

BRAINPOoL Action Plan

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Introduction

BRAINPOoL is a collaborative project funded through the European Union's Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration, and seeks to help accelerate the use of 'Beyond GDP' indicators in policy-making. The project started in October 2011 and will be finalised by the End of March 2014. Being a knowledge brokerage project, the primary aim of the project is to helping the producers and promoters of Beyond GDP indicators and the potential users of these indicators come together, understand one another, and identify fruitful interactions.

The first stage of the project (Work Package 1) explored the arena through the perspective of indicator producers and promoters – cataloguing the various initiatives, understanding the producers' intentions, and learning about the indicators' successes or otherwise in achieving some form of impact in policy, the media and elsewhere.

In the second stage of the project (Work Package 2) we took a look from the perspective of the potential users of Beyond GDP indicators – working to understand several selected national and supranational organisational contexts, and identifying the barriers to and opportunities for demand for Beyond GDP indicators.

In the third stage (Work Package 3) we took a closer look at how different alternative indicators are being used within seven specific organisations and contexts at different geographical levels, from the local to the supranational, bringing producers and potential users together. We worked with the OECD, the Welsh Government, the City of Rotterdam (The Netherlands), the City of Chrudim (Czech Republic), the British Business Bank (United Kingdom), the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU, Germany), and the Midi-Pyrénées region of France. In each of these case studies, we sought to identify a problem that Beyond GDP indicators might help solve, and explore the steps and barriers to be overcome towards them playing such a role.

The fourth stage (Work Package 4) comprised of knowledge brokerage activities which brought together a diverse group of different stakeholders identified as being key to accelerating the use of alternative indicators. A two day workshop was held to verify the drivers and barriers identified in previous BRAINPOoL work, and to develop a joint 'vision report' on the application of Beyond GDP indicators. BRAINPOoL's vision document intends to inform those involved in the production or use of (alternative) indicators on challenges that must be met, in the short or long term, in order to enhance the use of beyond GDP indicators in policy making and governance.

This current document is the second output of BRAINPOoL's fourth Work Package, an action plan identifying the steps and actions needed to help overcome barriers to the use of indicators that can balance the use of GDP in policy-making. With this 'Action Plan' or 'Roadmap' the BRAINPOoL project aims to provide an outline of the best opportunities for future implementation of Beyond GDP indicators in integrated policy processes, building on BRAINPOoL's *Vision report on the application of Beyond GDP indicators*.¹ The vision report expresses a shared view on the most important challenges to the application of 'Beyond GDP' indicators in regional, national as well as international policy making and governance, and provides some direction on possible solutions to overcome barriers and to tackle challenges. BRAINPOoL's action plan now aims to provide more practical recommendations, and where possible, tries to identify which actors should be involved in follow-up actions.

¹ BRAINPOoL Deliverable 4.1, *Vision report on the application of Beyond GDP indicators*, 17 March 2014.

During the course of the BRAINPOoL project several actions targeted at improving Beyond GDP indicators and increasing their applicability in policy processes have already started at European level. For example, in November 2011, the Sponsorship Group on “Measuring Progress, Well-being and Sustainable Development” proposed a set of concrete actions and development work to be undertaken by the European Statistical System (i.e. Eurostat together with the National Statistical Institutes of EU Member States). Accordingly in 2013 the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development took this work forward and proposed a harmonised conceptual framework to measuring sustainable development. Furthermore, in 2013, the European Commission published a Staff Working Document on “Progress on ‘GDP and beyond’ actions”.

Annex 1 to this document summarises these, and some other, international ‘GDP and Beyond actions’ and provides an overview of their findings on future (research) needs and proposed actions or ways forward. Where applicable, BRAINPOoL’s Action Plan makes reference to these recently proposed actions or ways forward; as it happens that some of these proposed actions offer a solution to some of the barriers and challenges that BRAINPOoL’s research pointed out.

A first draft of the current action plan has been discussed during a workshop on the 25th March 2014, one day after BRAINPOoL’s final conference. At the conference, the key findings and recommendations of BRAINPOoL were presented, with a focus on how to achieve both a Beyond GDP narrative, and the integrated, innovative policy-making that is needed for Beyond GDP indicators to influence policy. Recommendations stemming from the final conference’s panel discussion and results of the workshop discussions on ‘next steps’ and ‘making it happen’ are integrated in the current final version of BRAINPOoL’s Action Plan.

Intended Audience

BRAINPOoL’s Action Plan aims to inform different target groups. The Action Plan builds on the project’s findings on barriers to the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy making, and recommendations to overcoming them. The recommendations, or ways to overcome challenges and barriers to the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy, that are listed in the numbered sections of this document are primarily addressed to a range of actors: political parties, officials, NGOs, the OECD and other international agencies, official statisticians and unofficial statisticians.

We hope that actors in the international statistical community that will progress in the short-term with ‘GDP and Beyond work’ can make good use of actions reported in this BRAINPOoL deliverable. We think of: the e-Frame project in their efforts to finalise its *handbook for policy use of indicators* and its *Roadmap for future research needs*; The European Statistical System with its Common reflection on ‘GDP and Beyond’; the High-level Expert Group (“Stiglitz 2”); and actors involved in the post 2015 Development Agenda (Sustainable Development Goals).

Most of the actions reported in this document can be started by national or regional policy making bodies that wish to use Beyond GDP indicators for their own policy purposes. Some of these actions can be started by individual actors, building on recent proposals, for example on a harmonised conceptual framework to measuring sustainable development, that are stemming from internationally coordinated actions.

This Action Plan also aims to be an informative document to a wider audience. The success of well-being and progress initiatives at local, national, and regional level depends on both political leadership and public consultation processes, managed from both a bottom up and a top down perspective. Throughout this Action Plan there are several references to a need to involve civil society in democratic processes. Especially for actors that might not be fully informed on ‘GDP and Beyond actions’, this Action Plan provides a short but informative summary of recent internationally coordinated actions (Annex 1).

Summary of BRAINPOoL findings

A need for conceptual clarification

One of BRAINPOoL’s major research findings on barriers to the use of alternative indicators in policy making is that there exists confusion about the ‘Beyond GDP’ concept itself. Confusion and divergent interpretations of what exactly is meant by ‘Beyond GDP’ arise from the large number of institutions and actors now working on alternative indicators. Institutionalisation of alternative indicators, and policies associated with them, will be partly dependent on the existence of common and recognised Beyond GDP definitions and labels. Conceptual clarification and convergence are therefore crucial requirements to enhance the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy making.

Confusion about the Beyond GDP concept is caused by the inherent (but necessary) complexity that emerges from various attempts to define progress as a multi-dimensional concept that includes the wealth of phenomena that lies outside the measurement of economic growth. The fact that Beyond GDP indicators synthesise different phenomena, sometimes even in a single composite index, makes them complex by nature. Competing concepts of quality of life, living standards, human development and sustainable development contribute to increased confusion, while many terms, such as well-being, sustainability, quality of life, progress of society or sustainable development are used to mean different things by different actors.

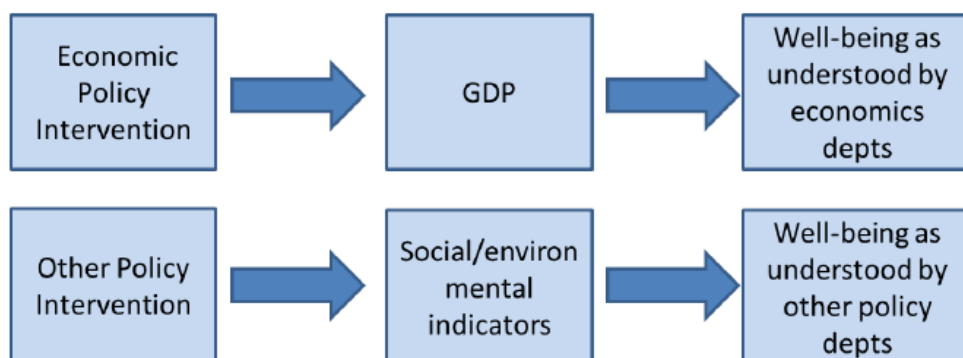
A need for more integrated and forward looking policies

For Beyond GDP indicators to be applied in policy making, an integrated policy process is needed rather than parallel policy interventions that are initiated by different policy departments. Some statisticians that were interviewed during the BRAINPOoL project simply identified ‘Beyond GDP’ with social and environmental indicators. They then pointed out that these indicators are already used in social and environmental policy, and that therefore asking what it would take for these indicators to be used in policy making is pointless. It became necessary to refine the question to what it would take for the indicators to be used in *economic* policy making.

The BRAINPOoL project therefore defined beyond GDP indicators as:

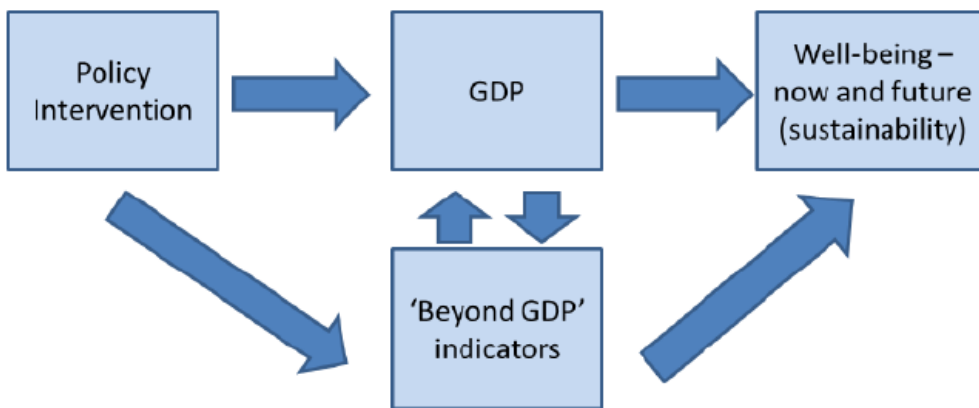
“those indicators and indicator sets that have been proposed as necessary and central to the measurement of societal progress in a broad sense, other than those indicators, such as GDP or the unemployment rate, that are already playing this role.”

