**National Report – Study No. 1**

Activity A2.2

**”Attitudes&beliefs of organizations towards Wellbeing&Resilience of practitioners in Youth Work”**

*Developed by*

ZAMOLXES Foundation

ACE-ES Romania – Navodari Branch

Positive
Wellbeing & Resilience
In Youth Work for Social Change

Co-funded by
the European Union

## Section I: Context and rationale of national study

This national study was prepared as part of POSITIVE4Youth Work! Erasmus+ project. Romania enters this study with a youth sector that is active, diverse and strongly supported by volunteers, but also fragile in very practical ways.

Many organisations work from one project cycle to the next, with limited budgets and few formal systems for supporting the people who deliver activities. As a result, practitioner well-being is often recognised as important, but it can easily be pushed behind urgent delivery tasks. This is especially relevant because much youth work in Romania is carried out by volunteers or short-term collaborators, who often fall outside the protections and routines normally available to employees.

Across Europe, the discussion on resilience has moved beyond the idea that individuals simply need to cope better. More attention is now given to the responsibility of organisations: how leaders behave, how teams communicate, whether supervision exists, whether people feel safe to speak honestly, and whether resources are stable enough to make support realistic. This study uses that perspective to ask how far similar thinking is present in the Romanian youth sector.

**The implementing organisations as an analytical lens**

Zamolxes Foundation, founded in 1996 in Campina, Prahova, brings long experience in non-formal education, community development and youth mobility, with involvement in more than 200 European and national youth projects. For this study it worked with

ACE-ES Romania - Navodari Branch, an organisation active in social economy and social inclusion. Together, the two organisations helped reach youth organisations from different parts of Romania, including networks working with vulnerable groups.

The study does not try to audit each organisation's internal practice in detail. Instead, it asks what people believe, what they value and how they understand responsibility for practitioner well-being. This matters because organisations are unlikely to build

support systems for something they do not first recognise as important. At the same time, the findings show that recognising a problem is not enough when organisations lack time, money, people or clear routines.

**The post-pandemic backdrops**

The post-pandemic context also matters. Many helping professions, including youth work, have faced higher emotional pressure, more complex needs among beneficiaries and greater risk of exhaustion. In Romania, responses to these pressures have often remained informal and uneven. By documenting attitudes and beliefs in 2026, this study offers a useful baseline for the later POSITIVE4Youth Work! activities, especially the WP3 digital resources and the WP4 training programme.

## Section II: Objectives and research questions of national study no. 1

### a. Specific objectives

The national study follows the objectives of Activity A2.2 and focuses on the Romanian context. More specifically, it aims to:

- To explore the attitudes and beliefs of youth organisations and their practitioners in Romania towards the well-being and resilience of their human resources.
- To understand the extent to which practitioner well-being is recognised as an organisational priority versus an individual responsibility.
- To identify the leadership approaches and organisational cultures that either support or hinder practitioner well-being.
- To analyse the degree of psychological safety and openness to discussing emotional demands in Romanian youth organisations.
- To assess the capacity and openness of organisations to reflect on and improve their practices related to practitioner well-being.
- To identify the systemic factors — organisational, contextual and cultural — that influence practitioner resilience in the Romanian youth-work sector.

**Central research question and working hypothesis**

The central research question is simple: how far do youth organisations in Romania

recognise and value the well-being of their practitioners, and where does a gap appear between belief and daily practice?

The working hypothesis was that Romanian youth organisations generally agree that practitioner well-being matters, but often lack the structures, resources and routines needed to support it consistently. The findings support this hypothesis across all six indicators.

### b. Research questions/working hypotheses/targeted indicators for the main study

**Research questions and targeted indicators**

The study is structured around six core indicators, each generating specific operational research questions that are answered in Section VII.

**Indicator 1 — Organisational awareness and strategic recognition of well-being**

- Do youth organisations in Romania acknowledge the emotional and psychological demands inherent in youth work?
- Is practitioner well-being treated as a strategic priority at the organisational level?

**Indicator 2 — Organisational responsibility for practitioner well-being**

- Is well-being framed primarily as an individual or an organisational responsibility?
- What support mechanisms and internal policies exist within Romanian youth organisations?

**Indicator 3 — Leadership attitudes towards well-being and emotional labour**

- How do leaders influence the organisational attitude towards practitioner well-being?
- Do leadership practices model open communication about stress and burnout?

**Indicator 4 — Organisational culture and psychological safety**

- Do practitioners feel safe expressing concerns related to their well-being within their organisations?
- Is peer support encouraged as a structural element of organisational culture?

**Indicator 5 — Organisational learning and openness to improvement**

- Do organisations reflect regularly on how their internal practices affect practitioner well-being?
- Are mechanisms in place to act on practitioner feedback related to well-being?

**Indicator 6 — Systemic understanding of well-being and resilience**

- Do organisations recognise the systemic connections between leadership, culture and practitioner well-being?
- Is resilience understood as a systemic, organisationally supported capacity rather than a purely individual trait?

## Section III: Description of how the national study no. 1 was carried out

### Research design (quantitative/qualitative/mixed)

The Romanian study used a mixed-methods design. It combined two online questionnaires with three interviews and one online focus group. This was useful because the questionnaires show the broader pattern, while the interviews and focus group help explain what sits behind the numbers. The approach followed the common methodology agreed by the consortium for Activity A2.2 and was adapted to the Romanian context by Zamolxes Foundation and ACE-ES Romania Navodari Branch.

### Implementation stages

Stage 1 — Preparation (February–March 2026): adaptation and translation of the two questionnaires into Romanian; design of the interview guide and focus-group protocol aligned with the six indicators; mapping and recruitment of respondents from both target groups; review of the ethical protocol.

Stage 2 — Data collection (March–April 2026): online administration of Questionnaire 1 (practitioners) and Questionnaire 2 (leaders/managers); three semi-structured interviews; and the national focus group on 27 April 2026.

Stage 3 — Data analysis (May 2026): quantitative analysis of questionnaire responses (descriptive statistics, item-level means, agreement and disagreement shares, and indicator means for each respondent group); qualitative thematic analysis of interview transcripts, open-ended responses and focus-group contributions, coded against the six indicators.

Stage 4 — Reporting and dissemination (May–June 2026): compilation of the national report; peer review within the consortium; and contribution to the transnational synthesis of Study No. 1.

## Methods & instruments used

Three complementary instruments were used so that the results would not rely on only one type of evidence:

*1. The questionnaire-based survey.* Two parallel questionnaires were administered online via Google Forms. Questionnaire 1 was directed at youth workers, practitioners, volunteers and project staff involved in direct work with young people. It comprised 35 questions: ten demographic and contextual items, twenty-two Likert-scale items scored 1–5 mapped to the six study indicators, and open-ended questions on influential organisational factors and desirable organisational change. Questionnaire 2 was directed at leaders, managers and coordinators. It mirrored the structure of Questionnaire 1 with adaptations relevant to a management perspective, including items on organisational responsibility, leadership impact and policy development, and an open-ended item on the main challenges leaders face in supporting practitioner well-being.

*2. The interview-based survey*. Three in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experienced practitioners and leaders. The interview guide was organised around the six indicators and included an introductory section on role and background, five thematic clusters mapped to the indicators, and a set of integrative, sector-level questions on organisational strengths, gaps, priorities for improvement and a future vision of supportive youth organisations. The interviews were conducted

in Romanian and relevant extracts were translated for reporting purposes.

*3. The focus group.* A national online focus group was organised on 27 April 2026 via Zoom, hosted jointly by Zamolxes Foundation and ACE-ES Romania — Navodari Branch. Ten representatives of Romanian youth organisations took part — a mix of managers/leaders and practitioners drawn from seven organisations.

The focus group was structured around two anchor questions — how organisations interpret their responsibility for the well-being and resilience of practitioners, and what role practitioner well-being and resilience play in the quality and sustainability of youth work — each supported by probing sub-questions. Its purpose was to validate, deepen and contextualise the findings emerging from the two questionnaires, and to surface collective sense-making those individual instruments cannot capture.

### Data collection

The questionnaires were circulated nationally through the networks of Zamolxes Foundation and ACE-ES Romania - Navodari Branch, including social media, mailing lists, direct contacts and partner organisations. In total, the study gathered 50 valid questionnaire responses: 24 from practitioners and 26 from leaders or managers. These were complemented by three interviews and a focus group with ten participants.

### Ethical considerations (voluntariness, anonymity, consent)

Participation in all research activities was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed in advance of the purpose of the research, the objectives of the POSITIVE project, the intended use of the data and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire completion, interviews and focus-group participation; focus-group participants additionally confirmed their consent to the processing of personal data through a GDPR disclaimer on the attendance list. Questionnaire responses were anonymous; no identifying information was collected unless respondents voluntarily provided an email address to

indicate interest in future project activities. Data were stored securely and processed exclusively for the purposes of this study, in line with the principles of autonomy, confidentiality, non-harm and transparency agreed in the transnational research protocol.

