



WELLCULTURE[®]
INSTITUTE
by Ewa Stelmasiak

Wellbeing Leaders

Insights from a research project
conducted in collaboration
with the Wrocław University
of Economics and Business

About the study.

The study focused on the evaluation and validation of the **Wellbeing Leadership Competency Model** by **Ewa Stelmasiak**. The model encompasses a set of leadership competencies that foster wellbeing and were described and operationalized into specific research questions.

The leadership competencies were assessed in relation to organizational practices supporting employee wellbeing, such as having a dedicated strategy or budget, and adopting a participatory approach.

The study employed a mixed-methods design, comprising a quantitative survey (including open-ended questions, conducted from Oct. 2024 to Dec. 2024) among CEOs, Managing Directors, board members, and senior management, and a qualitative phase involving individual in-depth interviews with company CEOs (Jan. – June 2025).

The project was carried out as by **Ewa Stelmasiak** in collaboration with **Prof. Dorota Molek-Winiarska**, part of a research grant awarded by the Wrocław University of Economics and Business. Data analysis was supported by **Hanna Kinowska, PhD** (Warsaw School of Economics).

130
respondents
(CEOs, board members,
top management)

22
respondents
in IDI (at CEO level)

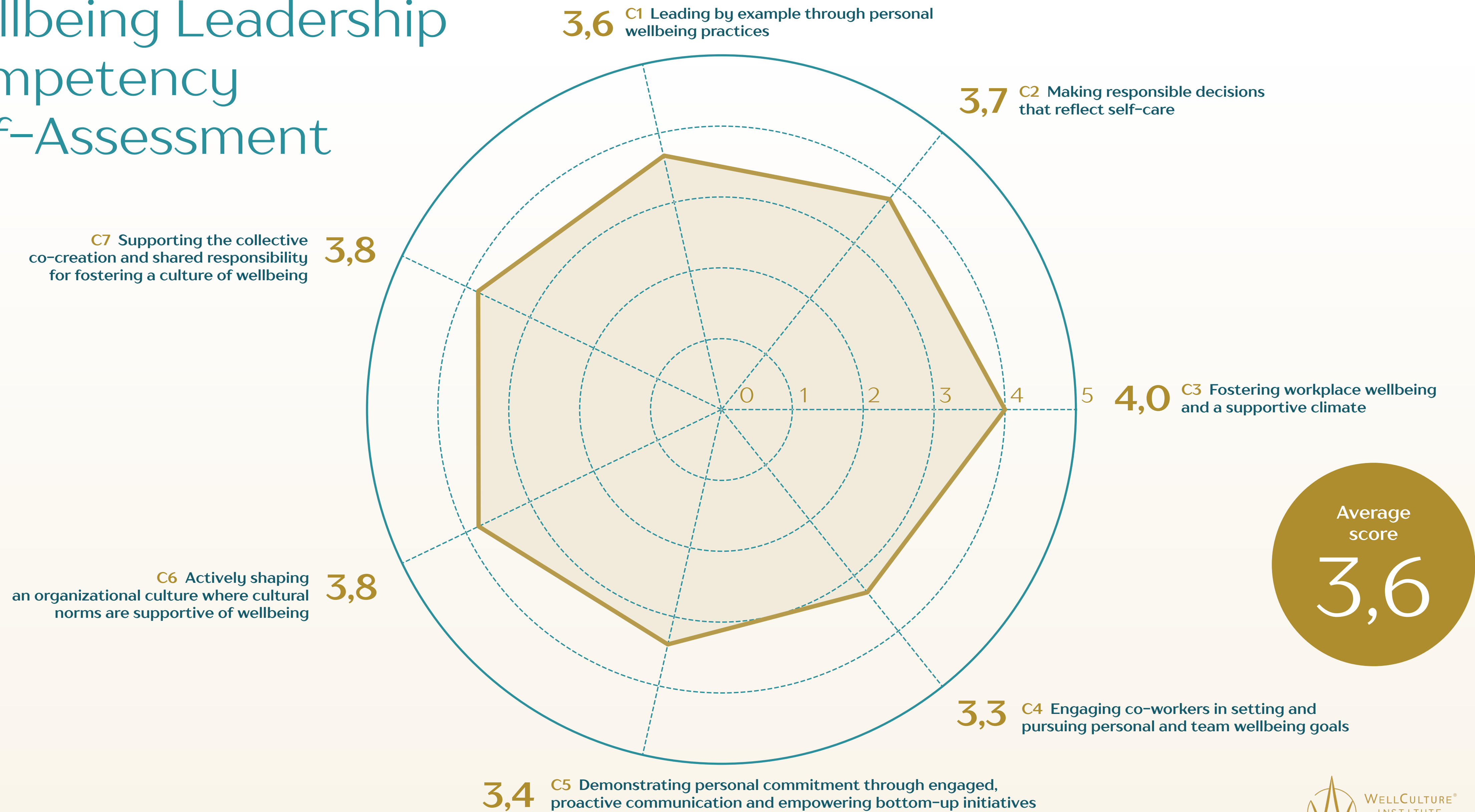
Wellbeing Leadership Competencies

The study confirms that the following competencies determine whether a leader is able to effectively build a culture of wellbeing:



In practice, these competencies distinguish leaders of companies that invest in wellbeing from the others.

Wellbeing Leadership Competency Self-Assessment



Abstract.