Figure 1: Policy interventions in parallel processes



Source: BRAINPOoL project (new economics foundation)

Figure 2: Beyond GDP indicators in an integrated policy framework



Source: BRAINPOoL project (new economics foundation)

In such a more integrated policy framework, Beyond GDP indicators can be used at two points: as ultimate outcome measures, i.e. measures of human well-being or sustainability, now and in the future (the right hand box); and as measures of the drivers of these outcomes (the lower central box). This corresponds to the double role that GDP currently plays: as a proxy for welfare, and as a measure of output.

Barriers to the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy making

Next to the findings on a need for conceptual clarification and a need to apply Beyond GDP indicators in more integrated policy, BRAINPOoL’s research activities showed that there are seven main barriers to the use of alternative indicators in policy making. These barriers can be divided into three groups.

Political barriers

1. **Lack of democratic legitimacy.** Alternative indicators being put forward have not been agreed democratically. Experts have had a much stronger influence on alternative indicator proposals than the general public. A more democratic legitimacy is especially relevant in Beyond GDP indicators’ role as measures of ultimate policy outcomes. The general public must be able to recognise itself in overarching policy goals. GDP by contrast, or so it is argued, has legitimacy because it is widely accepted as proxy measure of welfare.
2. **Lack of an appealing narrative.** The lack of legitimacy is in part because ‘Beyond GDP’ indicators are not underpinned by a theoretical foundation (like neoclassical economic theory and the System of National Accounts for GDP) or a coherent, politically compelling narrative that shows how *broad societal progress* ‘works’.
3. **Lack of a clear political imperative for change.** This lack of legitimacy and an appealing narrative, together with the pressures created by the economic crisis, mean that there is no strong societal demand that politicians prioritise the outcomes that Beyond GDP indicators measure. As a result there is no strong demand from politicians for use of Beyond GDP indicators.

Indicator barriers

- 4. Technical questions with indicators.** Throughout BRAINPOoL's research we found that there are divergent and contrasting nature of concepts which underlie different Beyond GDP indicators. There is no agreement about how best to measure different aspects of 'Beyond GDP' (such as sustainability or well-being). Disagreement on methodological and technical aspects of indicators is acting as a barrier to use.

Process and structural barriers

- 5. No clear process for integrated and innovative (economic) policy making.** The inherent multi-dimensionality of Beyond GDP poses two key challenges to policy making. Firstly, an integrated approach to economic analysis must deal with complexity and uncertainty and make use of a wider range of methodological approaches: this creates analytical challenges and there has as yet been relatively little development of models linking policy with overall well-being. Second, a more integrated approach to policy requires working across departments and disciplinary boundaries with a range of different perspectives at the table. This appears to create organisational challenges.
- 6. Institutional resistance to change.** During BRAINPOoL's research activities we came across resistance to abandoning traditional objectives and to support new ways of working. This may reflect a genuine belief in prioritising growth and a belief that the existing system is sufficiently capable of dealing with externalities and addressing societal challenges.
- 7. A failure to connect alternative indicators to policy.** We also came across examples of indicator development that was not taking into account the requirements of the audiences at whom they are targeted – as if the creation of the indicator was in itself enough for it to be used. One of the crucial findings of BRAINPOoL is that indicators are unlikely to be used if they have been developed in isolation from the policy process.

BRAINPOoL's recommendations

Based on the findings on main barriers to the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy, BRAINPOoL makes a number of recommendations. These loosely map onto the seven barriers. The recommendations are addressed to a range of actors: political parties, officials, NGOs, the OECD and other international agencies, official statisticians and unofficial statisticians. Different recommendations are relevant to different actors (the actors are indicated in brackets).

- 1. Develop processes to engage citizens and establish the democratic legitimacy of Beyond GDP indicators**
(political parties, European Parliament, officials, NGOs)

- 2. Develop a Beyond GDP narrative, and demonstrate the difference use of Beyond GDP indicators will make to policies and outcomes**
(political parties, European Parliament, UN, OECD, NGOs)

- 3. Continue work on the technical and theoretical foundations of alternative indicators, with a particular focus on standard setting and harmonisation, paying attention to the need for engagement by politicians as well as experts**
(academics, official statisticians, UN, OECD, international agencies)

- 4. Improve processes for integrated and innovative policy making**
(political parties, European Commission, officials)

- 5. Develop strategies for overcoming resistance**
(political parties, NGOs, think tanks)

- 6. Strengthen the 'indicator entrepreneur' role**
(official and unofficial statisticians)

A Roadmap towards application of Beyond GDP indicators in policy

1. Developing processes to engage citizens and establish democratic legitimacy

Setting commonly agreed policy goals that can be measured with Beyond GDP indicators

Beyond GDP concepts need to be rooted in processes, goals and targets that have legitimacy. A prerequisite for Beyond GDP indicators to be used in policy making is to have commonly agreed goals that are supported by policy, and that can be objectively measured. If there is no agreement on common goals, Beyond GDP indicators are simply lacking a context to using them in political decision making processes.

A crucial point is thus to find out what the general public cares about and to translate it into a common and easily understandable concept with targets and goals. Accordingly, indicator initiatives tend to be effective when they allow the production of 'simple' and 'attractive' messages that links to concepts the general public cares about.

Developing democratic processes to establish legitimacy of Beyond GDP indicators

A democratic process with wide representative and public engagement on the definition and on the measurement of ultimate goals (end indicators), including subjectively measured ends, will help to raise legitimacy and public awareness of (harmonised) Beyond GDP concepts.

Pure expert involvement should be avoided in the decision making process on how to define and measure ultimate goals of more integrated policy. The complexity and multi-dimensionality of Beyond GDP in fact makes deliberation necessary, based on exchanging knowledge and experiences between various stakeholders and partners. Only a common understanding of what well-being or sustainability as ultimate goals of policy should comprise, can be the basis to build a consistent indicator set to measure progress towards such overall policy goals.²

Such deliberative processes probably have highest potential for success on the local level, as democratic engagement might be easier to organise at smaller scales, but is important at all scales, including the national and European level.

Well-being debate shouldn't be left to experts

As well-being has a strong personal connotation, the debate should not be left to experts. Communities should be encouraged to discuss, agree and advocate for own Beyond GDP policies.

² For example, the Austrian initiative *Growth in Transition* offers such a platform, so-called "wisdom councils" to deliberate on policy goals and measurement instruments, where various stakeholders come together for a dialogue on questions of well-being like: "What kind of prosperity do we want?"; "How do we wish to live and work in the future?" and "How do we wish to conduct economic activity in the future?"

Another example on stakeholder inclusion is the Italian BES Initiative. See Annex 2 for more details on both initiatives.

2. Developing a legitimising Beyond GDP narrative

Towards a Beyond GDP narrative

To be successful as a public communication tool, Beyond GDP indicators must connect with things that have real impact on people's lives – dramatising a real problem and pointing the way towards a solution. What really matters for policy is the message that Beyond GDP indicators bring forward, and what policy actions can be taken based on this message. This also depends on the commonly agreed goals.

Such messages must go beyond the division between economic, environmental and social, instead articulating a new, more holistic vision of progress which resonates with the public. For example, well-being can be expressed as quality of life and linked to politically powerful concepts such as good jobs; sustainability can be expressed in terms of resource limitations, security and future quality of life. Ultimately, this narrative should be underpinned by a theoretical foundation which is perceived by the public to be at least equally sound as the neoclassical economic theory that underpins GDP.

How to build a narrative?

The need for a Beyond GDP narrative and ways how to build it have been much discussed during BRAINPOoL's final conference. It was proposed to develop a short 'core narrative' (maximum one page), and then to adapt the narrative to different target groups. It is recognised that different messages and language would be required for different audiences, but that these should be based on the same fundamentals.

Another important aspect that we came across during conference discussions is that the narrative must communicate a positive message. The word 'Beyond GDP' hides in itself a negative position to GDP, while it is recognised that GDP as such is a useful measure for economic production. It is important that a narrative brings forward a positive message that reflects things that are important, rather than communicating 'how bad' GDP is as proxy measure for welfare. Messages that can be perceived as 'anti-GDP' or 'anti-markets' should be avoided. In this context it was also stressed that the economic and financial crisis could best not be used as core narrative. The crisis can be used as a backdrop, and used in argumentation to explain a need for longevity. Instead, positive messages could reflect on the importance of, for example, Community, Fairness, Collective as well as individual wealth, quality of life, sustainability.

On the other hand it is acknowledged that some Beyond GDP topics are somewhat harder to explain in positive terms. In the domain of environmental sustainability, planetary boundaries and tipping points cannot be examples. Furthermore, we cannot ignore that due to the financial and economic crisis, financial deficits and European debt targets, discussions in Europe will remain a strong focus on macro-economic policy. The crisis thus really is a backdrop against which a Beyond GDP narrative must be built.

During conference discussions on how to build a narrative the question was posed who can build a 'beyond GDP narrative'. It was stressed that Prime Ministers' offices are the only actors that can build and promote such a narrative. However, it is acknowledged that society should be involved to achieve consensus. For the narrative to win legitimacy, more actors than only members of parliament or heads of state should be involved. The voice of the general public should be heard in building a narrative.

A narrative on its own is not enough

A narrative on its own will work. In essence a narrative is helpful to explain to a wide public why Beyond GDP indicators are helpful to inform on how society is progressing against grand challenges. In accordance, actions should be started with such a narrative in mind. To make this happen the narrative must be shared with a community. Moreover, indicators can best be connected to a policy strategy – a narrative can be helpful to explain the importance of the policy issues that such a strategy addresses. Beyond GDP indicators, in turn, should then function to measure progress towards policy goals.

Linking Beyond GDP indicators, where possible, to policy targets

One of the findings of the BRAINPOoL project is that indicators are unlikely to be used if they have been developed in isolation from the policy process and agenda or allowed to drift apart from that process and agenda. Therefore it is important to demonstrate how the use of Beyond GDP indicators will lead to different policy outcomes compared to current practices.

This finding is confirmed by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force (2013). The Task Force stresses that in order to enhance the usefulness of proposed indicators they should, where possible, be linked to policy targets:

“Traditionally, measurement initiatives and work on policy, including the formulation of policy goals, are seen as rather different matters. The Task Force, however, argues that the so-called conceptual and policy-oriented approaches can be narrowly intertwined, and that it is fruitful for measurement and policy initiatives to be in close contact with each other.”³

Linking statistical publications on ‘Beyond GDP’ to regular GDP publications

At one of BRAINPOoL’s knowledge brokerage workshops it was stressed that statistical bureaus do not publish indicators that are related to a political agenda, however statistical publications will have more impact if they would make such a connection. Therefore it was proposed to link statistical publications on ‘Beyond GDP’ topics to actual GDP publications. Statistical bureaus can then provide a comparison analysis of the various indicators in their statistical publications, in this way helping to build a GDP and beyond narrative.

³ Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development (2013). *Framework and suggested indicators to measure sustainable development, 27 May 2013, paragraph 363*

Ensure impartiality of Beyond GDP indicators

Finally, when applied in the policy process, the message that Beyond GDP indicators bring forward should be credible, i.e. not be easy to manipulate. BRAINPOoL found that a challenge here is that some alternative indicator producers work within a framework of simply providing 'neutral' information, while others are clearly connected to particular agendas. Being neutral is generally regarded as the best route to achieving legitimacy.

Yet, the conceptual framework as is proposed by the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force, given its selection criteria applied, can play an essential role in terms of impartiality. The Task Force stresses that using internationally accepted methodologies, standards and selection criteria limits the opportunities for agencies to unduly influence the indicator selection and interpretation. Using a statistical framework rather than a policy-based framework can also help manage perceptions if the government of the day, and thus policy initiatives, change.⁴

Transparent communication on progress towards policy targets

It is truly important to be open and transparent on Beyond GDP indicators in relation to policy options and actions. It is helpful to have pressure of public opinion on politicians for transparency, knowledge and social responsibility. Brainstorming, discussing, analysing and even criticism can be considered "effective tools" to improve and promote the application of Beyond GDP indicators.

To make sure that Beyond GDP concepts get translated into goals and targets that have legitimacy BRAINPOoL proposes that, at the beginning of their mandate, or when an agreement is made on political objectives and goals (for instance when a new overarching policy strategy such as the EU2020-Strategy is adopted), the EU, national government, or regional governing bodies publishes, where relevant and possible, an indicator set that can objectively inform about progress towards policy targets. Such indicator sets provide a base on which the responsible politicians can be judged on afterwards.

Identify and develop easily communicable headline indicators at different scales

To make easy and transparent communication possible it would be required to identify areas where local specificities should be addressed, and to agree on the most relevant and useful Beyond GDP (headline) indicators at different scales (EU, member states, regional and local). In order to make benchmarking between countries and regions possible, international harmonisation is required to a certain extent. The paragraph "Agreement on a core set of 'headline' Beyond GDP indicators" in section number 3 provides more detail on this point.

⁴ Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Progress (2013). *Framework and suggested indicators to measure sustainable development*, 27 May 2013.

3. Achieving clarity on conceptual, methodological and theoretical aspects of Beyond GDP indicators

Towards a harmonised conceptual framework

In order to have indicators that are as visible as GDP, there is a need for harmonised indicators, agreed at international level. In BRAINPOoL's Vision report on application of Beyond GDP indicators it is explained that different, sometimes perhaps even competing, concepts of 'Beyond GDP' cause confusion that is acting as a barrier to use alternative indicators. Harmonisation of concepts, a core indicator set and internationally agreed standards for data collection are considered to be helpful to overcome confusion and to reduce possibilities of divergent interpretation of indicators' meaning and message.

This research finding is in line with the Sponsorship Group (2011) recommendation to ensure harmonisation of data within Europe (and if possible with other geographical entities). It is stressed that for European comparison purposes, internationally harmonised core instruments are important. These should be developed in good cooperation with international partners such as OECD and UNECE.

Accordingly, the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Taskforce on Measuring Sustainable Development (2013) has proposed a harmonised conceptual framework to measuring sustainable development. This framework is considered to be a good starting point for an internationally agreed and harmonised indicator framework, not only for the EU but also beyond.⁵

Harmonisation but no one-size-fits-all indicator set

In the BRAINPOoL project we learned that the ability to compare/benchmark progress with developments in other countries or regions makes it easier for politicians to understand Beyond GDP indicators. Yet another challenge is that specificities of problems can vary locally. During BRAINPOoL's action research it was therefore stated that there is a need for "internationally harmonised 'core accounts' to compare global Beyond GDP issues but that are flexible enough to be able to show local specificities of problems".

For example, within such a harmonised core Beyond GDP indicator framework there should be room to reflect local human needs and regional specificities. Measuring (subjective) well-being means to measure what matters for individuals. These issues are not the same around the World. For this reason there should not be a 'one-size-fits-all' internationally harmonised beyond GDP indicator set; there is a need to adapt to national specificities and cultures.⁶

Also paying attention to vertical harmonisation

Discussions on harmonisation of Beyond GDP indicators have been focussed much on horizontal harmonisation, i.e. harmonisation within the same level to ensure comparison across countries or regions. Given that the business sector is developing initiatives to "measure what matters" (beyond the Global Reporting Initiative), vertical harmonisation would also be required, i.e. making sectoral disaggregation possible.

⁵ Presentation on behalf of Eurostat's Director General at E-Frame final conference, 11 February 2014.

⁶ Based on the presentation of Philippe Cuneo [INSEE] at E-Frame conference February 2014

Making well-being measures regionally comparable

Subnational well-being indicators are needed to highlight regional or local problems that are hidden by national averages. This makes there is a need for a coherent framework and harmonised methods to measuring well-being at a local level. In terms of regional comparability, this would also require guiding principles towards a common and unifying understanding of social progress at a local level. In this context it should be recognised that local progress or ‘community well-being’ is not simply the aggregate of individual well-being.⁷

Implementing quality standards for non-official statistics and subjective well-being indicators

It is recognised that subjective well-being indicators have high potential to inform on critical aspects of people’s life which are important for a broader measurement of progress. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that most subjective well-being measures have been developed outside official statistics – and probably will continue to be developed outside these boundaries. It is thus no longer possible to ignore data produced outside official statistics.

Non-official data sources can be complementary to official statistics in filling important data gaps, by covering product areas and sectors that are not published by NSIs. Data quality of non-official statistics will become an important aspect for sorting out indicators (and data producers) that can be trustfully used in guiding evidence-based policies. Data quality is one of the factors that will ultimately determine whether or not the public is interested in (alternative) measures.

BRAINPOoL therefore proposed that a neutral body or institute has a role in safeguarding data quality and neutrality of those Beyond GDP indicators which are based on non-official data.

Yet, the OECD is preparing a set of guidelines to provide guidance to National Statistical Institutes and other producers and users of survey-based data on subjective well-being.⁸

Agreement on a core set of ‘headline’ Beyond GDP indicators

International comparability is particularly important for Beyond GDP indicators in an increasingly globalised world, since it not only enables benchmarking of progress against other countries, but also enhances the credibility and legitimacy of indicators. We therefore recommend European co-operation to identify areas where local specificities should be addressed, and to agree on the most relevant and useful Beyond GDP indicators at different scales (EU, member states, regional and local). This should result in the development of international/EU standards and frameworks for Beyond GDP data collection to ensure harmonised methodologies and data quality of a core set of ‘headline’ Beyond GDP indicators.

Efforts can possibly be based on the small set of 24 indicators that is proposed by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force to communicate main messages more efficiently to policy makers and the general public. The proposed indicator sets by the Task Force have a thematic categorisation which has the advantage that terminology is than suited to the language of policymakers and the general public. Moreover, it is recognised that there is a need for flexibility – in some instances 24 indicators might even be too much for effective communication. The framework is intended to be applicable in a flexible way to policy-relevant themes. It proposes an indicator set without claiming to provide a one-size-fits-all selection; there is room for selecting country-specific indicators.

⁷ Based on e-Frame’s second tentative Roadmap, June 2013, p 20

⁸ Based on e-Frame’s second tentative Roadmap, June 2013

Organising international coordination

An international organisation, supra-governmental bodies or institutes that are 'issuers of rules' likely to be heeded by other institutions should preferably coordinate this harmonisation process. National Statistical Institutes should become responsible for the production of internationally harmonised core indicators. Where possible, these should be consistent with the EU2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, and international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context, in BRAINPOoL's Vision report, it is proposed to give mandate to a body or institute that can be trusted because it has the scientific background on indicators from different sources and on different domains. Such a body should then elaborate proposals, consult bodies representing the general public and take care of coordination, harmonisation and communication. This could be a 'Beyond GDP equivalent' of the International Panel on Climate Change, with representatives from governments, NGOs and academia.

In this context it is worth referring to the United Nations Rio+20 declaration "*The Future We Want*", especially paragraphs 82, 83, and 85 (see Annex 1).

BRAINPOoL proposes to the European Commission in collaboration with Member States, and international partners, to explore possibilities to install a (European) body for 'Beyond GDP coordination', inspired by a combination of roles such as those proposed for the UN Economic and Social Council and high-level political forum in the context of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015

Contrary to the decision of the European Commission to put development of a Sustainable Development scoreboard on hold, it is recognised that the United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development has given new international impetus to measuring societal progress in an integrated way⁹.

It is recognized by UN Member States that the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are important and useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. SDGs should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their inter-linkages.¹⁰ They should be coherent with and integrated in the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and serving as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. Furthermore, SDGs should be action-oriented in which Governments should drive implementation with active involvement of all relevant stakeholders.¹¹

Given the above, the current process of developing the goals, targets and indicators that will make up the Sustainable Development Goals should make good use of Beyond GDP indicators and assist in their international harmonisation. There thus clearly is a role for experts that are involved in the

⁹ *European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions" SWD(2013) 303*

¹⁰ During BRAINPOoL's final conference it was brought forward that there is a fourth dimension of sustainability: the institutional dimension. It is important that institutions their efforts on a coherent long-term perspective.

¹¹ *Paragraphs 246+247 of the United Nations Rio+20 Declaration "The Future We Want"*.

process of the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015. During a BRAINPOoL final conference workshop session it was mentioned that experts should try to connect to the 'G77 Group' that is involved in the SDG process.

4. Improving policy processes

Linking Beyond GDP indicators to integrated and innovative policy making

The European Commission concluded that a challenge to the use of 'GDP and Beyond' indicators now is to link the new insights these indicators provide with tools for policy assessment and evaluation.¹² Yet, in this context BRAINPOoL recommends to use new forms of analysis and policy development, dealing more robustly with multiple objectives and the trade-offs between them.

