governmental organizations
- Libraries
- Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK)
- Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS)
- Employers' movement Misija (misijanulle.lv)
- Occupational health service providers (represented by two main NGOs)
- Fonds PLECS (strengthening families and trauma-informed systems of care)
- Centrs Dardedze (child protection and prevention)
- Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS)

Regional actors

- Riga Planning Region (involved in related projects)
- Vidzeme Planning Region (vidzeme.lv)

Key stakeholders in social and family areas

- Child and family advocacy organizations
- Mental health professionals
- Education and social service providers
- Policymakers working on family policy, social protection, and labor market inclusion

Other relevant actors

- Think tanks
- Embassies of the Republic of Latvia
- Diaspora organizations of Latvian nationals abroad
- International partners, e.g.:
 - European Network of Employment Services
 - International Network of Employment Services

Lithuania

National networks and organizations

- National Poverty Reduction Organizations Network
- Center for Equality Enhancement
- Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson

Educational institutions and support bodies

- Lithuanian universities of the third age
- National Agency for Education
- Education Exchanges Support Foundation
- National Network of Education NGOs
- Lithuanian Pupils' Union
- Kaunas TAU (Third Age University)

Government and public institutions

- Ministry of Social Security and Labour
- Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas (Lithuania's Parliament)
- Lithuanian government in the field of education and training
- Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA)
- Hygiene Institute

Poland

Educational and senior organizations

- University of Rzeszów-University of the Third Age
- Senior organizations (e.g., senior clubs)
- Municipal Senior Center in Rzeszów

Government institution

- Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy
- National Institute of Public Health (PZH)

Sweden

Government agencies and public institutions

- Försäkringskassan (Swedish Social Insurance Agency)
- MUCF (The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society)
- Socialstyrelsen (The National Board of Health and Welfare)
- Visit Sweden
- Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Educational institutions and councils

- Linnéuniversitetet (Linnaeus University)
- National Council of Adult Education

Trade unions

- Trade unions representing teachers, doctors, nurses, psychologists

Private sector

- Private providers within the public sector

Åland

- Statistics and Research Åland

General

Key concepts and sectors

- Welfare economics
- Universities explicitly addressing the triple-helix model (interaction between academia, industry, and government)
- Enterprises, ministries, health boards, social care organizations, municipalities, companies, clinical partners
- Employers
- Government agencies, regions and municipalities, civil society organisations, private sector

Stakeholders in mental wellbeing in education

- Psychologists
- Educators
- School leaders
- Local authorities
- NGOs
- Young people themselves

Collaboration across these groups ensures effective, sustainable, and well-adapted mental health initiatives.

Occupational safety and health & related bodies

- Occupational Safety and Health Institutions
- Social Partners
- Health and Pension Insurance Providers

- Education and Training Bodies
- Scientific and Research Institutions
- Companies and SMEs
- Policy Makers and Government Ministries

Other relevant bodies and programs

- Chambers and associations
- Programs offered by universities of applied sciences

International and European organizations

- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA): coordinates research, campaigns, and policy initiatives at the European level to improve working life
- International Labour Organization (ILO): provides guidance on decent work and occupational safety and health worldwide

Research, advocacy and policy stakeholders

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- Policy makers and public authorities
- Research and advocacy organizations
- Experts and research centres
- NGOs and advocacy groups

Policy makers are critical as they set the normative frameworks for new ways of thinking.

Other experts in the area (as of June 2025)

- Prof. Arvydas Guogis, Mykolas Romeris university
- Andrzej Kubisiak, Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny
- Marcin Zieliński, Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju
- Sławomir Dudek, Instytut Finansów Publicznych
- Nijolė Mackevičienė, Lithuanian Strategy for the use of European Union Structural Assistance for 2007-2013
- Thor Rutgersson, Folk high school
- Sanna Kulmala, TYÖ2030 programme
- Sinimaaria Ranki and Tuomo Alasoini, Työterveyslaitos
- Niilo Hakonen, KT
- Antti Närhinen, TEM
- Tanja Chawla, DGB Hamburg
- Oliver Falck, author of the article "Elderly Left Behind?"