Leadership competencies in the area of wellbeing are universal and independent of age, gender, or tenure, and every leader – regardless of their strengths and weaknesses – can develop them. Strengthening efforts in active, participatory wellbeing management within a company promotes the development of leadership approaches that support employee wellbeing.

The analysis showed that only *Facilitating open, two-way communication and empowering bottom-up wellbeing initiatives* (C5) had a statistically significant impact on implementing wellbeing initiatives. Leaders who take responsibility for the wellbeing of their team and manage it in a participatory manner initiate the processes of introducing and consolidating wellbeing practices within the organization.

The highest-rated competency was *Fostering workplace well-being and a supportive climate* (C3), which reflects care for employee wellbeing and the building of a positive social climate. Even though *Engaging co-workers in setting and pursuing personal and team wellbeing goals* (C4) was rated the lowest in the study, it has the greatest influence on building a strategic approach and professionalizing wellbeing initiatives.

The link between strategic practices and *Supporting the collective co-creation and shared responsibility for fostering a culture of wellbeing* (C7) indicates that co-creating a wellbeing

culture and collective responsibility for its development require institutionalization. Without clear frameworks, wellbeing initiatives may remain fragmented, and leaders may lack a shared vision and tools.

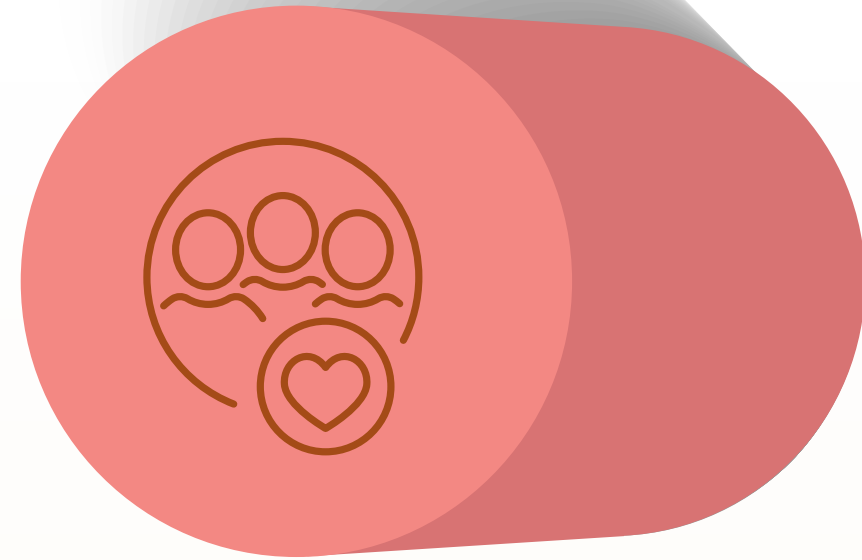
In the process of institutionalization, formal organizational elements are of key importance. Linking wellbeing to annual performance reviews elevates it to a managerial criterion and directs leaders' attention toward actively shaping wellbeing. Likewise, a dedicated wellbeing budget constitutes a central element of these efforts, correlating with strategic planning, operational efficiency, and a participatory culture.