This would require a new culture of politics - one with more cooperation and less competition between the different tasks or competences (e.g. different ministries or directorates). Moreover, this requires multi-disciplinary working (i.e. incorporating insights from disciplines beyond economics), working across silos within organisations, increased co-operation between organisations and potentially re-organising in order to bring together diverse perspectives and challenge orthodoxies. This all to establishing a common goal ('beyond GDP-growth' or 'better quality growth') where different policy fields can contribute to achieve higher well-being and sustainability.

Once more we stress that discussions with the general public are required to setting commonly agreed goals. Such discussions should aim to find correlations between policy domains and societal progress in a broad sense. The general public should be able to understand the causality between policy actions "now" and long-term effects, i.e. "the future". Especially to define and measure well-being in terms of societal characteristics in a legitimate way, the general public should agree on important topics (housing, jobs, mental health etc.) to include.

Accordingly, there is a need for common criteria in setting policy targets in relation to Beyond GDP indicators. We acknowledge, however, that it is still challenging to set a threshold along which to assess policy impacts. Which indicator value represents the line between a 'good' or 'bad' situation?

Sharing experiences and best practices

By sharing experiences and best practices on "what works", stakeholders and policy-makers would be more aware of the results achieved and of the potential of using indicators complementing GDP to assess and design their policies.¹³

During BRAINPOoL's final conference it was brought forward to create communities of practice who share, evaluate and adapt best practices. For example by communicating where well-being policies actually made a difference, including at the local level. Furthermore there are existing good practices to build on. For example at the OECD it is common that the economic directorate asks how other directorates can contribute to country reviews that are about to start.

¹² *European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions" SWD(2013) 303*

¹³ *European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions" SWD(2013) 303, p32-33*

Consider sustainability and human well-being as ultimate goals of integrated policy

The inherent multi-dimensionality of Beyond GDP poses two key challenges to policy making. Firstly, an integrated approach to policy requires working across departmental and disciplinary boundaries with a range of different perspectives at the table. Second, an integrated policy approach must deal with complexity and uncertainty and make use of a wider range of methodological approaches: this creates analytical challenges. First and foremost, the challenge is to commonly agree on the overall goal of integrated policy, i.e. (the operationalisation of) human well-being and sustainability.

Yet, the conceptual framework and suggested indicators to measuring sustainable development, as proposed by the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force, provides a coherent analytical framework in which human well-being is placed as overall goal.

BRAINPOoL acknowledges that specificities of problems can vary locally. For this reason overall goals of more integrated policy should not only be defined on aggregated levels (e.g. countries). In order to become effective for policy at multiple-levels, the ultimate policy goals with corresponding indicators should be flexible enough to be targeted at smaller scales. The Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force therefore recommends to explore the possibility of measurements at sub-levels, e.g. industries, types of household or at the company level, within the proposed conceptual framework.

Timely data availability to allow for more balanced policy-making

Integrated analysis can only support public debate and political decision making if data on economic, social and environmental issues are available in time, to be applied in a framework that enables assessment of trade-offs between different domains. As policy domains are increasingly linked in a complex way across countries and continents, there is a need for a better knowledgebase for assessing developments such that integrated policy responses can be formulated.

In this context it is recognised by the European Commission that several new indicators have been developed and produced, but often remain compartmentalised in their respective policy areas. Therefore, efforts are still needed to produce a comprehensive basket of top-level indicators to complement GDP. When possible and relevant, such complementary top-level indicators should be published at the same time as GDP.¹⁴

Experiment with a different approach to indicators

During BRAINPOoL's final conference it was mentioned that an experimental approach with indicators can be followed: instead of allocating 95% of analysis time to measurements and debate prior to policy decisions, and 5% after, do the opposite. Indicators function would then be to inform on changes after a policy decision have been made. This information can accordingly be used to adjust course, if necessary.

Applying Beyond GDP indicators in EU2020 Strategy impact assessments

A mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth is scheduled for 2015. The review will comprise of technical work related to the headline indicators but also political discussions. This review is considered to be a great opportunity to assess the impact of the EU2020 (headline) indicators and the role that (additional) Beyond GDP indicators could play towards the year 2020. The political discussion might be used to have dialogues between Member States on relevant aspects of well-being/societal progress/sustainable development, with objectives

¹⁴ *European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions" SWD(2013) 303*

and targets that could be included as additional headline indicators in the next term of the EU-2020 strategy.

During a workshop session at BRAINPOoL's final conference it was proposed to try to re-write the EU-2020 Strategy, taking into account current policies and the existing EU Sustainable Development Strategy, perhaps calling it "*The Europe We Want*". It was proposed to explore possibilities to include additional indicators in the set of EU-2020 headline indicators, covering topics of household income (median household income), mental health, material consumption, and job quality. It is acknowledged that a discussion on measurability of such topics is needed – some topics might still be difficult to measure. It was therefore proposed to start using proxies while Eurostat and NSIs develop better measures.

The Italian Presidency of the EU (July-December 2014), and its successor (Latvia, January-June 2015) were recognised as main actors to connect with in order to stimulate dialogues on the possibility to implement Beyond GDP indicators after the Mid-term Review of the EU-2020 Strategy. In this regard main European think tanks were also mentioned.

Feed Beyond GDP indicators into the European Semester

All EU Member states have committed to achieving Europe 2020 targets and have translated them into national targets and growth-enhancing policies. But only if the individual efforts of all the countries are coordinated and focused, can they result in the desired impact on growth. Therefore the European Commission has set up a yearly cycle of economic policy coordination called the 'European Semester'. The European semester starts when the Commission adopts its Annual Growth Survey, usually towards the end of the year, which sets out EU priorities for the coming year to boost growth and job creation.

Each year the European Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of EU Member States' programmes of economic and structural reforms and provides them with recommendations for the next 12-18 months. Thematic summaries have been developed to facilitate a comparison between Member States and to put the economic challenges they face into a broader context. The summaries cover the main policy themes relevant for the Europe 2020 Strategy. A set of key indicators has been selected for each theme which allows the different positions of the Member States to be compared. The summaries also contain general guidelines on policies that should be followed to tackle current shortcomings and fasten progress towards attainment of relevant targets.

Related to the conference discussion mentioned under the previous point to explore possibilities to implement Beyond GDP indicators after the Mid-term Review of the EU2020 Strategy, it was brought forward to include (a harmonized 'core' set of) Beyond GDP indicators in the European Semester's thematic summaries to comparing Member States' performances. During this discussion it is recognized that this might be difficult to achieve, given that the European Council has earlier decided that the Social Scoreboard should only be used for analytical purposes. The latter example shows that national governments have a crucial role. It is the European Council that makes final decisions, not the European Commission. If one would like to feed Beyond GDP indicators into the European Semester it is thus crucial to convince national governments on the need and usefulness.

Include Beyond-GDP in economic curricula of educational programs

At BRAINPOoL's knowledge brokerage workshop in Venice (October 2013) it was suggested to include 'Beyond GDP' in economic curricula of educational programs. Current economics students will become (economics) professionals of the coming, say, 45 years. As to date, economic textbooks pay limited attention to a broad concept of welfare; there is still a strong emphasis on GDP-growth as welfare proxy.

In this context it is worth to mention that the e-Frame project proposes to train at University Level on Official Statistics (a European Master in Official Statistics).

5. Developing strategies for overcoming resistance

Building a coherent alternative theory

During BRAINPOoL's research activities we came across resistance to abandoning traditional objectives and to support new ways of working. This may reflect a genuine belief in prioritising growth and a belief that the existing system is sufficiently capable of dealing with externalities and addressing societal challenges. One way to be able to better inform on the usefulness of Beyond GDP indicators in the context of grand societal challenges is to build a sound theoretical foundation. As is already explained in the first numbered section on a Beyond GDP narrative, it is important to start working from a positive approach that shows how alternative indicators can be informative as complement to GDP.

During a workshop session of BRAINPOoL's final conference a first proposal to develop alternative economic models to provide a sound theoretical foundation for beyond GDP was constructed. It was stressed that there is a need to put an integrated theory next to traditional macro-economic theories (austerity versus growth debate) to have a convincing argument to debunk resistance to Beyond GDP ideas. An alternative theory can form the basis to outreach to non-convinced colleagues/researchers.

Such alternative models should look at well-being in a broader sense than consumption of goods and services alone, and it should include ecological constraints. In such a theoretic model, growth will have to be perceived as *means* or an instrument, not as *end*. The theory should describe relationships between well-being outcomes and its drivers, including policy drivers.

It is proposed that researchers and academics cooperate over disciplinary boundaries, e.g. involving ecologists, sociologists, economists. The High level Expert Group ('Stiglitz 2') is recognised as a platform to have a discussion on "*beyond traditional macro-economics*". Furthermore it is proposed to stock taking of existing work on alternative (macro)economic models; organise workshops for sharing new theories and models; to build research capacity (for example in Horizon 2020 projects); and to engage with academia/universities to include Beyond GDP in economic curricula.

Target communication at a broad audience

Alternative indicators should not only be understood by and targeted at policy makers; it is crucial to their success that they have relevance for a broader audience. We cannot expect to enhance the use of alternative indicators in policy making and politics without an effort to improve statistical understanding in the media and by the general public. Beyond GDP indicators that are 'easy to communicate' and that are understood by a wide public will also be essential for successful uptake in policy making.

Good communication and dissemination on Beyond GDP indicators can enable and encourage public debate with civil society organizations, social entrepreneurs, researchers, practitioners, consumers, workers, citizens and society at large. Such debates can provide decision makers with a wealth of information to develop more informed policies. This in turn could help to convince political actors or the business sector on the value added of Beyond GDP indicators.¹⁵

¹⁵ Based on e-Frame's second tentative Roadmap, June 2013.

Involving the media

The way how the media will look at all sustainability and Beyond GDP issues is fundamental to keep these points on the (political) agenda. However, as to date, the media seldom report on a country or region's overall performance, despite various initiatives to publish new summary and top-level indicators.¹⁶

During one of BRAINPOoL's knowledge brokerage workshop a journalism professional explained that while statisticians deal with problems to define how best to measure difficult issues such as sustainability, the media often oversimplifies such issues. Moreover, well-being indicators appear to be difficult to understand and explain in the media. Newspapers, televisions, internet comments today tend to look always for numbers that are useful in order to build a "stage" for dramatising conflicts, rather than trying to explain the correct perspective. Investments to increase "numeracy" in the public opinion (the ability to understand the true meaning of numbers), including a different style in the media, might thus be opportune.

