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The Malta Foundation  
for the Wellbeing of Society

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## **Wellbeing INDEX Project exposes low satisfaction with use of free time**

People in Malta may have a higher level of satisfaction with jobs, finances and relationships than their European counterparts, but are then less satisfied with their use of time and leisure, according to the initial findings from the first wellbeing project.

This INDEX – Indicators Networking Data Extrapolation eXchange – will serve as a repository of information to guide policymakers and stakeholders in measuring the island’s wellbeing, and is a strategic initiative by the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, together with the University of Malta.

Lead researcher Marie Briguglio said the data emerging so far was not surprising, especially when considering that Maltese tended to work longer hours than their European neighbours.

“The higher the education, the higher the income, the lower the satisfaction with recreation time in Malta. Those most satisfied with their time use are the elderly. However, we find loneliness is higher among this category,” she said.

Dr Briguglio, who is working together with economists Daniel Gravino and Melchior Vella, said this first study employed a dataset collected in 2018 by Malta’s National Statistics Office as part of the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions.

These first outcomes were presented in Parliament today during an event opened by Speaker Anglu Farrugia, and addressed by European Commission vice president Dubravka Šuica, MFWS chair Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, and University rector Alfred Vella.

Ms Coleiro Preca said since its launch in December, the Malta Wellbeing Index Project has received wide support, including from the European Commission and the World Bank, while advisors from the London School of Economics and the National Statistics Office have come on board.

Mr Farrugia welcomed this research and said the decisions parliamentarians took had to be based on scientific research and “doing otherwise would be reckless”.

The review found life satisfaction in Malta stood at 7.5 out of 10, higher than the EU average of 7.3 for the same period. In contrast, average satisfaction with time use stood at 6.6 out of 10, compared to an EU average of 6.8.

Meanwhile, in terms of emotional wellbeing, people in Malta, like their European counterparts, reported happiness as the more frequently felt emotion.

The study confirms that those who are materially deprived, in poor health and separated or divorced report lower levels of wellbeing than others. Single-parent households also report lower average wellbeing. On the other hand, employed people report higher life satisfaction than those in retirement, unemployed or unable to work due to disability.

Early findings also indicate that people who live in areas with pollution are more likely to report experiencing negative emotions. The same holds true for those living in areas with crime. Meanwhile, people living in Gozo experienced negative emotions less often.

Dr Briguglio said: “These findings should start to shine a light on the poor satisfaction with availability and use of leisure time; the materially deprived, those in poor health, single parents, unemployed, disabled, and those living in polluted areas; as well as loneliness, especially among the elderly.”

This three-year study will eventually consolidate all the indicators of wellbeing and create a model based on the data, to identify the extent to which each outcome contributes to enhance or suppress wellbeing in Malta.

**ENDS**