A wellbeing culture should not be equated merely with webinars or shared sports activities. Its foundation lies in clearly defined values and the behaviors derived from them, as well as the systematic diagnosis of employee needs. Without this, leaders' personal wellbeing practices may be perceived as individual actions rather than organizational ones.

The study revealed that leaders in companies implementing wellbeing initiatives exhibit higher levels of competencies related to teamwork and organizational culture than leaders in organizations without such initiatives.

Wellbeing should be an integral part of work, and respondents rated its importance in their companies as high.

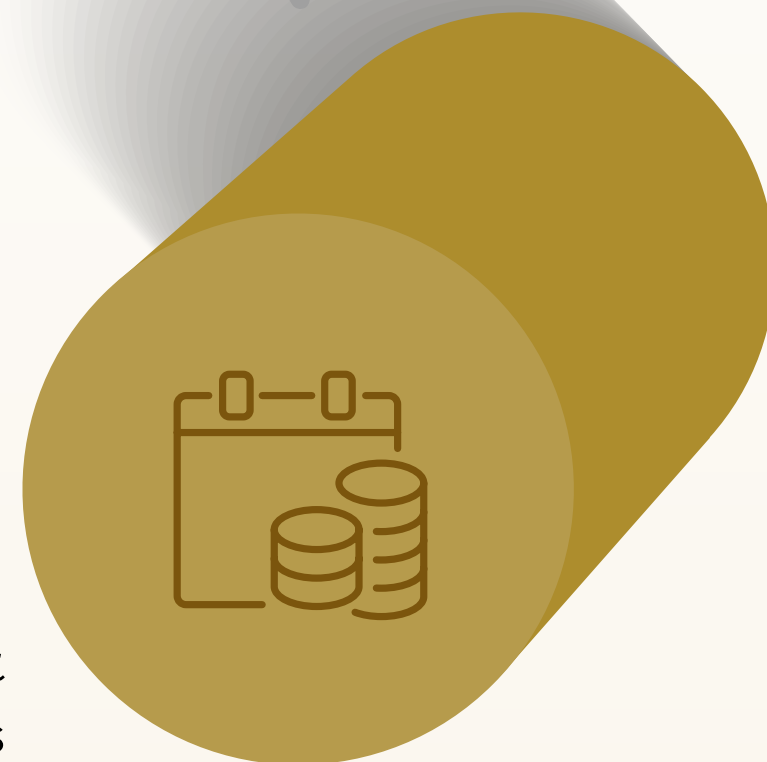
Five Pillars of a Wellbeing Culture in the Company



Dedicated budget and strategic approach.