### Difficulties and limitations encountered

Sampling method. The questionnaires were applied at national level, reaching youth organisations from across Romania through the complementary networks of the two implementing organisations. The sample was nonetheless recruited by convenience rather than by stratified random selection, so it does not claim full statistical representativeness of the national youth sector.

- Sample size. The sample (n=50 for the questionnaires) is sufficient for exploratory and indicator-level analysis but does not permit statistical generalisation to the broader Romanian youth sector.
- Self-reported data. All instruments rely on self-report; responses reflect perceptions that may be shaped by personal expectations, organisational role or social desirability — particularly when respondents assess their own organisation, leadership or culture. Anonymity was emphasised throughout to mitigate this risk.
- Self-selection. The voluntary nature of participation introduces self-selection bias: respondents who engage with well-being topics are likely to be more interested in and supportive of such themes than the wider sector, which may inflate normative agreement scores.
- Volunteer composition. The largely volunteer-based composition of responding organisations means that findings may not fully reflect the experiences of paid, salaried youth workers, and that occupational-health protections designed for employees are only partially relevant to much of the sample.

Despite these limitations, the combination of questionnaires, interviews and a focus group gives a credible picture of how the topic is currently understood in the Romanian youth sector. It is best read as an exploratory national study, not as a statistically representative survey of the whole sector.

## Section IV: Specific national legislation related to the study topic

The Romanian legal and policy context is important because it shapes what youth organisations are formally required and practically able to do. In short, the field is regulated, but not yet strongly systematised from the point of view of practitioner support. The law provides a basis for NGOs, employment protection and safeguarding, but says little in explicit terms about supervision, reflective practice, burnout prevention or the well-being of volunteers and youth-work practitioners.

**1. Legal recognition and governance of youth organisations**

Youth organisations are formally recognised through two foundational instruments: Youth Law No. 350/2006, which establishes youth work as a field and frames the relationship between public authorities and youth structures, and Government Ordinance No. 26/2000 on Associations and Foundations, which provides the legal basis for the existence, governance and accountability of NGOs. Together these confer institutional legitimacy and enable organisations to participate in funding, consultation and public-policy mechanisms. They regulate organisational functioning primarily through compliance requirements, however, and say nothing about the internal conditions — supervision, support, workload — under which practitioners operate. See Youth Law No. 350/2006 and Government Ordinance No. 26/2000.

**2. Labour law and occupational health**

Law No. 53/2003 (the Labour Code), with subsequent amendments, establishes the foundational framework for employment relationships. It guarantees equal treatment, dignity at work, regulated working time and access to professional development, and from Article 175 onwards it places explicit obligations on employers to protect workers' physical and psychological health. Oversight rests with the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) and the Labour Inspectorate. The Code does not, however, regulate youth-work supervision, coaching or reflective practice, and its protections attach to employees — a minority of the people delivering youth work in the responding organisations.

Law No. 319/2006 on Occupational Safety and Health (transposing EU Directive

89/391/EEC) requires employers to assess and manage psychosocial risks, including work-related stress, workload and emotional demands, and to implement preventive measures. Notably, its provisions can extend protection not only to employees but also to volunteers and other participants in organisational activities — which makes it, in principle, the single most relevant instrument for this study. In practice, enforcement within small, volunteer-based youth NGOs is minimal, and formal psychosocial risk assessments are rare.

**3. Volunteering legislation**

Law No. 78/2014 on the Regulation of Volunteering Activity defines volunteers' rights and host organisations' obligations, including volunteer contracts, training, coordination and the recognition of volunteer experience, and it protects against the misuse of volunteering as a substitute for paid employment. While it guarantees safe working conditions, it contains no explicit provisions on psychological well-being, mental-health support or resilience-building. Because a large share of those engaged in Romanian youth work operate as volunteers rather than employees, this gap leaves much of the front-line workforce outside the reach of occupational-health protection.

**4. Safeguarding, mental health and equality**

Child Rights Law No. 272/2004 and the mental-health framework set by Law No. 487/2002 on Mental Health and the Protection of Persons with Mental Disorders complete the protective architecture. The former strengthens safeguarding for young beneficiaries; the latter focuses on clinical services and patient rights rather than preventive workplace mental health. Anti-discrimination and equality duties are established by Government Ordinance No. 137/2000 and Law No. 202/2002 on Equal Opportunities, which oblige organisations to ensure equal treatment and anti-harassment measures. None of these instruments, however, generates psychological safety, supervision or inclusive organisational culture on its own; legal compliance is a floor, not a guarantee of supportive practice.

**5. National policy**

At policy level, the National Youth Strategy 2024–2027 acknowledges the importance

of youth work as a field and recognises several structural challenges — insufficient professionalisation of youth work, uneven territorial coverage of youth services, weak monitoring systems and the need to strengthen youth-worker training. These observations are directly relevant to the present study, because they confirm that organisational readiness is shaped not only by individual organisations but also by systemic conditions. The Strategy does not, however, set out specific provisions for the well-being of youth practitioners or volunteers, and mental-health support for youth workers is not named as a national policy priority.

**Legislative assessment**

Taken as a whole, the Romanian framework provides limited and indirect protection for practitioner well-being in youth organisations. The principal gaps are consistent: the absence of explicit mental-health or psychological-safety provisions for volunteers; the lack of sector-specific regulation of supervision, mentoring or reflective practice in youth work; and a structural disconnect between formal legal duties and the operational realities of small, volunteer-based, project-funded NGOs. The readiness of organisations to support practitioners therefore varies considerably depending on their internal capacity, leadership and commitment. This reinforces the importance of bottom-up, organisational-level approaches — precisely those promoted by the POSITIVE4Youth Work! project — in the absence of comprehensive top-down policy provision.

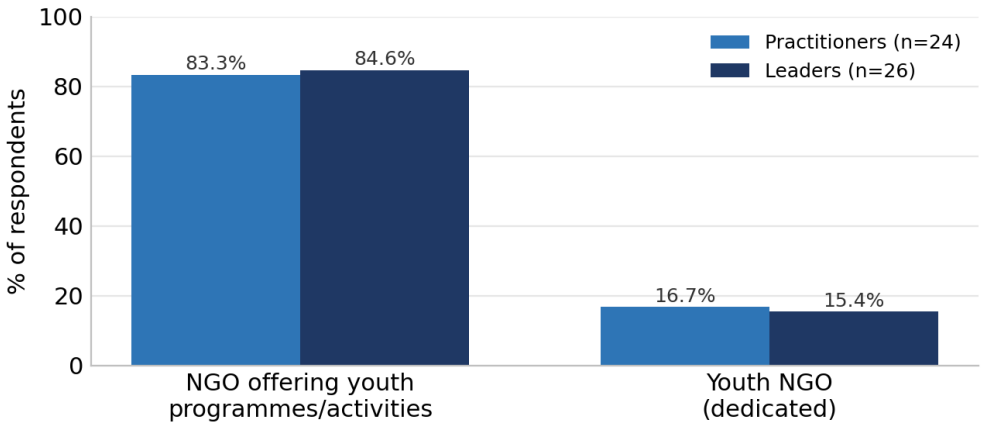
## Section V: Description of organisations involved in study no. 1

### a. Typology of participating organisations

***Table V.1. Typology of participating organisations***

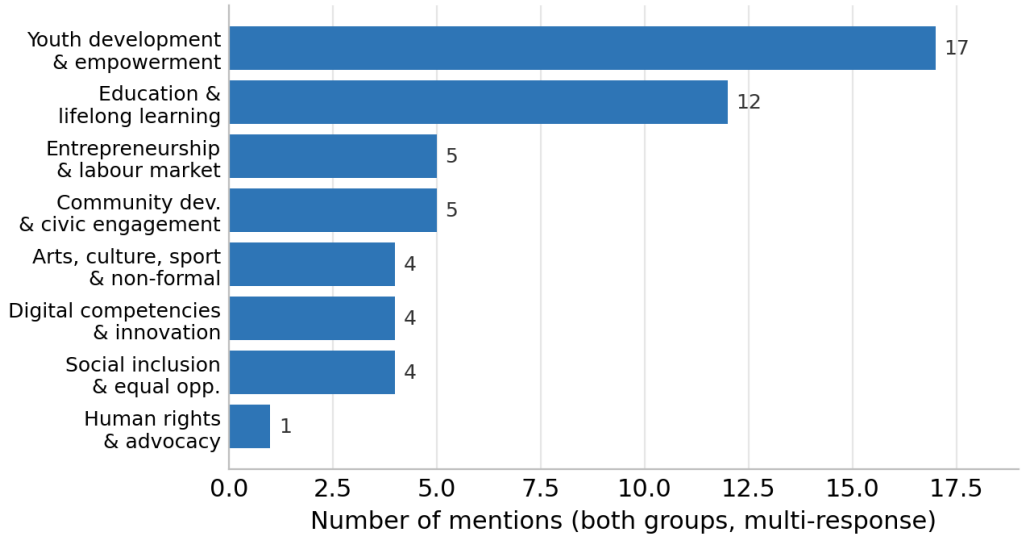
| Organisation type | Q1 Practitioners (n=24) | Q2 Leaders (n=26) |
|---|---|---|
| NGO offering programmes/activities for young people | 20 (83.3%) | 22 (84.6%) |
| Youth NGO (dedicated youth organisation) | 4 (16.7%) | 4 (15.4%) |

