

Executive summary of the National Report for Poland

**Erasmus+ Project “Youth Positive Potential”
(Agreement no. 2019-1-MTO1-KA201-051251)**

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Introduction

This executive summary contains the most important information presented in the ‘Report on research conducted in Poland within the framework of the Erasmus+ Youth Positive Potential project (Agreement no. 2019-1-MTO1-KA201-051251)’. It presents the results of research on adolescent youth from Poland, which was part of a broader project entitled Youth Positive Potential (YPP), under the Erasmus+ programme. Besides Poland, the research was carried out in Malta and Lithuania, that is in all the countries that participated in the project.

In addition to surveys involving young people, the YPP project assumed the adaptation of the Polish Archipelago of Treasures® integrated prevention programme to the conditions of the partner countries participating in the project. The assumptions of the youth study closely corresponded with the goals and content of the Archipelago of Treasures® programme, and study results for Poland were to be not only a diagnosis of the psychosocial condition of adolescents, but also a reference point for international data.

Information about the research

The YPP project uses the Polish **Integrated Prevention Model** as the basis for an effective method of comprehensive support for youth development and the prevention of problems and risk behaviours of youth.

According to the definition of the model, integrated prevention is one that aims to **effectively prevent the broadest possible spectrum of youth risk behaviours and problems** (e.g. tobacco, alcohol, drugs, violence, depression, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases) **simultaneously**.

The study used a research methodology based on the integrated prevention model, developed in Poland over more than 20 years of experience of the Institute for Integrated Prevention staff.

A new Pro-Inte 10 questionnaire was constructed for the study (based on the Polish ProZint-9 questionnaire). In this new version of the questionnaire, the vast majority of questions were common to all the countries participating in the project (i.e. Lithuania, Malta and Poland), but the questionnaires also contained sets of questions directed only at students of a specific country, due to the specificity of national social contexts.

The survey was carried out in classrooms and was anonymous and in compliance with personal data protection regulations.

The main purposes of the studies conducted as part of the YPP project were:

1. to identify the positive potential and problems of youth in Malta, Poland and Lithuania,
2. to adapt the Archipelago of Treasures® programme to the national contexts in the partner countries, on the basis of study results,
3. to share the results of the studies with school counsellors, teachers and other school staff in the partner countries so that they can use the knowledge in their work with students and parents.

The survey included students aged 14 to 15. The main research questions formulated for this group of young people were:

- what is their positive development potential?
- what are their values and life attitudes?
- what risk behaviours do they exhibit?
- what risk factors are they exposed to?
- what are the protective factors for their positive potential?

The above questions were operationalized by means of over 80 questions in the Pro-Inte 10 questionnaire. The responses to these questions became important material developed and used in the adaptation of the Polish Archipelago of Treasures® prevention programme to the needs of young people in Malta and Lithuania.

The school surveys were conducted under difficult conditions, as the Covid-19 pandemic was underway (2021-2022). For this reason, data collection in schools took much longer than originally planned, as the national survey teams tried to achieve the maximum of the assumed survey sample sizes.

The Polish study planned a sample of 794 people, including 399 boys and 395 girls. Thanks to the strong commitment of the research team, a high sample completion rate of 84% was achieved.

The Polish study was conducted between September 2021 and April 2022. Ten schools took part, including 9 primary schools and 1 upper secondary school. The surveyed primary schools came from small towns in the Lubelskie, Podlaskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie and Wielkopolskie provinces, while the upper secondary school came from a large city in the Dolnośląskie (Lower Silesia) province. The survey was not representative.

The dominant age group in the sample realized was 14-year-olds (54% of respondents). The second most numerous group was 13-year-olds – 30% of the respondents. The remaining 16% were youth aged 15, and 1% were youth of other ages.

As for the sex breakdown of the sample, it is equal for boys and girls.

In the next step, a single cumulative statistical set was created on the basis of the data collected in the surveys in Lithuania, Malta and Poland. Data analysis methods varied from simple frequency analysis through correlation analyses to regression analyses.

Data analysis was conducted at two levels: the general, nationwide level and the level of data obtained at specific schools. For the Polish schools, reports were prepared of the diagnosis, which were given to individual institutions to draw a picture of the positive potential and problems of their students.