On the other hand, during BRAINPOoL's knowledge brokerage activities we came across an Austrian example where the media actually did took up an alternative indicator set, connecting it to the political agenda, but politicians themselves did not take the same indicator set up. This example makes clear that media can indeed function as a catalyst group. During a BRAINPOoL final conference workshop session this role of the media is acknowledged in a proposal to enhance media attention on well-being themes, aimed at communicating and disseminating work of statistical offices.

¹⁶ *European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions"* SWD(2013) 303, p32-33

6. Strengthening the ‘indicator entrepreneur’ role

Find ways to strengthen the ‘indicator entrepreneur’ role

Those responsible for indicators (whether statisticians, policy-makers, politicians, or independent watch dogs) need to be alert to opportunities to promote the use of new and existing indicators. In other words they should act as ‘statistical entrepreneurs’. For example, where there are data shortages that prevent a beyond GDP approach (as BRAINPOoL identified in several case studies) it could be the role of indicator entrepreneurs to identify and advocate appropriate investment in data gathering, harmonisation and communication.

Since Beyond GDP is both a political and a technocratic problem, it also necessitates much closer collaboration between statisticians and democratic representatives. At national level this allows indicators to better match objectives, while at local level it can help achieve the right balance between sophistication (the priority of the experts) and feasibility (the priority of the governments).

Identify ways in which existing indicators can be used

In a more integrated policy framework it is important to demonstrate how Beyond GDP indicators can inform the public. Demonstration in this context also means to **make use of already existing indicators**. This research finding of BRAINPOoL is in line with the finding of the European Commission Staff:

“As more ‘GDP and Beyond’ indicators will become increasingly available a logical step would be to test the most mature indicators in ‘real-world’ policy-making. While the first pilots do not yet match GDP in terms of accuracy and comparability, they could still be used — with caution — so as to determine their strengths and limitations for policy-making and learn from that for their further improvement.”¹⁷

From this perspective, it might be better to already start using proxy indicators in policy making instead of first trying to bring indicators to perfection. Efforts are probably still needed to improve Beyond GDP indicators but these can run in parallel to the use of proxy indicators in current policy making processes.¹⁸

Statisticians to develop their role as agents of change

During the political panel discussion at BRAINPOoL’s final conference it was put forward that one of the reasons for new measurement tools not being used, is that public administrations work ‘rules based’ rather than based on ‘early signals’ that indicators might give. Possibly this can be changed if there would be more ‘marketing’ within the governments’ civil service for messages based on Beyond GDP indicators. One way for this to happen is to empower those who believe in the usefulness of Beyond GDP or alternative measures. This can be ‘keen’ civil servants that take the freedom to write perhaps somewhat ‘unconventional’ letters or memos to their seniors in the civil service. Statisticians are the ones capable of informing such actors within the civil service, and in doing so can thus play a role as ‘agent of change’.

¹⁷ EC SWD(2013) 303, p32.

¹⁸ Based on the presentation of the EU Commissioner for Environment at e-Frame’s final conference, 10 February 2014

Annex 1 - ‘GDP and Beyond’ in existing (internationally coordinated) actions and visions

EU Roadmap 2009

“GDP and beyond: Measuring progress in a changing world”

The European Commission, since 2007, has engaged in the debate on how to best measure societal progress beyond economic indicators such as GDP (with the Beyond GDP conference). The European Commission emphasises that GDP is a key indicator of economic performance and essential in key policy fields. However, it is recognized that GDP cannot be used to measure societal progress in a broader sense. Therefore, the European Commission has decided on the need to develop more inclusive indicators to complement GDP, e.g. in environmental and social dimensions.

In August 2009, the European Commission released its policy paper “GDP and beyond: Measuring progress in a changing world” [COM(2009) 433]. The Beyond GDP initiative is about developing indicators that are as clear and appealing as GDP, but more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress. This Communication fulfilled the commitment made by the European Commission at the Beyond GDP conference to mould the ideas presented at the conference into a roadmap for action.

The Communication outlined five key actions to be undertaken in the near term. These five key actions supported the Commission’s aims to develop indicators relevant to the challenges of today — ones that provide an improved basis for public discussion and policy-making.

The five key actions were:

1. Complementing GDP with highly aggregated environmental and social indicators:

As GDP growth figures do not provide sufficient information about social and environmental outcomes, top-level indicators on environmental protection and quality-of-life indicators are being developed.

2. Near real-time information for decision-making:

For policy-making and public debate, complementary environmental and social indicators need to be available at the same time as GDP, therefore the timeliness of such indicators needs to be improved.

3. More accurate reporting on distribution and inequalities:

GDP per capita and its growth over time does not tell how economic benefits are shared within a society. To enable a debate on equity and fairness, it is necessary to know the distribution (in particular between regions and social groups) of income, health, education and environmental quality. Such data are being further developed and better communicated.

4. Developing a European Sustainable Development Scoreboard:

GDP growth rates do not indicate whether economic development is sustainable. Tools are being developed to better measure and communicate overall sustainability.

5. Extending National Accounts to environmental and social issues:

The central reason why traditional macro-indicators such as GDP or Net Domestic Production (NDP) do not measure environmental or social outcomes is that national accounts do not cover such issues. This is being addressed by enlarging the scope of accounting to environmental and social issues.

Sponsorship Group on “Measuring progress, Well-being and Sustainable Development”

The European Statistical System Committee launched a collaborative project to translate the recommendations from the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission (2009) and the European Commission’s Communication on “GDP and beyond” [COM(2009) 433] into concrete actions for the European Statistical System. This collaborative project was organized as a ‘Sponsorship Group’ on “Measuring Progress, Well-being and Sustainable Development”, comprising of the chief statistician of the EU, and several (high-level) representatives of National Statistical institutes of EU Member States. Its mandate was mainly to prioritise actions with the aim to produce adequate indicators rather than proposing an additional conceptual framework. The report of the Sponsorship Group should help to shape the 2013-2017 programme of the European Statistical System.

In November 2011, the Sponsorship Group published its final report which summarises main actions to be taken to implement the recommendations from the “GDP and Beyond” Communication [COM(2009) 433] and the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission. The report contains a set of concrete actions and development work to be undertaken by the European Statistical System. The Sponsorship Group narrowed the rather widely formulated recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission down to a more concrete set of actions and possibilities for further development. In November 2011, the ESS Committee adopted the report of the Sponsorship Group and decided to include the concrete actions, development work and recommendations in its work plan.

One of the major objectives of the Sponsorship Group was to ensure harmonization of data within Europe (and beyond):

“For European comparison purposes, core instruments are one important way of building harmonization and these should be developed and defined in good cooperation with international partners (OECD, UNECE). One of the major objectives of the Sponsorship Group was to harmonize the data produced and delivered within Europe, and if possible, with other geographical entities” (p11).

A general recommendation of the Sponsorship Group, targeted at communication on resulting (alternative or Beyond GDP) indicators, is that communication should be based on a ‘story telling approach’ - informing about the indicator itself but also positioning the results in a wider context. The Sponsorship Group believes that a layered approach to the set of indicators will increase its accessibility and efficient use. Furthermore it is recommended to make use of modern visualisation tools which allow user engagement and discussion on indicators or indicator proposals.

The more concrete recommendations of the Sponsorship Group to develop or improve European statistics are organized around thematic areas. These are in line with the clusters that Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi have used to present their recommendations for measurements in various domains which contribute to progress of society in the broadest terms possible.

Table A1: Summary of Sponsorship Group recommendations on indicator development

Recommendation	Actor	Timing
<i>Promoting existing national accounts data on household income and consumption</i>	European Statistical System (ESS)	(primarily) Short term
<i>Providing information on the distribution of income, consumption and wealth (of households)</i>	Eurostat, OECD expert group on Disparities in a National Accounts frame, ESS	Short term, ongoing and longer term
<i>Encouraging the compilation of balance sheet accounts for households</i>	ESS	Medium term to long term
<i>Broadening income measurement to non-market domestic activities and leisure time</i>	UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), ESS	Short to medium term
<p><i>Multi-dimensional measures of quality of life:</i></p> <p>1. Use the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions as core instrument (EU-SILC) (A single-source approach would enable capturing correlations; recommended to have a special focus on the Europe 2020 indicators to be used for policy monitoring)</p>	ESS	Medium to long term
<p><i>Multi-dimensional measures of quality of life:</i></p> <p>2. Complement the coverage of the dimensions with additional data sources</p>	ESS	Medium to long term
<p><i>Multi-dimensional measures of quality of life:</i></p> <p>3. Deepen and improve analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compilation of indicators based on existing data - Development of synthetic indicators (reduce complexity of data and allow for analysis between Quality of Life dimensions) - Co-operate with owners of non-official statistical sources - Establishment of an expert group to support indicator work 	ESS and Eurostat,	Ongoing, short term (to medium term)
<p><i>Environmental sustainability:</i></p> <p>Recommendations in this field take a medium to long term implementation strategy. Aiming at consistency with a more general framework encompassing also economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, with a 'capital approach'.</p>	ESS, European Energy Agency (EEA), DG ENV	Short term (towards 2014): integrated environmental-economic accounting; 'Second and third priorities' (2013- long term): additions, e.g. water accounts, waste accounts

European Commission Staff Working Document on "Progress on 'GDP and beyond' actions"

In August 2013, the EC published the Staff Working Document [SWD(2013) 303] on "Progress on 'GDP and beyond' actions". The GDP and Beyond roadmap adopted in 2009 aims to complement GDP with high level indicators reflecting issues such as environmental protection, quality of life and social cohesion. The roadmap also puts emphasis on the timeliness and robustness of these indicators which are necessary to inform policy making.

The Commission Staff Working Document reviews the actions undertaken since the Roadmap of 2009. Per each of the five lines of actions as set out in the Roadmap, progress that has been made over the last 3 to 5 years to complement GDP with additional summary and other top-level indicators to measure and communicate societal progress more comprehensively is described.

The actions have resulted in development and implementation of various new official statistics, e.g. on environmental impacts, quality of life and well-being, and income inequality. The Commission services acknowledge that speeding up the production of social and environmental data is important to allow for more balanced policy-making. The Commission Staff recognizes that such an integrated analysis can support public debate and political decision making only if economic, social and environmental figures are available in time.