***Figure V.1. Typology of participating organisations (% by group)***




The predominance of NGOs offering youth-oriented programmes — as opposed to purely youth-membership organisations — suggests that respondents are primarily engaged in service delivery and programming for young people rather than in youth governance or advocacy structures. This matters for the interpretation of well-being: in service-delivery organisations, the emotional labour of direct relational work with beneficiaries is a central feature of practitioners' experience, which makes the under-development of formal support systems particularly consequential.

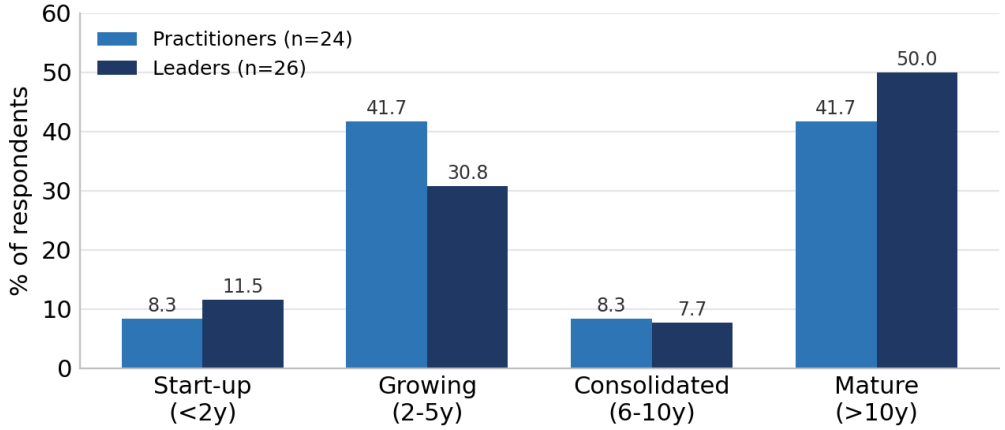
## b. Field(s) in which organisations operate




## c. Their stage of development

| d. **Organisational age** | **Q1 Practitioners (n=24)** | **Q2 Leaders (n=26)** |
|---|---|---|
| Start-up (less than 2 years) | 2 (8.3%) | 3 (11.5%) |
| Growing (2–5 years) | 10 (41.7%) | 8 (30.8%) |
| Consolidated (6–10 years) | 2 (8.3%) | 2 (7.7%) |

***Figure V.2. Stage of organisational development (% by group)***



Both samples are weighted towards organisational maturity while retaining a substantial developing segment. Among practitioners the distribution is notably polarised between growing organisations (2–5 years, 41.7%) and mature organisations (more than 10 years, 41.7%), with very few in the intermediate consolidation phase.

Among leaders the centre of gravity shifts further towards maturity, with half of respondents reporting organisations active for more than ten years. This polarisation likely reflects the recent boom in small NGO creation alongside the survival of well-established organisations, with comparatively few organisations bridging the intermediate phase.

The practical implication is that mature organisations may already possess routines and governance structures on which supportive practices can be grafted, while start-up and developing organisations are more likely to need external support to formalise such practices in the first place.

## Section VI: Description of respondents

*VI. 1 Target group no. 1*

### a. Position within the organization

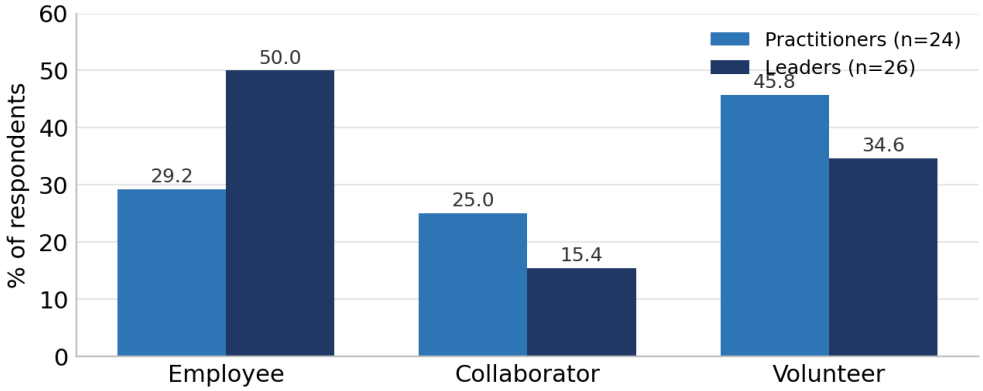


*Table VI.2. Current role in working with young people (practitioners)*

| Role | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Mentor, educator, trainer or counsellor | 9 | 37.5% |
| Youth worker | 8 | 33.3% |
| Project expert / programme staff | 6 | 25.0% |
| Social worker / case worker supporting youth | 1 | 4.2% |

The near-equal presence of youth workers and of mentors/educators/trainers/counsellors indicates that most respondents engage in facilitation, guidance and non-formal learning, while the substantial share of project and programme staff shows that organisational support is relevant not only for front-line interaction but also for planning, coordination and implementation work. Many respondents likely combine several of these functions in the same organisation.

b. Current role when working with young people

| e. **Role** | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Mentor, educator, trainer or counsellor | 9 | 37.5% |
| Youth worker | 8 | 33.3% |
| Project expert / programme staff | 6 | 25.0% |
| Social worker / case worker supporting youth | 1 | 4.2% |

The near-equal presence of youth workers and of educators/trainers/counsellors indicates that most respondents engage in facilitation, guidance and non-formal learning, while the substantial share of project and programme staff shows that organisational support is relevant not only for front-line interaction but also for planning, coordination and implementation work. Many respondents likely combine several of these functions in the same organisation.

### c. Years of experience in working with youth

| Experience | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| More than 10 years | 10 | 41.7% |
| 6–10 years | 6 | 25.0% |
| 1–5 years | 8 | 33.3% |

The experience profile is strong: 66.7% of respondents have more than five years of experience in youth work and 41.7% have more than ten. The views captured here are therefore not introductory impressions, but assessments informed by sustained exposure to organisational practices, young people's needs and the pressures placed on practitioners — which lends considerable weight to the perceptions reported in Section VII.

### d. Level of education

| Education level | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Master's degree | 13 | 54.2% |
| Bachelor's degree | 8 | 33.3% |
| Secondary / Baccalaureate | 2 | 8.3% |
| Doctoral degree | 1 | 4.2% |

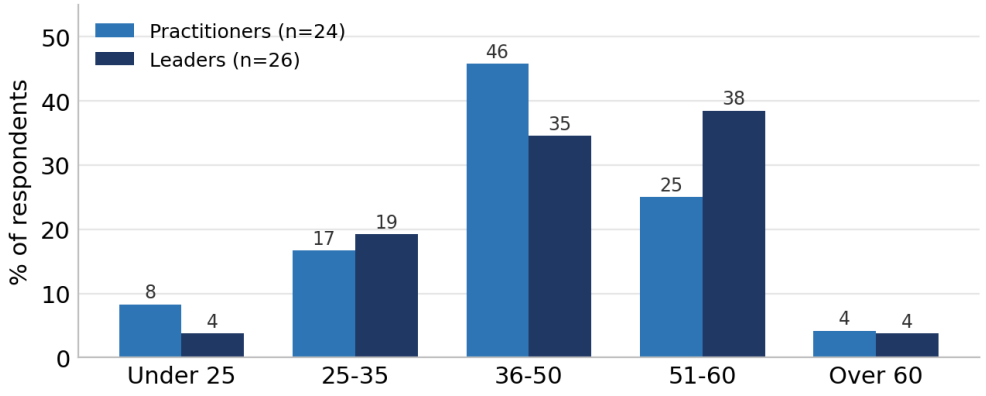
### d. Age

| Age group | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Under 25 | 2 | 8.3% |
| 25–35 | 4 | 16.7% |

| Age group | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| 36–50 | 11 | 45.8% |
| 51–60 | 6 | 25.0% |
| Over 60 | 1 | 4.2% |

The dominant age bracket (36–50, 45.8%) reflects a cohort of mid-career practitioners with substantial experience, while the presence of younger respondents ensures that early-career perspectives are not absent. The gender distribution is 70.8% female (17) and 29.2% male (7), consistent with the broader composition of the Romanian youth and social sector.