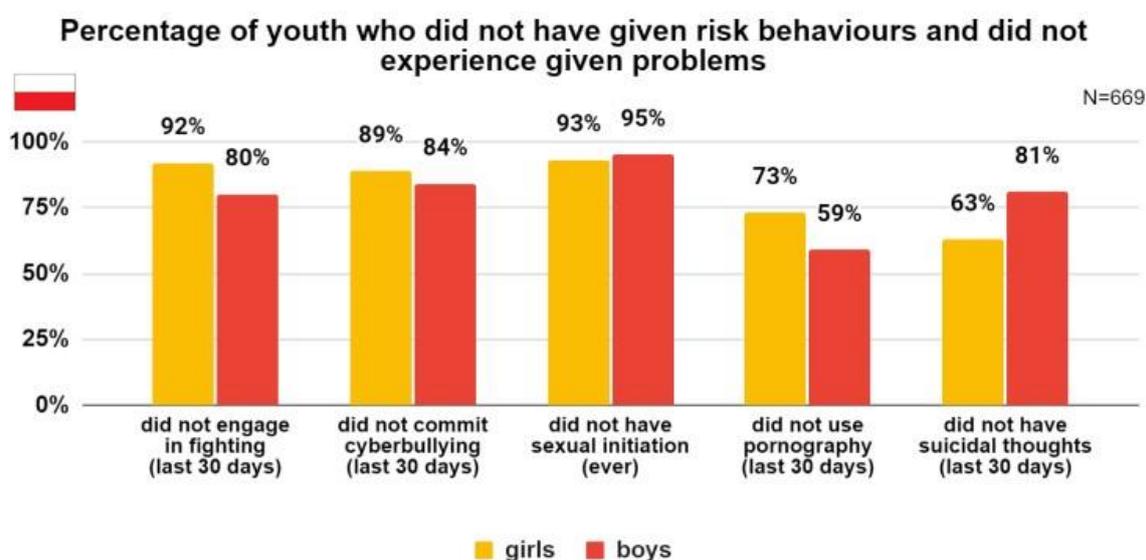
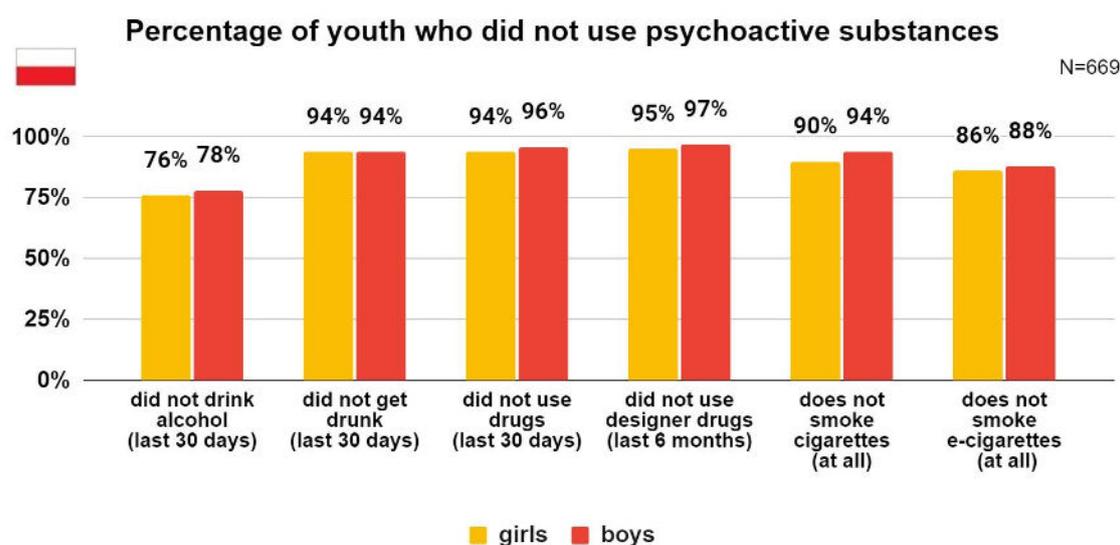
Presentation of study results

The most important part of the report is devoted to the presentation of the results of the surveys in which Polish youth participated. For the most part, they are in the form of bar charts showing the percentages of surveyed students who gave a certain answer to selected questions. The charts also include information about missing data for particular questions – students sometimes skipped some survey questions.