Sustainable Development is an overarching objective of the European Commission. The aim is to continuously improve the quality of life and well-being on Earth for present and future generations. With the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, sustainable development became an integral part of the EU's socio-economic strategy.

The initial aim of the European Commission was to complement the existing SDIs with a Sustainable Scoreboard in order to communicate overall achievements and challenges in the area of Sustainable Development. While Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) continue to be published twice a year, a first feasibility test showed that not many indicators are readily available to be assembled into an easy communicable Sustainable Development scoreboard. Therefore, development of a SD-Scoreboard have been put on hold. However, it is recognized that the United Nations Rio+20-conference on Sustainable Development has given new international impetus to measuring progress towards sustainable development, integrating all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental).

In recent years the EU has financed or directly undertaken several projects that aim to provide policy analysts with integrated databases that can be used to analyse the synergies and trade-offs between policy objectives (for example the World Input Output Database to understand the relation between trade patterns and environmental pressures and socio-economic variables).

The Commission Staff's assessment of Progress on 'GDP and Beyond' actions looked in particular at the (potential) use of these new indicators for policy making. Several challenges to the use of Beyond GDP indicators in policy making are identified:

*"With the novel 'GDP and beyond' indicators becoming increasingly available, **the challenge now is how to link the new insights they provide with the existing tools for policy assessment and evaluation, be they econometric models or political narratives.** Further attention also needs to be given to how to **effectively integrate** and communicate the available indicators and summarise data." [...] There is a demand for measuring societal progress in all areas that matter for people's sustainable well-being. The Commission services will therefore continue to work with stakeholders, researchers, Member States and international organisations to implement the 2009 Roadmap to achieve realistic, user-friendly and — where needed — **internationally comparable results.**" (EC SWD(2013) 303, p7)*

The Commission recognizes furthermore that statistics are not always easy to access and understand in the form in which they are commonly presented and published. Moreover, it is recognized that policy domains are increasingly linked in a complex way across countries and continents, calling for a

better knowledge base for assessing and communicating developments, and supporting timely and integrated policy responses.

“Some of the new indicators have been released and have proven their worth for policy-making. As more ‘GDP and Beyond’ indicators will become increasingly available a logical step would be to test the most mature indicators in ‘real-world’ policy-making. While the first pilots do not yet match GDP in terms of accuracy and comparability, they could still be used — with caution — so as to determine their strengths and limitations for policy-making and learn from that for their further improvement.” (EC 2013, p32)

The European Commission services have identified a number of challenges that remain:

1. Several new indicators have been developed and produced, but they often remain compartmentalised in their respective policy areas. Efforts are still needed to produce a comprehensive basket of top-level indicators complementing GDP and being released, when possible and relevant, at the same time.
2. On the timeliness of data, the scaling up of methodologies that can produce reliable ‘early estimates’.
3. The extension of national accounts to integrate environmental, social and economic accounting is progressing well but work is still needed to translate this wealth of information into integrated macro-indicators and to promote analyses that exploit the potential of this coherent data framework.
4. The media seldom report on a country or region’s overall performance, despite various initiatives to publish new summary and top-level indicators. By sharing experiences and best practices, stakeholders and policy-makers would be more aware of the results achieved and of the potential of using indicators complementing GDP to assess and design their policies.
(EC SWD(2013), p32-33)

European Framework for Measuring Progress (e-Frame FP7 project)

“A Roadmap for future research needs” – e-Frame deliverable 11.2 (2nd tentative version June 2013)

e-Frame is a European research project funded through the European Union’s Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration, that runs in parallel to BRAINPOoL. The e-Frame project started in January 2012 and will end the End of June 2014. The research consortium is led by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (IT) and Statistics Netherlands (NL). One of the main objectives of the e-Frame project is *“to ensure that European research activities in the field of official statistics and related areas, and, in particular those related to the ‘Beyond GDP’ and related initiatives such as the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report, take place in a co-ordinated manner.”* In particular, *“Coordination activities should build on relevant existing research projects and strengthen the European dimension of work in this area in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, European Research Area (ERA) and the European Statistical System.”*¹⁹

It is acknowledged by the e-Frame project that the main challenge is to make well-being and societal progress an explicit goal for decision-making in all fields providing governments with advices on the well-being effects of policy options.

It is stressed in e-Frame’s second tentative Roadmap report of June 2013 that an international research agenda on future research needs is crucial for moving from measurement to informing decision-making. Furthermore, it is essential that the future agenda promotes change by creating awareness and knowledge, impacting on behaviours and decision-making process, involving citizens and civil society, encouraging new business models. A ‘virtuous cycle’ can then be generated by: regular stocktaking for a periodic assessment of where we stand and where progress is needed; sharing experiences on “what works”; considering frameworks for managing trade-offs and synergies; introducing well-being measures into cost-benefit analysis and program evaluation.

e-Frame’s roadmap aims at addressing research areas that need further developments and investments at a European level in the measurement and use of indicators of well-being, societal progress and sustainability. It is a dynamic document such that it can be updated taking into account research outcomes from other projects and initiatives. The research needs have been classified in four main areas in order to facilitate the identification of suitable and coordinated actions:

1. Measurements issues related to the official statistics;
2. Research related to the usage of non-official data;
3. The communication side of Beyond GDP measures;
4. The forward looking dimension of a wide integrated vision.

1. Measurements issues related to the official statistics

e-Frame has identified specific needs to support the process to update the official statistics system to the changing needs to measure progress, well-being and sustainable development in a more comprehensive way:

- Need to continue implementing subjective indicators
- Need to report indicators at different levels: local, national, global
- Need to disaggregate at the right dimension (target groups)
- Need to harmonize concepts, standards and definitions (metadata)

¹⁹ European Commission Work Programme 2011 under Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities, page 39

- Need to improve the timeliness of data
- Need for indicators of sustainability
- Need to train at University level on Official Statistics (European Master in Official Statistics)

It is recognized that subjective well-being indicators have high potential to inform on critical aspects of people's life which are important for a broader measurement of progress. Furthermore it is acknowledged that most subjective well-being measures have been developed outside official statistics – and probably will continue to be developed outside these boundaries. Yet, the OECD is preparing a set of guidelines to provide guidance to National Statistical Institutes and other producers and users of survey-based data on subjective well-being.

Furthermore, the need is identified to develop new measures and methodologies to measure and compare well-being at the local, national and global level. The interaction between the European level and the global context is the approach to follow to go towards the definition of new indicators on measurement of progress and well-being beyond GDP. Efforts can be extended to plan a global survey. In particular concerning the local level, the Italian BES-initiative²⁰ including its stakeholder consultation for measuring equitable and sustainable well-being, is mentioned as an important experience.

It is concluded that continuous work of NSIs is required to set standards, provide guidelines, and to identify and document best practices to produce more comparable (Beyond GDP) data to measure progress. Given that there seems to emerge convergence between the well-being agenda and sustainability agenda, it is necessary to improve indicators of sustainability and that NSIs propose a consistent system of measurement.

2. Measurements issues related to non-official statistics

e-Frame recognizes that non-official data sources can be complementary to official statistics in filling important data gaps, by covering product areas and sectors that are not published by NSIs. In this context the Global Reporting Initiative²¹ is mentioned, an initiative which enables companies and organizations to measure and report their sustainability performance and to contribute to a Green Economy.

e-Frame has identified the following indicative list of research needs:

- Need to foster the usage of non-official data
- Need to consider crowd sourced locally generated data
- Need to integrate official data with non-official data
- Need to bridge the top-down with the bottom-up approaches for the construction of statistics beyond GDP
- Need to complement with initiatives beyond official statistics
- Need to evaluate the roles for non-official data in order to keep down the costs of the measurement
- Need to validate the quality of non-official data

Yet another important observation of the e-Frame project in the domain of non-official statistics, however, classified under the fourth domain of forward looking issues, is that it is no longer possible

²⁰ www.misuredelbenessere.it

²¹ <https://www.globalreporting.org/Pages/default.aspx>

to ignore data produced outside official statistics. Data quality of non-official statistics will become an important aspect for sorting out data (and data producers) that can be trustfully used in guiding evidence-based policies. Furthermore, data quality will determine whether or not the public is interested in (alternative) measures based on the data.

3. Communication aspects of Beyond GDP measures

It is acknowledged that Well-being measures can make a real difference to people's lives if they are explicitly brought into the policy-making process. Good communication and dissemination on Beyond GDP indicators can enable and encourage public debate (with civil society organizations, social entrepreneurs, researchers, practitioners, consumers, workers, citizens and society at large) and provide decision makers with a wealth of information to develop more informed policies. This in turn could help to convince political actors or the business sector on the value added of Beyond GDP indicators.

e-Frame has identified the following indicative list of research needs:

- Need to inform and train the business world and educate the market to read new measurements of progress and well-being beyond GDP as a chance to catch
- Need to facilitate the communication to policy makers
- Need to find a wording for policy makers
- Need to develop Web2.0 tools to improve the use of statistics and indicators
- Need to involve communities using the opportunities given by Internet
- Need to map the digital initiatives carried on by communities for statistics beyond GDP (crowd sourced platforms and networks for use of locally grass root generated data)
- Need to foster the culture on the measurement of well being
- Need to train at University level on the measurement of well being
- Need to educate the opinion leaders to foster the statistical culture

4. Forward looking dimension of a wide integrated vision

E-Frame recognizes that work should be done to look forward to a wide integrated vision identifying the main drivers of well-being and to assess the overall impact of alternative policy options on people's life. This would require (econometric) models to evaluate the various benefits and costs of policies enacted simultaneously or of a single policy affecting many dimensions at the same time. As well as the need to describe trade-offs between different policy dimensions. Furthermore, the long term effects of policies should be taken into account in order to assess sustainability impacts of actions undertaken. At the same time, the construction of risk indicators is necessary to study the social effect of not taking action.

In addition to the above points, e-Frame has identified the following needs:

- Need to define quality criteria for composite indicators
- Need to extend NSIs consolidated quality framework across disciplines
- Need to study how the use of well-being indicators positively influences the (good) policies
- Need to spread European experience in a worldwide perspective

e-Frame's final remarks

The e-Frame consortium concludes its second tentative roadmap by stressing that several actions have already started at European level, for example building on the recommendations of the Sponsorship Group in partnership with NSIs. However, started actions need to be further developed or implemented.