***Figure VI.2. Age distribution of respondents (% by group)***




**Interpretative synthesis (VI.1).** The practitioner sample is well placed to assess organisational support because it combines practical experience, organisational embeddedness and role diversity. Most respondents are experienced, mid-career, highly educated and active across multiple youth-work functions.

The strong volunteer component is the single most important feature for interpretation: it signals that organisational well-being in this sample cannot be framed only around formal employment, and that mechanisms such as welcoming, guidance, recognition and protection from emotional overload are as relevant to volunteers as workload and supervision policies are to employees.

*VI. 2 Target group no. 2*

### a. Position within the organization

This group comprises directors, project managers, team coordinators and board members with management responsibilities. The profile is particularly relevant for organisational readiness, because these respondents influence strategy, internal culture, staff support and the allocation of resources.

***Table VI.6. Position within the organisation (leaders)***

| Position | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Employed (paid staff) | 13 | 50.0% |
| Volunteer | 9 | 34.6% |
| Collaborator (contracted) | 4 | 15.4% |

Half of the leaders are employees, but a substantial 34.6% lead or coordinate on a voluntary basis. This is an important result: leadership and governance in the participating organisations

### b. Current leadership or management role in organization

***Table VI.7. Current leadership or management role (leaders)***

| Leadership role | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Board member / administrative leadership | 14 | 53.8% |
| Executive Director | 5 | 19.2% |
| Team / Department Coordinator | 4 | 15.4% |
| Project Manager | 3 | 11.5% |

The group spans both governance-level and operational leadership. Board and administrative leaders shape strategic direction and culture, while project managers and team coordinators are closer to day-to-day implementation and

team support. Notably, no respondent identified as a dedicated HR or staff-coordination role — a meaningful absence that suggests participating organisations rarely have a specialised function responsible for staff well-being, supervision or burnout prevention, with these responsibilities instead distributed informally across other roles.

### c. Years of experience in a management/coordination position

***Table VI.8. Years in management / coordination role (leaders)***

| Management experience | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1–5 years | 10 | 38.5% |
| More than 10 years | 7 | 26.9% |
| 6–10 years | 5 | 19.2% |
| Less than 1 year | 4 | 15.4% |

Leadership experience is divided between long-serving leaders (46.1% with at least six years) and a substantial early-leadership segment (53.9% with five years or fewer, including 15.4% in their first year). This mix is analytically useful: newer leaders are often more aware of gaps in systems and supervision, while long-serving leaders carry deeper knowledge of institutional constraints and organisational history.

### d. Level of education

***Table VI.9. Level of education (leaders)***

| Education level | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Master's degree | 15 | 57.7% |
| Bachelor's degree | 7 | 26.9% |
| Doctoral degree | 3 | 11.5% |
| Secondary / Baccalaureate | 1 | 3.8% |

### f. Age

*Table VI.10. Age of respondents (leaders)*

| Age group | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Under 25 | 1 | 3.8% |
| 25–35 | 5 | 19.2% |
| 36–50 | 9 | 34.6% |
| 51–60 | 10 | 38.5% |
| Over 60 | 1 | 3.8% |

The leader/manager sample skews older than the practitioner group, with 38.5% aged 51–60 and a further 34.6% aged 36–50. The gender distribution is 73.1% female (19) and 26.9% male (7). This age and gender profile is consistent with the broader Romanian NGO sector and means that leadership perspectives in this study are predominantly those of mature, experienced and highly educated respondents.

**Interpretative synthesis (VI.2).** Target Group No. 2 offers a leadership-side view of organisational readiness from precisely the roles most able to make supportive practice systematic rather than occasional. Two features stand out for the analysis that follows: the heavy reliance on voluntary leadership, which can be both a strength (civic commitment) and a fragility (unsupported leaders); and the complete absence of dedicated HR/staff-coordination roles, which helps explain why, throughout Section VII, well-being support is experienced as informal and relational rather than embedded in organisational systems.

**Analytical bridge to Section VII.** Sections V and VI together show that this study captures perceptions from experienced, educated practitioners and leaders embedded in mission-driven Romanian organisations of considerable maturity, but staffed and led to a significant degree by volunteers and lacking specialised support functions. This is the context in which the strong values and weaker structures documented in the next

section should be read: even where organisations are institutionally mature, the people delivering and leading youth work frequently depend on relational and motivational support rather than on formal well-being systems.

## Section VII: Key findings – quantitative results and qualitative insights

**Findings by each of the 5 indicators**

For each indicator:

- Quantitative results
- Qualitative insights
- Short integrated interpretation (see below)

### Indicator 1 – Organisational Awareness and Strategic Recognition of Well-being

Focus: whether organisations recognise practitioner well-being as an organisational issue, acknowledge the emotional demands of youth work, and treat well-being as a strategic priority. The indicator draws on items Q11 - Q16.

Key questions addressed:

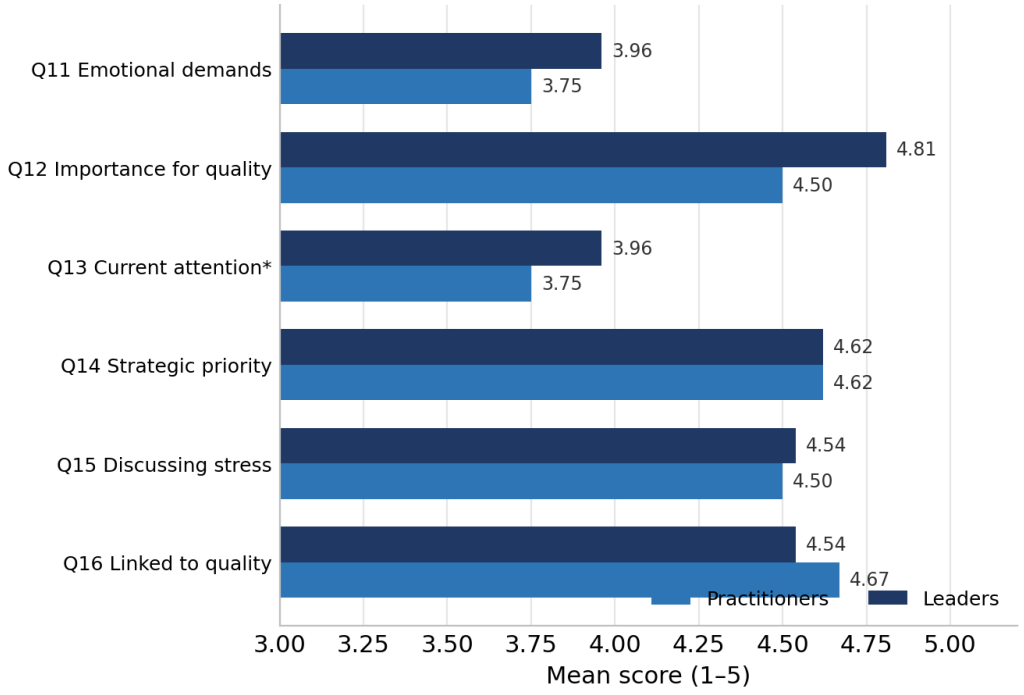
- ✓ Do organisations acknowledge emotional demands in youth work?
- ✓ Is practitioner well-being considered an organisational priority?

***Table VII.1. Indicator 1 item-level results***

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4â€“5 | Q1 %1â€“2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4â€“5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q11: Emotional demands of youth work | 3.75 | 58% | 12% | 3.96 | 69% |
| Q12: Importance of well-being for service quality | 4.50 | 88% | 0% | 4.81 | 96% |
| Q13: Current attention to well-being in own org. (descriptive) | 3.75 | 46% | 0% | 3.96 | 73% |
| Q14: Well-being as explicit strategic | 4.62 | 96% | 0% | 4.62 | 92% |

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4â€“5 | Q1 %1â€“2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4â€“5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| priority | | | | | |
| Q15: Discussing stress as part of organisational dialogue | 4.50 | 83% | 0% | 4.54 | 88% |
| Q16: Well-being linked to quality of youth work | 4.67 | 92% | 0% | 4.54 | 92% |
| **INDICATOR 1 MEAN** | **4.30** | | | **4.40** | |

***Figure VII.1. Indicator 1 - item means by group (* descriptive items)***




**Quantitative interpretation**

The defining feature of Indicator 1 is the divergence between normative beliefs and descriptive reality. Respondents strongly agree that well-being should be a strategic priority (Q14: 4.62 in both groups, with 96% and 92% agreement) and that it is important for service quality (Q12: 4.50 and 4.81). Yet the descriptive item the current level of attention to well-being within their own organisation (Q13) sits markedly lower at 3.75 among practitioners, where fewer than half (46%) score it 4 or 5. Leader's rate current attention somewhat higher (3.96, 73% high), producing one of the larger

perception gaps between the two groups on a descriptive item.

