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More than half of all young people in the EU feel lonely

Gütersloh (ots) -

Many young adults in the EU share the feeling that they are lonely. Around 57 per cent of young Europeans aged from 18 to 35 feel moderately or strongly lonely, according to a new Bertelsmann Stiftung study entitled "Loneliness of Young People Compared across Europe in 2024." The data for the EU-wide survey derive from the European opinion research tool eupinions.

While loneliness among young people has been an issue across the EU since the coronavirus pandemic, there are significant differences between the member states. Young people in France, for example, feel lonely very often: 40 per cent of young French people feel at least moderately lonely, and 23 per cent of them are extremely lonely. This means that almost two thirds of young people in France suffer from loneliness. These are the highest levels in the seven EU countries that permit comparison on account of the sample size.

Young adults in Germany are affected by loneliness slightly less often: 39 per cent of them say that they feel moderately lonely, and 12 per cent are extremely lonely. While moderate loneliness among young people in Germany is the lowest, young people in the Netherlands are least affected by extreme loneliness.

"Loneliness can reduce the feeling of belonging to the society and in this way become a social and political problem as well. We should for that reason tackle loneliness together as a society and not stigmatize those affected," Bertelsmann Stiftung youth expert Leander Berner says.

Lower education level amplifies loneliness

In making comparisons across countries, it is noticeable that loneliness is particularly strongly felt among people with a lower level of education. There are various reasons for this to be found in the academic literature: It is assumed on the one hand that people with a higher level of education generally find more options to deal with stress and are able to sustain more social relationships and maintain them better. And on the other, better educated people often have higher income and can as a result participate in social life to a greater extent.

"Reducing loneliness among young people essentially requires incorporating their perspectives into political consultation processes systematically and in a binding way. To the extent that we draw young people into designing and implementing initiatives, we generate solutions that truly meet their needs and help them to feel less isolated," Bertelsmann Stiftung youth expert Anja Langness recommends.

Those affected perceive extreme and long-term loneliness in particular as a big problem. The study points up various recommendations for action to counter this. Good data on the people affected, providing advice and ways of meeting, particularly for young people, a cross-country exchange of experiences, plus support for social and emotional skills can in this way make an effective contribution to reducing loneliness.

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