It is acknowledged by the e-Frame consortium that National Statistical Institutes can play a leading role in many areas. For example by calculating well-being, societal progress and sustainability indicators that respond to the users' needs and satisfy quality requirements such as timeliness, geographical disaggregation and representativeness, comparability over time and accuracy. They could also adequately support the process of integration of official and non-official statistics given the know-how and the expertise gained in setting quality requirements and in developing statistical models for integrating and jointly analysing data from different sources.

However, e-Frame stresses that most challenging needs could be better tackled in partnership, even in domains where there is an explicit call for a proactive role of NSIs. In order to increase the use and relevance of "beyond GDP" indicators, it is extremely important to establish a dialogue with the society at large, for example by means of bottom up deliberative processes.

The second tentative *roadmap for feature research* needs of the e-Frame project identifies a number of "needs" to be addressed at a European level in order consolidate the availability and the use of indicators on well-being, progress and sustainable development. Nevertheless, it would be recommended, as an initial step, to find a large consensus on setting priorities with regard to the above mentioned needs and to schedule the future actions in the light of the objectives of Horizon 2020.

Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development

The joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development has published its final report on 27 May 2013, proposing a framework and suggested indicators to measure sustainable development. It responds to the need for a conceptual framework to harmonise the different ways in which sustainable development has been measured.

The publication presents a broad conceptual framework for measuring sustainable development and suggests indicators that can be used for international comparison. The framework presented in the report of the joint Task Force may serve as an organising principle to facilitate user's choices through large numbers of indicators and to present the information in a concise manner. The Task Force states that although the report is primarily intended for a readers audience of statisticians, it may also be relevant for policy makers in setting targets for sustainable development policies and monitoring their implementation. The publication of the Task Force is a step towards harmonising the various approaches and indicators already used by countries and international organisations to measure sustainable development.

The conceptual framework emphasises on human well-being as ultimate outcome of the allocation or use of all types of capital (i.e. economic, human, natural, and social capital). Human well-being is considered a broad concept that is not only confined to the utility derived from the consumption of goods and services, but also relates to people's functioning and capabilities. Consumption can be seen as a subset within this overall concept of human well-being.

The proposed conceptual framework is based on:

- The *Brundtland definition* of sustainable development that “*meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*” (UN World Commission on Environment and Development WCED, 1987).
To take account of how a country in the pursuit of well-being of its citizens may affect the well-being of citizens in other countries, three dimensions of sustainable development are distinguished: “here and now”, “later” and “elsewhere”);
- Economic theory with additional insights from social sciences, building on the notion to link human well-being to capital;
- The Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report and other international (Beyond GDP) initiatives (primarily the ones previously described in this annex);
- The commonalities in existing Sustainable Development Indicator sets.

The measurement framework proposes three ‘example’ indicator sets; two large sets of 60 and 90 indicators respectively, and a small set of 24 indicators. The latter set is proposed to communicate main messages more efficiently to policy makers and the general public. The proposed indicators are selected on three criteria:

- Being ‘ideal indicators’ based on proved theoretical and methodological concepts (in the academic literature) to measure specific aspects of sustainable development;
- Indicators which have commonalities with most existing SDI sets;
- Data availability in international databases of the United Nations, OECD and Eurostat.

Some of the proposed indicators are not yet available, they thus demonstrate a need for new indicators that statisticians can strive for to develop in the future. The proposed indicator sets have a thematic categorisation. The advantage of this thematic categorisation is that terminology is than suited to the language of policymakers and the general public. The framework is intended to be applicable in a flexible way to policy-relevant themes. It proposes an indicator set without claiming to provide a one-size-fits-all selection; there is room for selecting country-specific indicators.

The joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force outlines potential areas for future work:

1. **Measurement issues:**

- *Transboundary impacts:*
more work is needed to measure the international aspect of sustainable development which takes the social and economic inter-relationships into account, in addition to the environmental aspects.
- *Further work to arrive at better measures for the following specific topics:*
 - i. Human capital* (with a focus on health in the context of human capital)
 - ii. Social capital* (with a focus on 'norms and values' and interconnectedness of different groups in society)
 - iii. Financial capital* (with a focus on financial instability and macro-economic imbalances)
 - iv. Natural capital* (linking ecosystem services to human well-being, valuing biodiversity on the basis of measurements of degradation, experimenting with Green National Accounting techniques)
 - v. Distributional aspects and inequality* (from the perspective of *distributional justice* in the context of sustainable development the Task Force believes this should be high on the agenda for further development, focussing on internationally comparable measures (e.g. in the area of health and education).
 - vi. Time use* (more use can be made of information on time use in order to better measure non-market activities. This is especially relevant in the field of human and social capital).
- *Linking subjective and objective indicators:*
especially to link subjective (perception) indicators of human well-being to actual living conditions.
- *Long time-series of data* as the concept of sustainability concerns inter-generational issues.
- *Measuring sustainable development on different scales:*
Sustainable development should not only be measured on the scale of countries. The Task Force recommends to explore the possibility of measurements at the company level – in harmony with initiatives such as the Global Reporting Initiative in the business community. Furthermore, a sub-categorisation by industry or by type of household can be particularly useful to study how economic, ecological and social developments are interrelated.
- *The use of satellite accounts to improve consistency between Beyond GDP indicators and GDP itself:*
The Task Force recommends to explore possibilities to introduce satellite accounts for other domains than are already available (e.g. energy). In line with recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, special attention should be paid to measures on wealth (of households). In this context, the Task Force recommends to implement the OECD guidelines for Micro Statistics on Household Wealth.
- *International harmonisation of indicator sets for measuring sustainable development:*
NSIs and international organisations should harmonise their SDI sets, so that they are better suited for international comparison. With its report, the Task Force has proposed a conceptual foundation that can function as a starting point for such an international harmonisation effort.

2. **Communication and visualisation:**

The actual use of indicators on sustainable development as proposed by the Task Force will crucially depend on how the data are communicated. That is of course next to the quality of data.

Table A2: Key dimensions of data quality

Dimension	Description
Relevance	The degree to which the statistical product meets user needs in coverage, content and detail.
Coherence/consistency	The degree to which statistical information can be successfully brought together with other statistical information within a broad analytical framework and over time.
Interpretability	The availability of supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and use the statistics effectively.
Accuracy	The degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure.
Accessibility	The ease with which users are able to access and understand the statistical data and its supporting information.
Timeliness	The degree to which the data produced are up-to-date, published frequently and delivered to schedule.

Based on these quality dimensions, the Task Force points out to the importance of working with a harmonised conceptual framework. In terms of coherence and consistency, a conceptual framework functions as an organising principle. As indicators are selected and presented according to a conceptual framework, users do not have to go through an overwhelming number of separate indicators. Moreover, for the user to understand and interpret the information on sustainable development, there is a need for a frame of reference to place the outcomes of sustainable development indicators (indicator values) in a context 'a reference threshold'.

Furthermore, the Task Force stresses the importance to discuss and decide from the outset what type of audience a statistical publication is targeted at, what the purpose of the publication is, and finally, what type of report (or other publication) would be required. Various type of reports are identified:

- *A report that provides a narrative:* describing statistics, identifying trends, but not making any judgements about interpretation – leaving this completely to the reader.
- *A report that is more analytical:* making informed judgements or interpreting the statistics to assist the reader.
- *A policy document:* using statistics to support policy analysis and provides recommendations.

A complexity of sustainable development indicators, compared to other official statistics, is that they may have already been published or released in their own right; not in a more integrated context. This might result in analysis in a different context such that the indicators may be

perceived in a different matter by the user. The Task Force highlights that maintaining integrity of a report is important to ensure that results do not and are not perceived to have bias.

The conceptual framework as is proposed by the joint Task Force and the selection criteria applied can play an essential role in terms of impartiality. Using internationally accepted methodologies, standards and selection criteria limits the opportunities for agencies to unduly influence the indicator selection and interpretation. Using a statistical framework rather than a policy-based framework can also help manage perceptions if the government of the day, and thus policy initiatives, change.

On deciding what statistical products to produce The Task Force concludes it requires an understanding of audiences and their needs, available channels and related costs, and the framework and size of the indicator set. There are several good examples from different countries of how the information can be communicated. And finally, Visualisation encompasses new and creative ways to attract and assist users in their understanding of statistical information on sustainable development.

3. The Post Rio+20 agenda:

The Task Force stresses that in order to enhance the usefulness of the indicator sets proposed, they should be linked to policy targets where possible. And in paragraph 363: *“Traditionally, measurement initiatives and work on policy, including the formulation of policy goals, are seen as rather different matters. The Task Force, however, argues that the so-called conceptual and policy-oriented approaches can be narrowly intertwined, and that it is fruitful for measurement and policy initiatives to be in close contact with each other.”*

The joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Taskforce on Measuring Sustainable Development hopes, with its proposed harmonised measurement framework, to contribute to the setting of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Post Rio+20 agenda (see the next section on the UN Rio+20 Declaration ‘The Future We Want’).

United Nations Rio+20 declaration “The Future We Want”

At the Rio+20 Summit of 2012, heads of state and government and high level representatives have renewed their commitment to sustainable development, and to ensure the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet, both for present and future generations. These commitments are agreed to by all UN Member States and laid down in the Common Vision “The Future We Want”, the declaration of the 2012 Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

In this declaration, all UN Member States recognize **a need for broader measures of progress to complement GDP in order to better inform policy decisions**, and, *“in this regard we request the UN Statistical Commission in consultation with relevant UN System entities and other relevant organizations to launch a programme of work in this area building on existing initiatives.”*

(paragraph 38; p6)

Selection of paragraphs from the UN Rio+20 declaration that are relevant to take into account for an action plan on the implementation of Beyond GDP indicators:

Green Economy:

- (56) Green Economy is considered to be an important tool in the context of sustainable development. It could provide options for policy making but should not be a set of rigid rules. Policies for green economy should be guided by and be in accordance with, *all Rio principles, Agenda 21, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation* and contribute towards achieving **internationally agreed development goals**.
- (58+59) Green Economy policies in the context of sustainable development should, as far as possible, be based on international consensus. The implementation of green economy policies by countries is viewed as a common undertaking but it is recognized that each country can choose an appropriate approach in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities.
- (62) Each country is encouraged to implement green economy policies in the context of sustainable development in a matter that endeavours to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation.
- (63) It is important to evaluate the range of social, environmental and economic factors and encouraged to integrate these factors into decision making.
- (66) The UN System, in cooperation with relevant donors and international organisations are invited to coordinate and provide information upon request on:
 - toolboxes and/or best practices in applying policies on green economy;
 - models or good examples of policies of green economy;
 - methodologies for evaluation of policies of green economy.
- (67) Governments should take a leadership role in developing policies and strategies through an inclusive and transparent process.

