



Well-being 2030

Well-being and Social Policy in the European Union

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The Well-being 2030 project

- 2 year research project, jointly financed by EPC and European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs)
 - Long term focus
 - Key aims:
 - to bring insights of research on well-being definition and measurement into policy debate over the long-term future of Social Europe;
 - to analyse Europeans' values and preferences in order to sketch a picture of a future society delivering a higher level of well-being for its citizens; and
 - to identify the strategic policy choices, reflecting Europeans' preferences and considering current challenges as well as available resources.
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The Well-being 2030 project

- The structure:

- 2 partners: EPC and DG Employment and Social Affairs.
- A steering group
- An Advisory group

- The approach:

- Mix between a conceptual and a consultative approach.
 - Large range of activities, including desk research, public events, workshops among experts, focus group interviews and publications.
 - Main focus on raising a political debate and policy, i.e. on the objective determinants of well-being which policy can impact on.
 - An EU angle.
 - To take trade-offs and constraints into consideration.
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Policy context

- Increasing international attention on measuring well-being and happiness.
 - Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz).
 - European Commission's 2009 Communication 'GDP and beyond: Measuring progress in a changing world'.
 - EU Member States' initiatives.
 - Beyond GDP:
 - GDP inadequate as a comprehensive measure of prosperity and well-being.
 - Need for indicators more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress.
 - Indicators need to relate to current global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, resource depletion, health and quality of life.
 - Increasing attempts to incorporate well-being and happiness into public policy e.g. OECD 'Better Policies for Better Lives'.
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But many limitations remain...

Due to the context:

- Policy priorities have changed due to the crisis.

Due to the current status of research:

- Still many different approaches and different concepts, e.g. life satisfaction, well-being, happiness, sustainable well-being.
- Lack of consistent data over time.
- Comparison issue between surveys.
- Country aggregation/averages not helpful.
- Different focus, e.g. social vs. environmental.
- Interlinkages between determinants of well-being.
- Impact of policy on determinants of well-being.

Due to the European structure:

- Significant influence of cultural factors → can policy be applied at EU level?
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But many limitations remain...

- Large variations in EU citizens' preferences, as regards the role of the state or of the EU.
 - Rooted in historical, institutional or political traditions.
 - High level of skepticism about a greater EU role, especially in countries with highly developed social systems and those with a generally critical attitude to the EU.

 - The EU's social dilemma:
 - On the one hand :
 - Few EU competences in social policy, mainly coordination role through the Open Method of Coordination.
 - Austerity programmes leading to less social.
 - Widespread perception of social policy as a national policy area.
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But many limitations remain...

➤ On the other hand :

- Recognition of EU's responsibility to improve Europeans' well-being enshrined in EU Treaties.

"The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples"

- Social issues are given more prominence in the European political agenda, e.g in the Europe 2020 strategy.

What can be done ?

- What does our work tells us?

Eurobarometer research

- Europeans' well-being depends on two dimensions, i.e. individual determinants (individual well-being) and the quality of society they live in (societal well-being).
 - Individual determinants in line with the WB research: health status, income, education, employment status and interlinkages between determinants.
 - High awareness of the challenges/constraints.
 - Citizens can make choices with resource constraints even if they don't like it.
 - Not willing to compromise on some societal values – social cohesion, equality of opportunity through equal access to and affordability of public services, solidarity.
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What can be done ?

- What implications for policy-making ?
 - Involving citizens in policy choices.
 - Some common values underpinning the European Social Model which needs to be protected.
 - The need for reform and for taking economic changes into account.
 - Rethinking social policy.

 - What role for the EU ?
 - A coherent vision on 'Social Europe'
 - A Europeanisation of strategic policy areas
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Thank you for your attention !

The Well-being 2030 project:

http://www.epc.eu/prog_forum.php?forum_id=8&prog_id=2

Qualitative survey about well-being:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/quali_en.htm
