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The Malta Foundation
for the Wellbeing of Society

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A nation's thermometer goes beyond GDP metrics

One-stop website for Wellbeing INDEX launched today

Researchers and stakeholders involved in wellbeing projects are being urged to come forward and form part of Malta's first wellbeing index initiative that will serve as the go-to resource for policymakers.

One year after the launch of the Wellbeing INDEX – Indicators Networking Data Exploration eXchange – the team behind this project also rolled out a one-stop website where all the wellbeing metrics compiled so far can be accessed.

The latest updates on the INDEX a strategic initiative by the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and the University of Malta, were presented in Parliament today to mark World Human Rights Day.

MFWS chair Marie Louise Coleiro Preca stressed that the aim of this strategic project was to pave the way for regular and robust national statistics that went beyond simply pegging wellbeing to a country's GDP.

"The research into the wellbeing of society's different segments is intended to guide policy. Now more than ever, there has to be a shift where wellbeing becomes the overarching aim of various policy efforts as the world moves towards recovering from COVID-19 and addressing climate change through sustainable development," she said.

Lead researcher and economist Marie Briguglio said since the launch, the feedback from academics and stakeholders alike had been overwhelming and the general sentiment was that such a project could not have come soon enough.

The INDEX project, which is intended to serve as a repository of information to guide policymakers and stakeholders in measuring the island's wellbeing, will equip the island to better deal with shocks in the future.

Dr Briguglio said: "The recognition that a nation's thermometer goes beyond GDP metrics is growing so Malta is entering this at the right time. Availability of a wider set of metrics will hold policy accountable to a multiplicity of goals, not just GDP."

During today's event, Dr Carl Camilleri, who forms part of the research team, presented the salient findings from a co-authored report focusing on internationally comparable metrics of social progress to measure wellbeing in Malta. Dr Camilleri provided a brief description of each indicator, an assessment of Malta's performance, as well as the ranking over time and in relation to other countries.

Today also served as a showcase for the website of the wellbeing index — wellbeingindex.mt — which is intended to serve as a one-stop shop for data, research and knowledge about the state of Malta's wellbeing.

Dr Joel Azzopardi explained how within one year of the project's launch, the portal already contained two interactive dashboards: one utilising subjective wellbeing data, and one summarising objective indicators comparing Malta with other countries.

The portal also contains the space where users can register an organisation as an interested stakeholder in the project; register their interest as researchers; or link any relevant scholarly publication to the website. The portal also directly links to the University of Malta's online library catalogue for publications related to wellbeing.

Dr Briguglio said the next steps would lead to the creation of a network of researchers and stakeholders. She invited them to register their interest in the project and share links to their work on the portal.

"I believe there's a groundswell of interest in this and I feel it chimes in with what people want... there is a growing desire to live a good life beyond income."

ENDS