- Johan Pastarus, Mental Health Consultant, Labour Inspectorate of Estonia (Tööinspektsioon)
- Heli Laarmann Ministry of Social Affairs,
- Jānis Kīnasts
- Christian Skoog, Arbetsförmedlingen
- Katrin Kärner-Rebane, “Healthy Workplace”
- Lara Fleischer, OECD, Head of Unit, Well-being Data Insights and Policy Practice

Annex 4: Cooperation models to learn from

Other successful cooperation models recommended by the stakeholders.

Title	Link
Baltic Sea Labour Forum	BALTIC SEA LABOUR FORUM – Working Together Through Social Dialogue
MERGE project - Measuring what matters – Policy pathways to sustainable and inclusive wellbeing	MERGE
Experio Worklab - Collaborative project that have tackled sickness absence in new ways to reduce long-term sick leave There are successful examples where SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) is combined with vocational training	Experio worklab - Region Värmland
IN4AHA project - Empowering the innovation for scaling active and healthy ageing	in4aha – Empowering the innovation for active and healthy ageing
DEAHL BALTIC - Digital Empowerment for Active Healthy Living in the Baltic Region	DEAHL BALTIC - Interreg Baltic Sea Region
Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll)	Wellbeing Economy Alliance
Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGO)	https://weall.org/wego
Earth4All	Home - Earth4All

NewWork4Keyworkers project	https://nw4kw.de/
The Government's Strategic Analysis Center (STRATA, LT) has developed a methodology to improve the planning of state-funded vocational and higher education study programs. This ensures better alignment between educational offerings and labor market demands by involving multiple stakeholders in decision-making	https://strata.gov.lt/en/
Lifelong Learning Platform	https://www.lllplatform.eu/
Adult Learners' Week (Täiskasvanud Õppija Nädal) is a nationwide campaign involving ministries, local governments, libraries, community centers, employers, and media to celebrate lifelong learning	https://www.tartumaa.ee/haridus/taiskasvanuharidus/taiskasvanud-oppija-nadal?=
OSKA – Labour Market and Skills Forecasting System is an Estonian system that exemplifies strategic cooperation between the education sector, employers, and research experts to align training with	OSKA - OSKA studies - Estonian Qualifications Authority

future economic needs. OSKA itself has been highlighted by Cedefop as an inspiring practice in skills matching internationally.	
“Rajaleidja” (Pathfinder) Network for Inclusive Education – provide free counseling and support services for children and youth (ages ~1.5 to 18), parents, and teachers across the country.	RAJALEIDJA – Rajaleidja, kooliväline nõustamismeeskond, õppenõustamine
TYÖ2030 programme	TYÖ2030 "The best working life in the world is made together.
Arbetsförmedlingen Sweden: For youth: Fryshuset. For youth with disabilities: Samstart,	https://fryshuset.se/english Samstart
Council for Demographic Affairs of Latvia	https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/demografisko-lietu-padome
National Tripartite Cooperation Council and its Tripartite Subcommittee on Labour Affairs and Sub-Council for Social Security	https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/nacionala-trispusejas-sadarbibas-padome
Human Capital Development Council	https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/84000152-df69-480c-a74a-4070be5d69c9
NEWLEAD project	NEWLEAD
Social enterprise "Sonido" created a call line to fight loneliness. Anyone who feels lonely can call and talk and	https://www.sonido.lv/en/the-let-s-talk-social-initiative/

people answering the phone are people with disabilities	
Latvian Healthy Cities Network: Municipal cooperation promoting public health and well-being	
EPALE Community Storytelling Initiative	The 2024 EPALE Community Stories Initiative EPALE
EPALE Volunteer Ambassadors and Regional Coordinators Network	Regional training and networking event for EPALE ambassadors held i...
EPALE Academy	EPALE Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
Stars - Supporting professional development	Stars
The National Institute for Health Development (TAI), in cooperation with the Labour Inspectorate, awards the “Healthy Workplace” (Tervist edendav töökoht)	Tervise Arengu Instituut – riigi teadus- ja arendusasutus
Healthy Workplace Network (TET-võrgustik)	Health Promoting Jobs (TET) Network Health information
“Edukacja ma moc” initiative, which focuses on supporting the mental wellbeing of immigrant children in Poland	Main Demo - Edukacja ma moc
Project "Pozytywny Rozwój", which has implemented a nationwide program	Positive Development - Home page