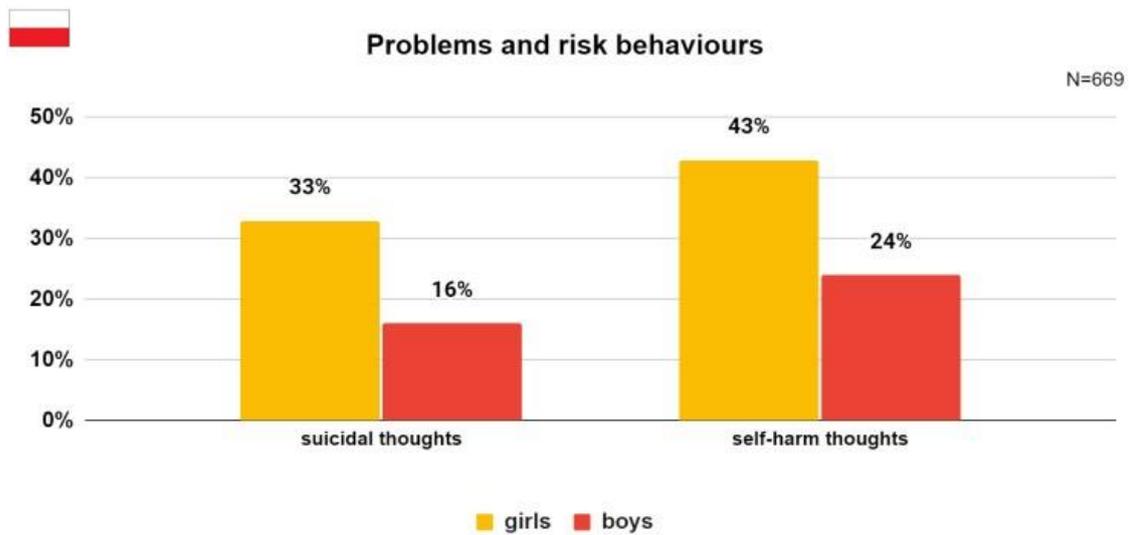
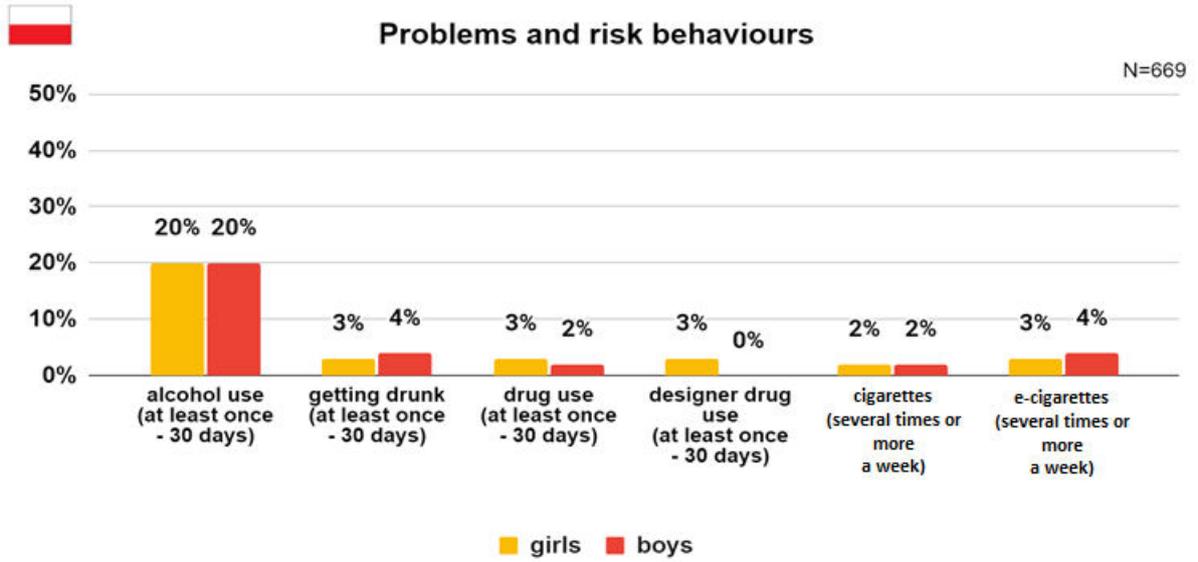
The results on the charts are shown separately for girls (bar in yellow) and for boys (bar in brown). All charts were provided with the necessary explanations to facilitate the interpretation of the results presented graphically.