A second nuance concerns Q11, the recognition of the emotional demands of youth work, which records the lowest agreement of the cluster (58% among practitioners, with 12% actively disagreeing). This is noteworthy: even the basic premise that youth work is emotionally demanding is not universally endorsed, which points to a residual strand of opinion that frames the work as difficulty as ordinary rather than as a psychosocial risk requiring organisational attention.

**Qualitative insights**

Interview data strongly confirm and elaborate this divergence. The president of an NGO described well-being as something organisations tend to treat as the individual as own affair rather than a structural priority:

> *Well-being is generally seen as something practitioners manage on their own, rather than as a structural or organisational priority there are no consistent or structured spaces dedicated to it. In most cases, operational priorities take precedence and well-being is not integrated into regular planning or evaluation processes.*

In contrast, the president of another NGO offered a more proactive stance, describing a growing organisational awareness of burnout prevention and the link between the team's emotional health and the quality of activities delivered. A practitioner-leader from a newly established association framed well-being as foundational to her organisational vision, stating that for her there can be no performance and no evolution without mental well-being, because well-being cannot be simulated in front of those, one works with.

Open-ended questionnaire responses echo the same gap between recognition and integration. Practitioners named organisational culture and leadership style, workload and role clarity, and access to professional and emotional support as the factors that most influence well-being â€" each of them an organisational rather than an individual variable. The focus group reinforced this reading: when participants were asked

directly how organisations interpret their responsibility for well-being, the discussion converged on the observation that recognition exists at the level of discourse but is rarely embedded in planning, evaluation or dedicated organisational spaces.

**Integrated interpretation**

There is a strong normative consensus among Romanian practitioners and leaders that well-being should be explicitly recognised as a strategic priority and is integral to the quality of youth work.

This consensus has not translated into practice: the perceived current level of organisational attention is only moderate (around 3.75-3.96), and practitioners' (those closest to the front line) rate it lowest. The gap is shaped by structural constraints (limited resources, project-based funding) and by a cultural pattern of prioritising programme delivery over internal human-resource support. This finding is consistent across both respondent groups and is corroborated by the interviews, the open responses and the focus group alike.

### Indicator 2 – Organisational Responsibility for Practitioner Well-being

Focus: how organisations interpret their responsibility for practitioner well-being as an organisational mandate or an individual burden and whether internal support structures and policies exist. The indicator draws on items Q17 and Q19.

Key questions addressed:

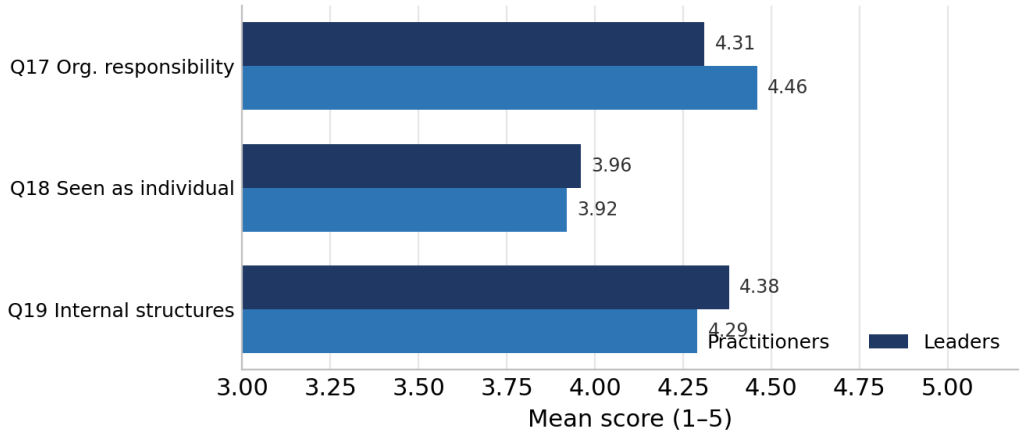
- ✓ Is well-being framed as an individual or organisational responsibility?
- ✓ Are support mechanisms discussed within organisations?

***Table VII.2. Indicator 2 â€" item-level results***

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4â€“5 | Q1 %1â€“2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4â€“5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q17: Organisations have responsibility to actively support well- | 4.46 | 88% | 4% | 4.31 | 77% |

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4â€“5 | Q1 %1â€“2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4â€“5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| being | | | | | |
| Q18: Well-being still seen primarily as individual responsibility | 3.92 | 67% | 4% | 3.96 | 62% |
| Q19: Organisations should develop internal psychosocial-risk structures | 4.29 | 83% | 4% | 4.38 | 81% |
| **INDICATOR 2 MEAN** | **4.22** | | | **4.22** | |

***Figure VII.2. Indicator 2 â€” item means by group***




**Quantitative interpretation**

Indicator 2 produces the study clearest portrait of ambivalence. Respondents endorse organisational responsibility for well-being (Q17: 4.46 and 4.31) and support the development of internal psychosocial-risk structures (Q19: 4.29 and 4.38). Yet they simultaneously agree, at a notable level, that well-being is still treated primarily as an individual matter (Q18: 3.92 and 3.96, with around two-thirds of each group endorsing the statement).

Because Q18 describes a prevailing situation rather than a recommendation, this is not a contradiction in respondents values so much as a candid acknowledgement that, in current practice, responsibility is shifted onto individuals even where organisational duty is endorsed in principle.

**Qualitative insights**

The interviews reveal the same tension with greater texture. One leader observed that practitioners are generally expected to manage their own stress, workload and emotional challenges, so that responsibility tends to drift toward the individual with limited organisational accountability. The president of an organization articulated a more balanced shared-responsibility model, arguing that each person is responsible for their own balance but that the organisation must create the conditions that make balance possible because in a toxic, chaotic or excessively demanding environment, individual effort alone cannot sustain well-being.

Open responses repeatedly called for exactly the structures that Q19 endorses. Practitioners asked for the institutionalisation of supervision and psychological support, for clear policies on supervision and work life balance treated as part of routine functioning rather than occasional initiatives, and for the building of an organisational culture that prioritises well-being as the precondition for everything else.

The focus group, organised around the question of how organisations interpret their responsibility, surfaced the same dual attribution: a stated belief in organisational duty coexisting with a lived reality in which coping is left to the individual.

**Integrated interpretation**

A prevailing mixed responsibility model exists in Romania youth NGO sector, in which well-being is simultaneously acknowledged as an organisational duty and treated, in practice, as an individual matter. This paradox reflects genuine ambiguity about organisational capacity under resource constraints, together with cultural norms in Romanian civil society that prize individual resilience and commitment. The moderate-to-strong agreement with Q19 signals real openness to formal structures; the persistence of Q18 shows that practice has not yet caught up with that openness.

### Indicator 3 - Leadership attitudes towards well-being and emotional labour

Focus: how leadership approaches shape organisational attitudes, and whether leaders model open discussion of stress and burnout. The indicator draws on items Q20-Q22.

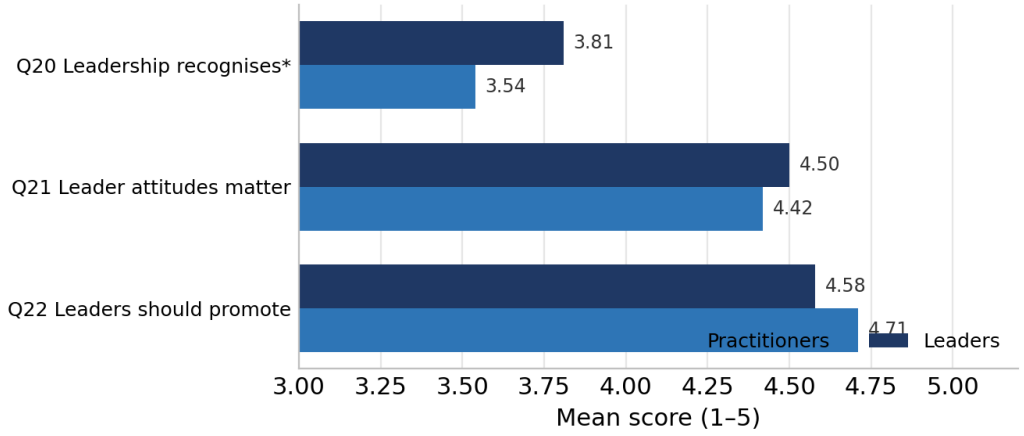
Key questions addressed:

- ✓ Do leaders actively support practitioner well-being?
- ✓ How leadership behaviours shape organisational attitudes.

