

Beyond Measurement – Insights for Wellbeing Policy in Malta

The Malta Wellbeing INDEX Project

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Executive Summary

The Malta Wellbeing INDEX project (www.wellbeingindex.mt) is a collaborative effort between the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society (MFWS) and the University of Malta (UM). The project is intended to serve as a repository of information and to pave the way for the establishment of a wellbeing framework for the Maltese islands. This report constitutes one of the research deliverables of the project and is intended to provide a structured review of the grey and scholarly literature on the manner in which various countries are tackling the matter of policy to enhance wellbeing, culminating in recommendations for policy makers with a view to seeding a national discussion.

Internationally, the last two decades have seen a burgeoning literature on the measurement of wellbeing, complemented by increased efforts in the field among supranational institutions and various countries to publish metrics of wellbeing. Efforts in policy-making have now started to move beyond measurement: various countries have committed to long-term economic visions that focus on wellbeing and in some, wellbeing policy frameworks have already been developed. Commensurately, institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the European Union (EU) among others have made headway in promoting policy visions and toolkits for progress on wellbeing.

This report starts by examining the issues related to the measurement of wellbeing. It proceeds by offering a review of the main processes involved in policy making for wellbeing. Subsequently, it presents a review of key efforts at the international level as well as the experiences of some countries (Germany, New Zealand, Bhutan, Iceland, Canada, Ireland and Ecuador), in their efforts to measure wellbeing and to integrate wellbeing metrics more systematically in policy-making. The report then turns to a review of the Maltese context, where research and initiatives on this theme have also evolved in recent years. It concludes

with a synthesis of the main findings, on the basis of which a number of policy recommendations are drawn up.

In summary, these recommendations are:

- To consult citizens and experts in establishing a wellbeing measurement framework
- To consistently generate subjective and objective wellbeing user-friendly data that may be disaggregated beyond averages and that may be studied in longitudinal form
- To nominate a wellbeing watch-dog/key ambassador to champion policy for wellbeing
- To build capacity and offer training opportunities for all key players involved
- To integrate wellbeing into core policy visions and forthcoming legislation
- To subject legislation and policy to wellbeing impact assessments
- To subject annual budgets and funding programmes to a wellbeing impact assessment
- To consider the role of education for wellbeing
- To communicate wellbeing information and data in a compelling and timely manner
- To strengthen collaborations across data and research entities