to improve teacher wellbeing	
The “Zobacz Emocje” project provides practical tools and educational resources for children and teachers to recognize and understand emotions	INSTITUTE OF POSITIVE EDUCATION Psychoeducation Program #ZobaczEmocje
Civil Society Working Group on Wellbeing and Social Sustainability, coordinated by the Latvian Civic Alliance (Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse). This platform brings together diverse NGOs, including organizations working with families, youth, mental health, education, and social inclusion, to develop shared advocacy positions and policy recommendations	
Die Österreichische Plattform Gesundheitskompetenz (ÖPGK)	English Summary - ÖPGK
GDA (Gemeinsame Deutsche Arbeitsschutzstrategie – Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy)	https://www.gda-portal.de

The Initiative New Quality of Work (INQA), supported by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), promotes sustainable and employee-oriented working conditions.	https://www.inqa.de
Tripartite Funding Scheme for Work-Related Training involving three ministries (Education, Social, Economic) and the European Social Fund, Estonia: Under this scheme, each ministry takes lead for a pillar: HTM funds training via educational institutions for those already employed (encouraging universities and vocational schools to offer short courses); the Ministry of Social Affairs (through the Unemployment Insurance Fund) funds training for the unemployed and jobseekers; and the Ministry of Economic Affairs incentivizes employers to train their workforce (e.g. through grants or tax breaks). All three pillars are coordinated so that efforts complement rather than duplicate each other. This model has been successful in increasing adult learning participation and targeting resources effectively. For instance, unemployed people can access requalification courses for free, while employers have used subsidies to upskill employees in needed areas. The cooperation ensures that responsibility is shared: no single ministry is overwhelmed, and each focus on its core clientele while aligning with a common goal. This is a valuable case of breaking out of siloed budgeting to achieve a broader wellbeing outcome (a more skilled, adaptable workforce). It could be instructive for other sectors or countries looking to create integrated funding approaches for lifelong learning or health promotion.	
There are also smaller-scale cooperation cases worth noting. For instance, the Pudru ja Papud project in Tartu united schools, parents, the local health board, and universities to improve children’s nutrition and health habits at school – a cross-sector well-being initiative. Or Liikuma Kutsuv Kool to support physical activity in schools. Another example is the Noored Kooli (Youth to Schools) program, which is Estonia’s adaptation of Teach for All.	
Inter-Organizational Networks for Promoting Workplace Wellbeing & Healthy Aging: Description: Networks of companies, research institutions, and public health organizations that share best practices, develop tools, and run pilot projects to improve workplace health, safety, mental wellbeing, and support active aging in the workforce. Why Successful: Facilitates knowledge sharing, peer learning, and the dissemination of evidence-based practices.	
Nordregio Projects: Cross-country initiatives on regional development and spatial planning.	
Latvia’s Smart Specialisation Strategy: Coordination between government, academia, and industry to drive innovation and employment.	

Nordic cooperation on integrated well-being budgeting is worth studying. Locally, pilot projects between municipalities and NGOs delivering mental health and employment services show promise, though scalability remains a challenge.

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ⁱ PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment, PIAAC: Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, TALIS: Teaching and Learning International Survey, OSKA: Occupational and Skills Needs Assessment (Estonia), OECD database: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Database, EUROSTAT: Statistical Office of the European Union LMP database: Labour Market Policy Database, ESSPROS: European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics, EHIS: European Health Interview Survey, ETIS: European Transport Safety Information System or Education and Training Information System (depending on context), HSPA: Health System Performance Assessment.