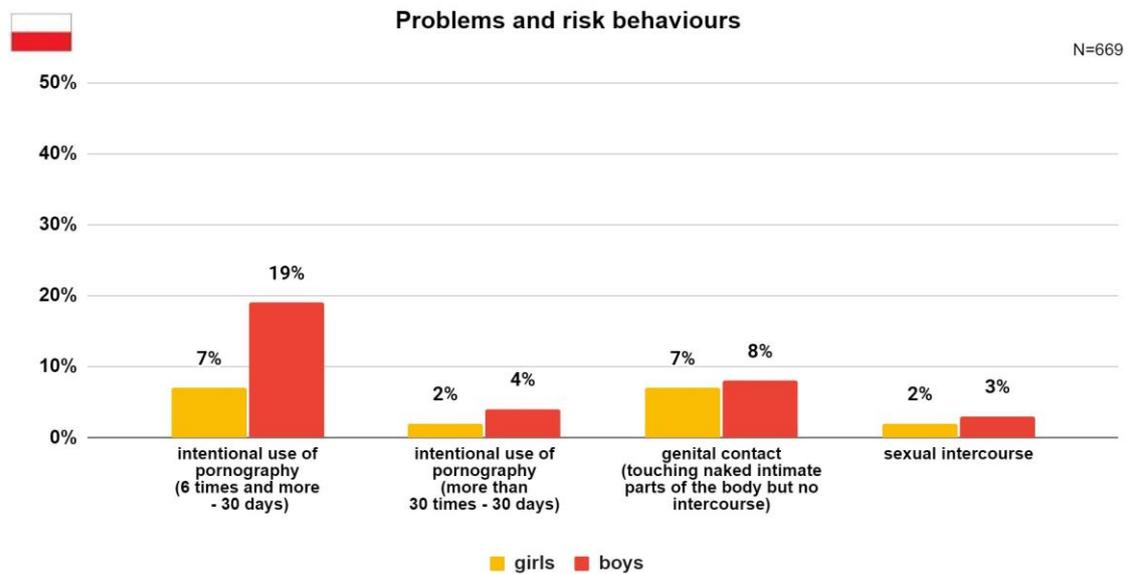
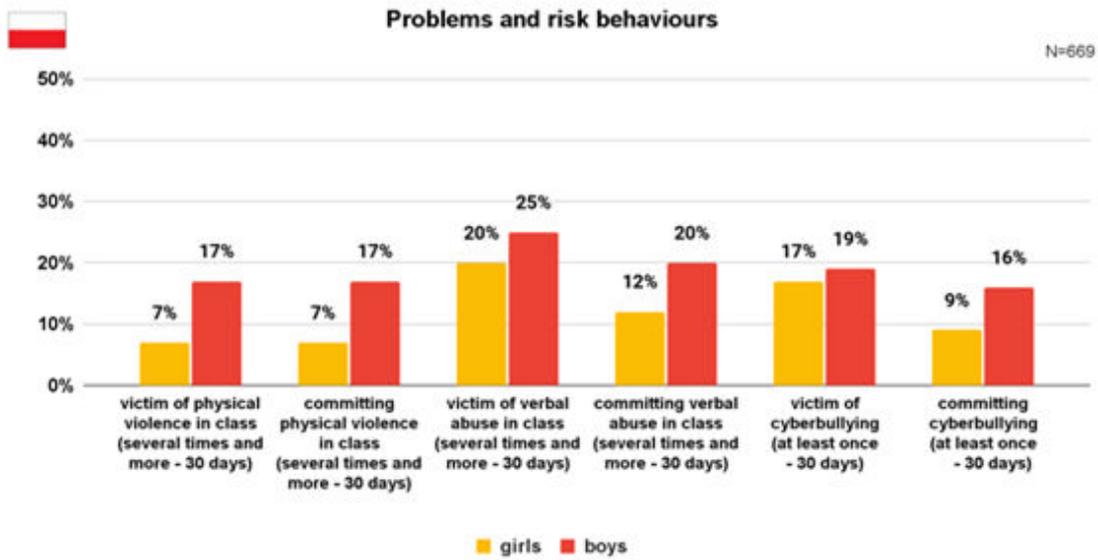
Much attention in the report has been given to the positive potential of Polish youth. On the one hand, this potential can be seen in the dreams and life goals that the youth declare. The most important dreams and life goals of the respondents mainly revolve around lasting interpersonal relationships such as love and friendship, and issues related to work – that it should be interesting and enable a career. At the same time, it is worth noting that 78% of the respondents would like to function in a marriage as 30-year-olds. Around 60% would also like to have children at this time. Slightly higher percentages of young people say they would like to have children at all in the future. As for the number of offspring, the most common answer was two children, followed by one child or three children. 4% of respondents said they would like to have four or more children.