*Table VII.3. Indicator 3 - item-level results*

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4-5 | Q1 %1-2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4-5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q20: Leadership currently recognises emotional demands (descriptive) | 3.54 | 54% | 12% | 3.81 | 62% |
| Q21: Leader attitudes influence comfort to discuss stress | 4.42 | 92% | 0% | 4.50 | 85% |
| Q22: Leaders should actively promote supportive environments | 4.71 | 92% | 0% | 4.58 | 85% |
| **INDICATOR 3 MEAN** | **4.22** | | | **4.29** | |

*Figure VII.3. Indicator 3 - item means by group (* descriptive item)*



**Quantitative interpretation**

Indicator 3 contains the single lowest item in the entire study: Q20, the descriptive assessment of whether leadership currently recognises the emotional demands of youth work, scores just 3.54 among practitioners with only 54% agreeing and 12% actively disagreeing and 3.81 among leaders.

Practitioners rate their leaders' awareness lower than leaders rate themselves, a classic self-perception gap. The two normative items, by contrast, are among the strongest in the study: both groups agree that leadership attitudes determine whether practitioners feel safe to speak (Q21) and that leaders should actively promote supportive environments (Q22: 4.71 among practitioners).

The structure of the indicator therefore localises the problem precisely: it is not that the importance of leadership is doubted, but that current leadership behaviour is felt to lag its acknowledged importance.

**Qualitative insights**

Interviewers characterised a prevailing leadership pattern oriented towards efficiency, delivery of results and meeting external expectations, in which well-being may be acknowledged in general terms but is not consistently modelled through decisions or daily conduct. A contrasting, more deliberate model came from the an organization president, who described promoting a leadership style based on empathy, dialogue and trust, on the conviction that people work better when they feel heard and valued rather than permanently controlled.

The most analytically rich qualitative material came from leaders' own open responses on the challenges they face. One leader described the difficulty of drawing a boundary between empathy and excessive personal involvement, and the struggle to implement clinical or professional supervision that would allow the discharge of accumulated emotional load, for want of time and specialised resources. Another named the constant tension between mission, resources and the human reality of the team. A

third pointed to a lack of management competencies specific to recognising the signs of exhaustion. These are leaders diagnosing, with considerable insight, the very awareness gap that Q20 quantifies.

**Integrated interpretation**

There is a clear leadership-awareness gap in Romanian youth organisations: leaders are widely seen as not yet fully recognising or responding to the emotional demands of youth work, even though both groups agree that leadership attitudes are among the most powerful drivers of organisational culture on well-being.

The gap appears rooted in a performance-and-delivery management culture and in limited management training for the human dimensions of leading teams in emotionally intensive work. Crucially, leaders themselves recognise this gap and frame it as a need for supervision, boundaries and competence rather than as a personal failing which makes leadership development the study's highest-leverage intervention point.

## Indicator 4 - Organisational culture and psychological safety

Focus: the degree of openness, safety and peer support within organisations in relation to well-being. The indicator draws on items Q23-Q25. Item Q23 is framed differently across the two questionnaires as a normative belief for practitioners and as a self-report (feel safe expressing concerns) for leaders and the two readings are reported separately below.

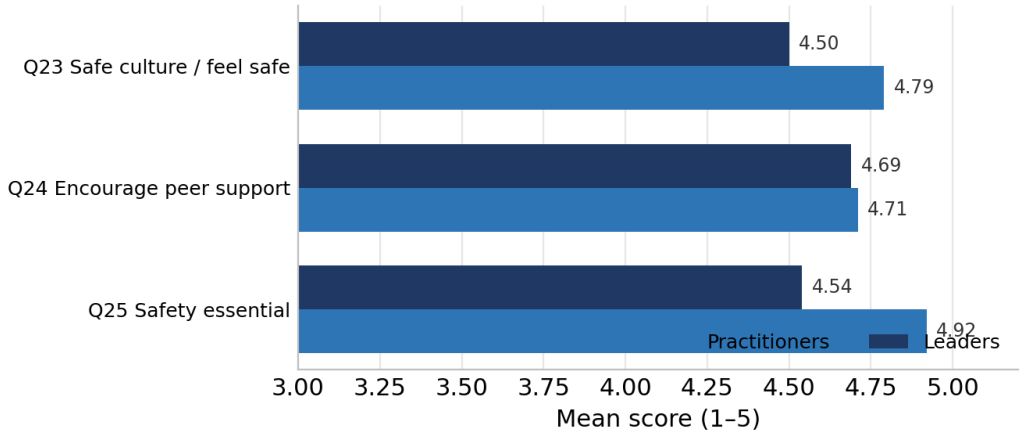
Key questions addressed:

- ✓ Do practitioners feel safe expressing concerns?
- ✓ Are supportive peer relationships encouraged?

*Table VII.4. Indicator 4 - item-level results*

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4-5 | Q1 %1-2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4-5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q23: Safe culture (Q1 normative) / feel safe to raise concerns (Q2 self-report) | 4.79 | 100% | 0% | 4.50 | 85% |
| Q24: Organisational culture should encourage mutual peer support | 4.71 | 92% | 0% | 4.69 | 92% |
| Q25: Psychological safety essential for effective youth work | 4.92 | 100% | 0% | 4.54 | 85% |
| **INDICATOR 4 MEAN** | **4.81** | | | **4.58** | |

*Figure VII.4. Indicator 4 - item means by group*




**Quantitative interpretation**

Indicator 4 yields the highest scores in the entire study. Among practitioners every item exceeds 4.7, and two items (Q23 and Q25) record 100% agreement, with Q25 (psychological safety as essential) reaching a near-ceiling mean of 4.92. The leaders' self-report on Q23 (4.50, 85% high) indicates that, at least within managerial contexts, safety to raise concerns is genuinely felt. The normative endorsement of psychological safety is, in short, as close to unanimous as anything this study measured.

**Qualitative insights**

The qualitative material complicates this bright quantitative picture in an important

way. One interviewee described an organisational culture that is not very open to discussing stress, emotional demands or burnout, with a tendency to normalise high workloads and emotional pressure as part of the role a tendency crystallised in the dismissive response “Well, don’t take it personally”, which she identified as a common reaction that discourages open conversation. The same respondent noted that practitioners do not always feel safe raising well-being challenges for fear of appearing less capable, and that when stress is raised, leaders tend to respond with short-term, task-oriented fixes rather than addressing underlying causes.

A more open environment was described by the president of an NGO, where the subject is discussed both formally in team meetings and informally between colleagues. A practitioner captured the intermediate, aspirational reality most precisely, describing a sense of comfort in talking about emotional well-being that nonetheless meets a feeling that more openness and collaboration are possible, and that colleagues work hard on their own personal development without yet being a source of inspiration for one another. Open responses pointed in the same direction, calling for coordinated sessions for sharing emotions and stress levels, and for team recreation activities and breaks between projects to relieve emotional and physical overload.

**Integrated interpretation**

There is near-unanimous agreement that psychological safety is not merely desirable but essential, and leaders’ self-reports suggest it is felt within managerial circles. Yet the qualitative evidence consistently shows that this safety is incomplete, context-dependent and more aspirational than structural.

The central challenge is to convert a near-universal belief into a lived, embedded organisational norm, which requires actively counteracting the cultural tendency, documented in the interviews, to normalise overwork and to read emotional strain as a personal rather than an organisational matter. The very strength of the normative consensus is the opportunity here: few interventions begin from such firm shared ground.

## Indicator 5 – Organisational Learning and Openness to Improvement

Focus: whether organisations reflect on how their own practices affect well-being, and whether they adapt on the basis of practitioner experience and feedback. The indicator draws on items Q26-Q28.