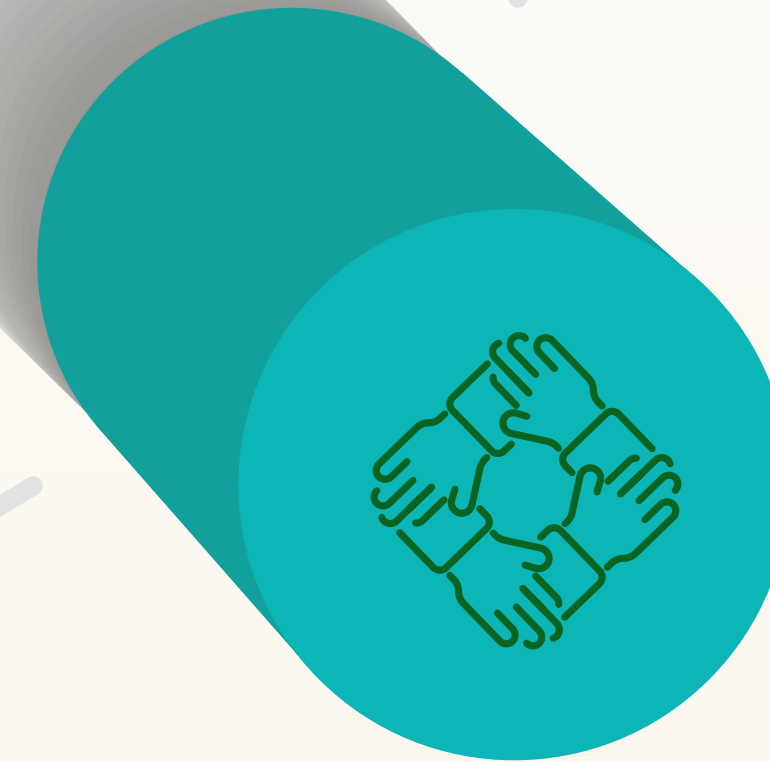
Leaders setting an example within an organizational culture that supports wellbeing.



Participatory management style and involving employees in decision-making.



Integrating wellbeing initiatives into leaders' annual performance reviews.



Responding to current needs and supporting employee initiatives, e.g. organizing a mushroom-picking trip or hobby clubs.

Conclusions and Implications for Leaders

- Building effective wellbeing in organizations requires competent leadership and a strategic approach – not a collection of benefits or one-off initiatives.
- Leaders need to strengthen managerial competencies that actively shape a culture of wellbeing across the organization.
- Wellbeing should be treated as a strategic lever – one that develops leadership capabilities, fosters a healthy organizational culture, and, in the long run, drives sustainable competitive advantage.

About me.

Ewa Stelmasiak

Pioneer of wellbeing leadership and culture in Poland, author of the Wellbeing Leadership Competency Model and this research report.

Founder of the WellCulture Institute (est. 2012) – an organization dedicated to the culture of wellbeing (formerly The Wellness Institute), whose mission is to promote knowledge about wellbeing leadership and culture, and to deliver educational initiatives in this field.

For over a decade, she has been supporting organizations in developing wellbeing strategies and building workplace cultures that empower leaders, employees, and business performance alike.

She collaborates with C-level executives across the CEE region, leading long-term consulting and training projects, workshops, and keynote sessions for companies such as Allegro, Veolia, PwC, Citi, Merck, Biogen, Motorola, Skanska, Deutsche Bank, Bain & Company, Orlen, Medcover, Nationale-Nederlanden, Warta, Eurocash, and many others.

She is the author of the bestselling book [Lider dobrostanu. Jak tworzyć wspierającą kulturę pracy w hybrydowym świecie](#) (*The Wellbeing Leader: How to Build a Supportive Work Culture in a Hybrid World*).

Ewa is an expert with UN Global Compact Poland, a jury member of the Dream Employer competition, and a member of several international professional organizations.

She is a regular speaker and moderator at conferences in Poland and abroad, including events organized by the European Commission, the Polish Presidency of the EU Council, and global forums such as the Business Insider Global Trends Festival, the International Happiness at Work Summit, and the Global Healthy Workplace Summit.

She graduated from Syracuse University and the University of Warsaw, and completed the Stern Leadership Academy at Stanford Graduate School of Business in 2023.

With over 25 years of experience in HR, communication, and wellbeing, she also serves as a guest lecturer at the Wrocław University of Economics and Business and at SWPS University, where a new program is inspired by her book.

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Book an inspiring
keynote or panel.



Grow leadership
competencies with us.



Build a competitive
advantage by investing
in a culture of wellbeing.

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Let's stay in touch!

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