On the other hand, the positive potential is the healthy lifestyle displayed by Poland's young people. The charts below show how many of them do not have problems and do not engage in risk behaviours.



Another chapter in the report is devoted to the results of surveys showing the severity of risk and problem behaviours among Polish youth. These cover such areas as peer violence, use of alcohol, drugs, smoking cigarettes, pornography use, and sexual contact. It should also be kept in mind that the data presented are from schools located in small towns and are not representative. Therefore, conclusions cannot be generalized to the entire population of Polish adolescents aged 13 to 15.





As the above results show, some adolescents experience some problems or engage in risk behaviours in various areas. As for the use of psychoactive substances, alcohol is the most popular. In this area, there are no significant differences between girls and boys, as in the issue of early sexual behaviour. However, the differences are significant with respect to experiencing suicidal thoughts and self-harm thoughts, which are more characteristic of girls, and various types of violence and intentional use of pornography, which are more characteristic of boys.

An important place in the report is given to the results of statistical analyses showing that many of the risk behaviours discussed earlier are interrelated, which means that they occur simultaneously. For example, the use of one psychoactive substance greatly increases the risk that a young person will use others. Moreover, the results of the analyses show that the chance that he or she will commit violence or engage in early sexual contact increases, too. The results of the correlation analysis showed significant interrelationships between the above-mentioned risk behaviours of adolescents.

The advantage of the study is that it covered as many as 19 indicators of adolescent risk behaviours and problems from a wide range of areas. This is because the study concept was based on the integrated prevention model, which involves conducting a multidimensional and contextual diagnosis of youth risk behaviours and problems. This broad approach makes the survey data a good source for analysing the relationships between variables describing risk behaviours, with the exception of behaviours that are very rare in the study population. The Table below presents the results of analyses conducted on data from a Polish survey of a large group of adolescents. The purpose of the analysis was to check whether links exist between various risk behaviours and problems, and if so, what their direction and strength is.

Table Correlation matrix between youth risk behaviours – Poland

N = 13,960  Risk behaviours & problems - correlations		Psychoactive substances					Sexual behaviours			Violence and fighting				Depression		Children	
		Drinking alcohol (last 30 days)	Getting drunk (last 30 days)	Smoking cigarettes (several times a week and more)	Drug use (last 30 days)	Designer drug use (last 12 months)	Intentional use of pornography (last 30 days)	Initiation of genital contact	Initiation of sexual intercourse	Involvement in fighting (last 6 months)	Victim of physical violence in class (last 30 days)	Committing physical violence in class (last 30 days)	Cyberbullying victim (last 12 months)	Committing cyberbullying (last 12 months)	Depression scale	Suicidal thoughts (once or more in the last year)	Don't want to have children in the future
Psychoactive substances	Drinking alcohol	1.00	0.60	0.48	0.39	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.32	0.30	0.08	0.26	0.07	0.23	0.08	0.18	0.02
	Getting drunk	0.60	1.00	0.49	0.41	0.30	0.25	0.35	0.36	0.30	0.07	0.24	0.05	0.21	0.08	0.18	0.01
	Smoking cigarettes	0.48	0.49	1.00	0.39	0.30	0.18	0.32	0.32	0.26	0.05	0.19	0.08	0.18	0.13	0.20	0.02
	Drug use	0.39	0.41	0.39	1.00	0.42	0.22	0.31	0.35	0.27	0.06	0.21	0.06	0.18	0.05	0.15	0.02
	Designer drug use	0.26	0.30	0.30	0.42	1.00	0.18	0.22	0.30	0.25	0.10	0.18	0.09	0.18	0.06	0.13	0.03
Sexual behaviours	Intentional use of pornography	0.29	0.25	0.18	0.22	0.18	1.00	0.35	0.29	0.30	0.21	0.37	0.09	0.22	-0.05	0.06	-0.01
	Initiation of genital contacts	0.37	0.35	0.32	0.31	0.22	0.35	1.00	0.48	0.28	0.11	0.24	0.11	0.21	0.06	0.16	-0.01
	Initiation of sexual intercourse	0.32	0.36	0.32	0.35	0.30	0.29	0.48	1.00	0.31	0.10	0.20	0.07	0.18	0.04	0.16	-0.01
Violence and fighting	Involvement in fighting	0.30	0.30	0.26	0.27	0.25	0.30	0.28	0.31	1.00	0.18	0.35	0.09	0.24	-0.01	0.10	-0.01
	Victim of physical violence in class	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.10	0.21	0.11	0.10	0.18	1.00	0.46	0.27	0.18	0.25	0.19	0.00
	Committing physical violence in class	0.26	0.24	0.19	0.21	0.18	0.37	0.24	0.20	0.35	0.46	1.00	0.14	0.30	0.07	0.13	-0.04
	Cyberbullying victim	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.27	0.14	1.00	0.35	0.24	0.20	-0.07
Depression and suicidal thoughts	Committing cyberbullying	0.23	0.21	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.22	0.21	0.18	0.24	0.18	0.30	0.35	1.00	0.10	0.16	0.01
	Depression scale	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.05	0.06	-0.05	0.06	0.04	-0.01	0.25	0.07	0.24	0.10	1.00	0.43	0.04
Children	Suicidal thoughts	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.15	0.13	0.06	0.16	0.16	0.10	0.19	0.13	0.20	0.16	0.43	1.00	0.08
	Don't want to have children in the future	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	-0.04	-0.07	0.01	0.04	0.08	1.00