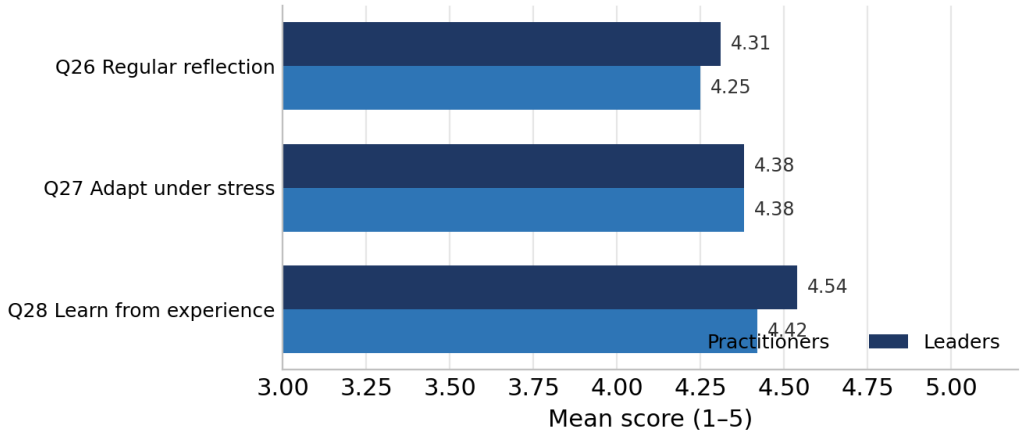
Key questions addressed:

- ✓ Are organisations open to learning from practitioner feedback?
- ✓ Are internal practices regularly reviewed?

***Table VII.5. Indicator 5 - item-level results***

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4-5 | Q1 %1=2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4-5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q26: Organisations should regularly reflect on practices impact on well-being | 4.25 | 75% | 8% | 4.31 | 81% |
| Q27: Organisations should adapt when practitioners face stress/burnout | 4.38 | 83% | 8% | 4.38 | 85% |
| Q28: Learning from practitioner experience improves support | 4.42 | 83% | 4% | 4.54 | 88% |
| **INDICATOR 5 MEAN** | **4.35** | | | **4.41** | |

*Figure VII.5. Indicator 5 - item means by group*




**Quantitative interpretation**

Both groups express similarly strong support for organisational reflection, adaptation and learning, with the highest agreement on Q28 the instrumental value of learning from practitioner experience (4.42 and 4.54). The notable feature here is variance rather than central tendency: Q26 and Q27 attract the highest disagreement shares of the cluster (8% scoring 12, with minimum scores of 1 observed), indicating that a minority of respondents do not regard structured reflection and adaptation as necessary. The average is strong, but consensus is thinner than on Indicator 4.

**Qualitative insights**

The interviews reveal wide variation in actual reflective practice. One leader described a situation in which staff may raise concerns about stress or workload but there is no consistent process for feeding this into organisational learning; where adjustments are made, they tend to be short-term and reactive rather than part of a broader strategy.

By contrast, the president of another NGO described organising reflection discussions after projects and encouraging open talk about difficulties, on the principle that a healthy organisation continually learns from its people. A practitioner offered a developmental reading, describing how her organisation had moved through alternating phases of strong group-level reflection and periods in which each member carried this responsibility individually.

Open responses converted this into concrete proposals: scheduling periodic sessions on stress and well-being; building debriefing, mentoring and peer-support mechanisms to manage emotional load and prevent burnout; and facilitating participation in workshops on stress management and emotional regulation. The recurring theme is that consultation must lead to visible change feedback is valued only when it produces adaptation, a point that connects this indicator directly to the recommendations in Section VIII.

**Integrated interpretation**

Romanian youth organisations display a broadly positive orientation towards learning and reflection, but implementation is inconsistent and, for a minority, not regarded as essential. The pattern matches the other indicators: strong normative agreement coexists with reactive, ad hoc practice rather than systematised reflection.

The strongest agreement attaches to the instrumental value of practitioner feedback (Q28), suggesting that both groups recognise the resource that practitioner experience represents even where they have not yet built durable mechanisms to draw on it. The development task is therefore to formalise the feedback-to-action cycle so that listening reliably becomes change.

### Indicator 6 – Systemic Understanding of Well-being and Resilience

Focus: Recognition of well-being as a systemic organisational issue.

Focus: the degree to which organisations understand well-being and resilience as systemic phenomena shaped by culture, leadership and structural conditions rather than purely individual traits. The indicator draws on items Q29-Q31, plus the descriptive self-assessment item Q32.

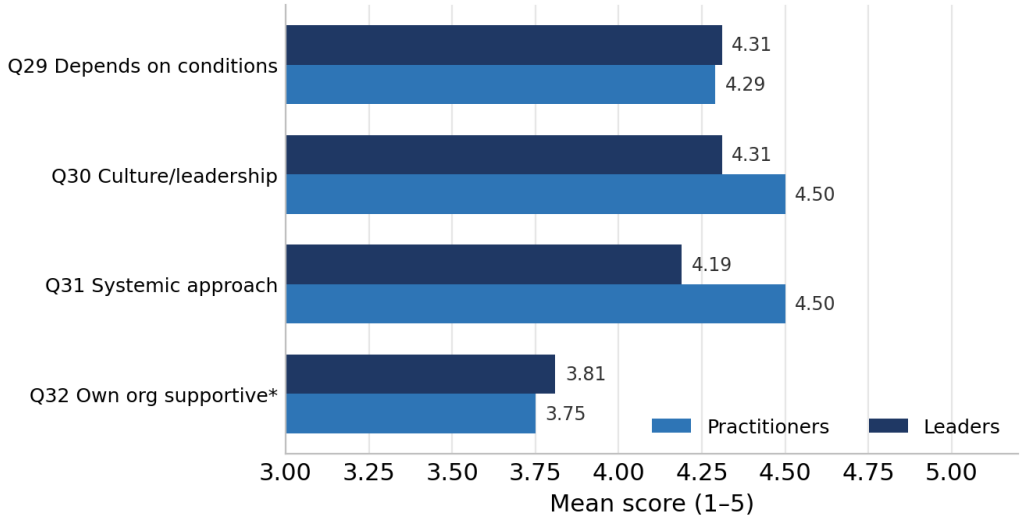
Key questions addressed:

- ✓ Do organisations recognise links between leadership, culture and practitioner well-being?
- ✓ Is well-being understood as part of organisational sustainability?

*Table VII.6. Indicator 6 - item-level results*

| Item | Q1 mean | Q1 %4-5 | Q1 %1-2 | Q2 mean | Q2 %4-5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q29: Well-being depends on organisational conditions, not only personal resilience | 4.29 | 88% | 8% | 4.31 | 85% |
| Q30: Culture, leadership and resources strongly influence resilience | 4.50 | 88% | 8% | 4.31 | 81% |
| Q31: Sustainable youth work requires a systemic approach to well-being | 4.50 | 88% | 8% | 4.19 | 77% |
| Q32: How supportive is your own organisation? (descriptive) | 3.75 | 62% | 8% | 3.81 | 62% |
| **INDICATOR 6 MEAN (excl. Q32)** | **4.43** | | | **4.27** | |

*Figure VII.6. Indicator 6 - item means by group (* descriptive item)*




**Quantitative interpretation**

The systemic understanding of well-being is well established in the sample: a clear majority of both groups agree that well-being depends on organisational conditions and not only on personal resilience (Q29), that culture, leadership and resources strongly shape resilience (Q30), and that sustainable youth work requires a systemic approach (Q31). Yet the descriptive item Q32 the self-assessment of how supportive

one's own organisation actually is records 3.75 among practitioners and 3.81 among leaders, tying with Q13 for the lowest scores in the study. The contrast between strong systemic belief (Q29-Q31, all above 4.19) and modest felt reality (Q32) reproduces, at the level of the most conceptually sophisticated indicator, the aspiration's reality gap that defines the whole study.

**Qualitative insights**

Interviewees spoke at length about structural and systemic factors. One key informant offered a multi-factor analysis naming organisational culture and leadership style, workload and role clarity, access to professional and emotional support, and organisational and financial stability as the conditions that most shape practitioner resilience. The most detailed leader response on desirable change argued for the institutionalisation of supervision and external psychological support recognising the practitioner mental health as a necessary operational expense rather than a luxury together with flexible work design and recovery-time policies that relieve practitioners of guilt for disconnecting.

A contrasting strand of opinion appeared in a minority of open responses that reasserted an individual-resilience framing one practitioner judged that nothing special was needed, and a board member observed that there are few challenges if one chooses to work with professionals. These minority views, alongside the 8% disagreement on Q29-Q31, mark the residual presence of the individual-trait narrative that the systemic items otherwise displace.

The focus group's second anchor question on the role of well-being and resilience in the quality and sustainability of youth work drew the discussion firmly towards the systemic reading, connecting practitioner well-being to retention, continuity and the quality of work with young people.

**Integrated interpretation**

The data reveals a genuinely systemic understanding among the majority of respondents, who recognise that resilience is shaped by organisational conditions

rather than being a purely personal attribute. The modest self-assessment of actual supportiveness (3.75-3.81) confirms, however, that systemic understanding has not been translated into systemic practice.

The disconnect is especially striking given that these respondents practitioners and leaders of youth-serving NGOs are professionally engaged in building resilience in young people, yet do not experience for themselves the organisational conditions they seek to create for their beneficiaries.