Institutional framework:

- (75+76) It is important to having a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development that integrates all dimensions in a balanced matter and enhances implementation by coherence, coordination, and avoiding duplication of efforts. Such a framework should be based on an action- and result-oriented approach giving due regard to all relevant cross-cutting issues, and should take account of interlinkages among key issues and challenges. This would require a systematic approach at all relevant levels as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in all related dimensions of sustainable development.

Intergovernmental arrangements:

- (81) The General Assembly of the UN is called to further integrate sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities and adequately address sustainable development in its agenda setting.
- (82) The Economic and Social Council is the principal body for policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development and for the follow-up on the Millennium Development Goals (i.e. Sustainable Development Goals).
- (83) All UN Member States are committed to strengthen the mandate of the Economic and Social Council and recognize its key role in achieving a balanced integration of all dimensions of sustainable development.
- (85) It is decided to establish a universal intergovernmental high level political forum that shall follow up on the implementation of sustainable development. This high level forum could:
 - Provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development;
 - Enhance integration of all dimensions of sustainable development in a holistic and cross-sectoral manner at all levels;
 - provide a dynamic platform for regular dialogue, and stocktaking and agenda setting to advance sustainable development;
 - have a focused, dynamic and action-oriented agenda, ensuring the appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges;
 - follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;
 - improve cooperation and coordination within the UN system on sustainable development programmes and policies;
 - promote the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development;
 - promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies;
 - enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to strengthen ongoing efforts of capacity building for data collection and analysis.

Regional, national, sub-national, local level:

- (97) The importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development is acknowledged by UN Member States. Regional frameworks can complement and facilitate effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at national level.
- (98) Regional, national, sub-national and local authorities are encouraged to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels. In this regard it is recognized that integrated social, economic, and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important to decision-making processes.
- (100) Regional and sub-regional organizations, including the UN regional commissions and their sub-regional offices, have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions. These institutions need to be supported, including through the UN system, in the effective operationalization and implementation of sustainable development, and to facilitate institutional coherence and harmonization of relevant development policies, plans and programmes. Effective linkage among global, regional, subregional and national processes to advance sustainable development should be ensured.
- (101) There is a need for more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at the national, sub-national and local levels. To this end, UN Member States call on countries to strengthen national, sub-national and/or local institutions or relevant multi-stakeholder bodies and processes, to coordinate on matters of sustainable development and to enable effective integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- (103) UN Member States underscore the need to ensure long-term political commitment to sustainable development taking into account national circumstances and priorities and, in this regard, we encourage all countries to undertake the necessary actions and measures to achieve sustainable development.

Framework for action and follow-up:

The objective of the Rio+20 Conference was to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, as well as to address the themes of a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. UN Member States recognize that goals, targets and indicators are valuable in measuring and accelerating progress and are committed to a framework for action.

The first part of this framework for action covers thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues in which UN Member States mostly reaffirm previous commitments or recognize the need to make progress in areas that have much relation with Beyond GDP topics, e.g. poverty and equality, health, employment, education and environmental issues including climate change.

The second part of the framework for action refers to Sustainable Development Goals. (246+247) It is recognized by UN Member States that the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are important and useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. These goals should address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their inter-linkages. They should be coherent with and integrated in the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015, thus contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and serving as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development in the United Nations system as a whole. Furthermore, SDGs should be action-oriented in which Governments should drive implementation with active involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

(251) It is recognized that there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically-based information on sustainable development. In this regard, all UN Member States request the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support regional economic commissions to collect and compile national inputs in order to inform this global effort.

Annex 2 – Examples of actions started or proposed in European countries

Austrian initiative “Growth in Transition” (Wachstum im Wandel)

In the light of the current financial and economic crisis and intensive efforts for achieving economic growth – the question emerges which kind of growth we want for the future and which goals are targeted with it. The Austrian project “Growth in Transition” intends to trigger a dialogue among institutions and people about how we can shape this transformation process towards sustainability. It also aims at contributing to current EU and international processes and at informing the Austrian public about them (e.g. the EU initiative “Beyond GDP”).

The project is initiated in 2008 by the Austrian Ministry for the Environment. The Ministry started a process dealing with the question, which kind of growth is compatible with sustainable development. The Initiative “Growth in Transition” (“Wachstum im Wandel”) constantly tries to involve as many institutions and persons as possible in a dialogue, how we can frame a process of transition towards sustainability. The process is very much alive in Austria and wants to increase international networking with institutions or initiatives dealing with the same issues.

Source: www.growthintransition.eu or wachstumimwandel.at

Inquiry Commission of the German Bundestag on “Growth, Welfare, Quality of Life”

The German Bundestag takes decisions on what are at times highly complex and controversial bills and parliamentary initiatives relating to the entire spectrum of policy fields. Study commissions play an important role in the parliamentary decision-making process. They provide forums where Members, academic experts and practitioners deliberate on significant issues before presenting the results of their work and recommendations to the Bundestag in a final report.

In the study commissions, the experts members enjoy the same rights as the Members of the Bundestag. Study commissions are meeting points between the worlds of politics and academia. And they work towards a clear goal: to deliver their reports and recommendations to the Bundestag by the end of the electoral term for which they are established. These documents set out concrete proposals for policy action that can serve as the basis for legislation.

In December, 2010 the German Bundestag agreed upon a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on *“Growth, Welfare, Quality of Life - Ways to sustainable economics and societal progress in the social market economy”*. The Commission consisted of 17 members of Parliament and 17 outside experts. The Commission operated until mid-2013. The establishment of the Study Commission was the Bundestag’s response to, among other things, widely articulated criticism of gross domestic product (GDP) as the sole indicator of wellbeing.

Sources: Bundestag (2011), Leaflet: Study Commission on Growth, Wellbeing and Quality of Life of the German Bundestag, [Wikiprogress \(2014\)](#).

“It is the task of the Study Commission on Growth, Wellbeing and Quality of Life to examine how we could grow in different ways, so enabling us to improve our quality of life. It is seeking to identify strategies that will permanently decouple our consumption of resources from economic growth and reduce consumption in absolute terms. We want to jointly develop a holistic methodology for the measurement of wellbeing and progress, and make our lifestyles and the world of work more sustainable.”

(Daniela Kolbe, SPD, Chairwoman of the Study Commission on Growth, Wellbeing and Quality of Life)

In addition, Germany's federal governments' coalition agreement after the 2013 elections states:

"Progress, quality of life and prosperity have many facets: Good jobs, a good income, health, but also intangible values such as family, friends and freedom. We want to orient our governance more strongly to the values and objectives of the citizens and therefore have a dialogue with them about their understanding of quality of life. The existing reports and indicator systems, such as the Inquiry Commission of the German Bundestag and the Advisory Council on the Assessment of economic development, will be referred to.

On this basis, we will develop an indicator and reporting system for quality of life in Germany. It shall inform at a regular interval in an easy to understand form of the status and progress in the improvement of quality of life in Germany. We want to improve the information about the social, environmental and economic dimensions of quality of life and progress. We want to feed the findings into a **cross-departmental action plan "good life"** on how to improve the quality of life in Germany."

Source: Stefan Bergheim, Direktor Zentrum für gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt e. V.

Welsh Government's Future Generations Bill "*The Wales we want by 2050*"

The Welsh Government have recently released the following information in relation to a Future Generations Bill - A Welsh society's commitment to a better quality of life for future generations. The proposed Future Generations Bill (previously the Sustainable Development Bill) will help tackle the inter-generational challenges Wales faces in a more joined up and integrated way - ensuring Welsh public services make key decisions with the long term wellbeing of Wales in mind. The proposed Bill is being introduced by Welsh Government in Summer 2014 to ensure that the public sector is focused on delivering the long term goals for the future.

Source: thewaleswewant.co.uk

"Our Vision: A sustainable future for Wales.

In 2050, Wales will be the best place to live, learn, work and do business. We want our businesses, our public services, the third sector and Government to have worked together to achieve the goals that we set in 2015 through the ground-breaking Future Generations Bill.

We will have thought more about the long term, worked better together, taken early action and engaged with citizens on this journey; this will mean people in Wales are healthier and happier and more bilingual; and our economy is prosperous and our environment is resilient. We recognise the value of achieving good health for the population of Wales."

Source: Welsh Government (2014)

Italian BES Initiative: *Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing in Italy*

The National Council for Economics and Labour (Cnel) and the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) have published a first Report on "Equitable and Sustainable Well-being" (Benessere Equo e Sostenibile - Bes) in 2013. The report presents the results of an inter-institutional initiative which places Italy in the forefront of the international panorama for the development of well-being indicators going "beyond GDP".

In recent years, the debate on how to measure the well-being of individuals and societies has been of primary interest to global public opinion. The crises of the last few years (food, energy and environmental, financial, economic and social) have made clear the urgent need to develop new statistical measures capable of guiding decision-makers in policy making, as well as firms' and citizens' individual *behaviours*. While gross domestic product (GDP) remains undeniably important as a way to measure national economic results, it is essential to complement it with economic, environmental and social indicators able to provide a comprehensive assessment of society's conditions and progress.

In December 2010 Cnel and Istat committed themselves to provide the society with a measurement tool capable of identifying the underlying elements of well-being in Italy. This result has been achieved through the involvement not only of some of the major experts in the various aspects which contribute to well-being (health, environment, employment, economic conditions, etc.), but also of the Italian society itself, through discussions and exchange of views with thousands of citizens, along with meetings held with institutions, social partners and NGOs. This is why Bes indicators aim at becoming a sort of “Statistical Constitution”, providing a constant and shared point of reference for the Italian society, capable of leading the way to achieve the progress which the society itself is looking for.

The Italian BES-initiative, including its stakeholder consultation for measuring equitable and sustainable well-being, can be an important source for sharing experiences and best practices.

Source: Cnel and Istat (2013), Findings in brief of Bes. Report on Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing in Italy. (published on [Wikiprogress](#))

See also: www.misuredelbenessere.it/