The results in the above Table confirm both many popular observations and those made by specialists dealing with the problems of adolescents. The analyses showed, among other things, a strong relationship between drinking alcohol and being drunk, between drug use and drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes, and a relationship between depression and suicidal thoughts.

The results of the analysis also showed many connections between adolescents' risk behaviours that are strong but less obvious. These include the connection between committing violence and being a victim of violence, and between sexual initiation and drug use or getting drunk. Non-obvious correlations demand explanation. In the first case, further analyses showed that the experience of violence is the experience of both committing violence and being a victim, and this is probably an effect of the school subculture, the unwritten norm of responding to violence with violence. The second example becomes understandable when we see the strong links, visible in the Table, between sexual behaviours and the use of various psychoactive substances, including drug use. Again, a more in-depth analysis showed a more general pattern related to psychoactive substance use, in which reaching for one increases the likelihood of reaching for others.

The colouring of the strength of the interrelationships between the variables in the Table makes it possible to see and name more general groups of youth problems. The results of subsequent analyses that led to the adoption of a more general categorization of adolescents' risk behaviours are described in detail in the report.

Subsequent analyses of the collected data were devoted to the protective factors, preventing youth from engaging in problem behaviours, and the risk factors that foster them.

It is known from many studies that a good relationship with parents is a strong protective factor. The analyses conducted concerned the intensity of risk behaviours of adolescents who identify both parents as life guides, compared to teenagers for whom neither mum nor dad is an authority. Their results clearly indicate that adolescents who identify both parents as important life guides are significantly less likely to report using psychoactive substances, experiencing suicidal thoughts, engaging in sexual contact or committing various types of violence.

It should also be noted here that adolescents were less likely to indicate their parents as guides if they were divorced. Fathers in particular lose authority in the eyes of the child. This is most evident in girls – 64% of female respondents from families without divorce indicate their father as a guide, while in families with divorce only 27% of girls give such a response.

Involvement with religion is also a very important protective factor, and it is to this issue that subsequent analyses are devoted. The results of these analyses showed that adolescents who declare that faith/religion is important in their lives undertake fewer risk behaviours related to early sexual behaviours, drug use, getting drunk, committing cyberbullying and experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Conclusions

The research results obtained in the YPP project enabled a broad diagnosis of the positive potential and problems of Polish youth. Although the study conducted in Poland was not representative, it confirmed the links between many risk behaviours and the fact that they have a number of risk factors in common. The data also showed the operation of a number of protective factors, with the dominant role of family and school and the supportive role of religion.

On the project-wide scale, the findings confirmed the usefulness of the Polish integrated prevention model in the national contexts of Lithuania and Malta, and in particular the usefulness of the *Seven Levers of Effective Prevention* strategy and prevention programmes based on it, like the Archipelago of Treasures® programme.

The report also describes strategic recommendations for solutions and long-term activities of a preventive nature. These include the importance of conducting systematic research on youth, implementing prevention activities with proven effectiveness, and greater involvement of parents in schools' efforts for supporting youth development.