## Section VIII: General conclusions and recommendations

This section integrates all evidence streams used in the national study: the two questionnaire datasets (50 respondents; 24 practitioners and 26 leaders/managers), the indicator-level quantitative analyses, the open-ended questionnaire responses, the three interviews, the national focus group, and the contextual, methodological and legal framing developed in the preceding sections. Its purpose is practical: to turn evidence into decisions that Romanian youth organisations can apply in real operations, under real constraints, within the thematic scope of Study No. 1.

### Conclusions

#### Conclusion 1. The aspiration–reality gap is the central finding.

Across all six indicators, normative items about what organisations should do consistently and substantially exceed descriptive items about what they actually do. The two descriptive items in the study — current attention to well-being (Q13) and self-assessed organisational supportiveness (Q32) — are its lowest-scoring items in both groups, while normative items routinely exceed 4.5. This gap is not a deficit of knowledge or values; it reflects a structural incapacity to operationalise what is already understood and desired.

#### Conclusion 2. Well-being responsibility remains ambivalently shared.

Romanian youth organisations have not resolved whose responsibility practitioner

well-being is. Organisational responsibility is endorsed (Q17: 4.46 and 4.31), yet around two-thirds of respondents also agree that well-being is still treated as an individual matter (Q18). This ambivalence is rooted in genuine resource constraints — especially the high proportion of volunteer-based organisations — and in cultural norms that frame resilience as a personal virtue rather than an organisationally supported capacity.

### Conclusion 3. Leadership is the critical leverage point.

Both quantitative and qualitative evidence converge on leadership. The single lowest item in the study is the descriptive assessment of whether leadership currently recognises emotional demands (Q20: 3.54 among practitioners), even as both groups agree that leadership attitudes are the most powerful driver of whether practitioners feel safe to speak. Strikingly, leaders themselves diagnose this gap in their open responses, framing it as a need for supervision, boundaries and management competence.

### Conclusion 4. Psychological safety is aspirationally near-universal but practically fragile.

Psychological safety is the strongest dimension in the study at the level of principle (Q25: 4.92 among practitioners, 100% agreement), yet the interviews reveal cultural norms that normalise overwork and silence around mental health. The dismissive response “Well, don’t take it personally” — cited as a common reaction to expressions of stress — epitomises a barrier that high agreement scores alone cannot overcome.

### Conclusion 5. Support is relational and informal rather than systemic.

The qualitative material consistently shows informal peer support, individual empathy and ad hoc flexibility carrying an organisational load that should be held by formal structures. The complete absence of dedicated HR or staff-coordination roles among the 26 leaders is the structural counterpart of this finding: there is frequently no function whose job it is to make support systematic.

### Conclusion 6. Organisational learning is valued but reactive.

Reflection, adaptation and learning attract strong support, especially the instrumental value of practitioner feedback (Q28). In practice, however, feedback is collected more often than it is converted into change; adjustments tend to be short-term and reactive, and a minority of respondents do not regard structured reflection as necessary at all.

### Conclusion 7. Systemic understanding outruns systemic practice.

A clear majority understand resilience as shaped by culture, leadership and resources rather than as a personal trait (Q29–Q31 all above 4.19). Yet the self-assessment of actual supportiveness (Q32: 3.75–3.81) confirms that this sophisticated understanding has not been translated into lived organisational conditions — not least for the practitioners who build resilience in young people for a living.

### Conclusion 8. Structural vulnerabilities are the root cause.

Open responses and interviews identify the same structural barriers with remarkable consistency: short-term, project-based funding; small teams with overlapping roles; high volunteer turnover; the absence of sector-specific psychosocial frameworks; and minimal investment in staff development beyond delivery skills. Leaders' own accounts describe a "race after projects" that turns vocation into administrative survival and erodes team morale.

### Conclusion 9. Leaders are more candid about gaps than practitioners on descriptive reality.

On several descriptive items, leaders do not display idealised optimism; on current attention to well-being (Q13) they rate higher than practitioners, but on the systemic items (Q30–Q31) and in their open responses they are more cautious and more aware of structural limits. This self-awareness among leaders is an asset for change, because it means capacity-building will meet recognition rather than denial.

### Conclusion 10. The readiness verdict is mixed but actionable.

Conceptual readiness in the Romanian youth sector is high, relational readiness is moderate-to-high, and structural readiness is moderate-to-low. Romanian youth organisations are ready to improve; what they need is system-building support to

move from informal care to sustainable, supportive organisational practice. This is a strong foundation for the project's intervention activities (WP3 digital products and WP4 training).

**Recommendations**

The recommendations below are derived directly from the findings and are ordered to address the largest gaps first. They are addressed to three audiences: youth organisations themselves; the POSITIVE4Youth Work! consortium and its WP3/WP4 deliverables; and national policy and funding actors.

### Recommendation 1: Move from organisational intention to organisational strategy for well-being

The central gap is between value and structure. Organisations should move from reactive, ad hoc responses towards integrated, written well-being strategies that make support a routine function rather than an occasional initiative. Concretely:

- Develop written internal policies on workload management, psychosocial-risk prevention and emotional support.
- Make well-being a standing agenda item in team meetings and annual planning.
- Incorporate well-being indicators into organisational self-assessment and reporting.
- Designate a well-being reference person within each organisation, even on a voluntary basis, to compensate for the absence of dedicated HR roles.

### Recommendation 2: Invest in emotionally aware leadership development

Because leadership is the highest-leverage point and the recognition of emotional demands is the study's lowest-rated item, targeted leadership development is the priority intervention. Programmes should prioritise the competencies that leaders themselves identified as missing:

- Recognising and responding to burnout, exhaustion and psychosocial risk in teams.
- Empathic, dialogue-based leadership and the boundary between empathy and over-involvement.

- Coaching, mentoring and conflict-management skills, and peer learning between leaders.
- The WP4 Training Handbook and transnational training programme are directly relevant resources here.

### Recommendation 3: Build cultures of enacted psychological safety

The near-universal belief in psychological safety must be converted from aspiration into embedded practice, actively counteracting the documented culture of normalised overwork:

- Regular team check-ins that explicitly make space for well-being and emotional state.
- Peer-support circles, supervision sessions or buddy systems adapted to volunteer-based teams.
- Communication norms that respect boundaries around after-hours contact and acknowledge emotional labour in performance conversations.
- Coordinated, specialist-facilitated sessions for sharing stress levels, as several respondents requested.

### Recommendation 4: Institutionalise supervision, reflection and the feedback-to-action cycle

Reflection and learning are valued but reactive, and feedback is collected more often than it is acted upon. Organisations should formalise the cycle that turns listening into change:

- At minimum, one protected supervision or reflective-practice session per month, internally or externally facilitated.
- Post-project debriefings and structured reflection on how practices affect well-being.
- A visible feedback loop: collect input, decide what changes, communicate the decision, and monitor effects.

### Recommendation 5: Address workload and resource planning directly

Workload pressure and resource instability are named repeatedly as the root threats

to well-being. Practical planning measures should be built into both operations and funding applications:

- Simple workload-monitoring and fair-distribution procedures, with redistribution when overload occurs.
- Recovery periods and real breaks following intensive activities.
- Realistic staffing assumptions and dedicated support-function costs in project budgets.

### Recommendation 6: Leverage the project's digital resources for self-care and learning

The WP3 digital products — the resilience card set, the emotional-intelligence kit and the storybook — respond directly to needs identified in this study. Organisations should:

- Integrate these resources into team development, volunteer training and reflective-practice sessions.
- Use the Study No. 2 self-analysis tool to periodically diagnose organisational culture and target improvement.

**MAIN SOURCES OF NATIONAL REPORT:**

**a. Project Documents of the POSITIVE Project – Activity A2.2:**

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. Study no. 1 Methodology/general framework.

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. Questionnaire 1 – Youth Workers and Practitioners.

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. Questionnaire 2 – Leaders and Managers.

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. Interview Guide.

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. Focus Group Guide.

POSITIVE – Wellbeing&Resilience in Youth Work for Social Change. National Report Template - Study no. 1.

**b. Legislative and Public Policy Sources analysed in Section IV**

**c. European-Level Sources:**

European Commission. EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027.

European Commission. European Youth Work Agenda (2020).

Council of Europe. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on Youth Work.

Bonn Declaration on Youth Work (2020).

SALTO Youth. Competence Model for Youth Workers to Work Internationally.

**d. Empirical data sources for the National Report – Romania:**

Questionnaire 1 responses (N = 24 youth workers and practitioners).

Questionnaire 2 responses (N = 26 leaders and managers).

Semi-structured interviews conducted with 3 representatives of participating organisations.

National focus group organised on 27 April 2026.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted within Study no. 1.