



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

## The European Network on Measuring Progress

This policy brief presents the experience of the *European Network on Measuring Progress (e-FrameNET)* set up as an offshoot of e-Frame project-European Framework for Measuring Progress, with the aim to foster the European position on “GDP & beyond debate”. The Network is highlighted in the perspective of the potentiality of communication and dissemination of such Web2.0 tools, able to create critical mass involving in real time a multiplicity of stakeholders and the society at large.

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### ABSTRACT

The last 15 years represent a new era characterized by two revolutions for statisticians and beyond. The Internet explosion that has radically changed the way in which information is produced and shared. The domination of “GDP & Beyond” debate on the European and global statistical and economic research scene for the new measurement of well-being, societal progress and sustainability. Web 2.0 technologies - networks and platforms - have deeply contributed to enlarge and to foster the debate on progress measurements and have been exploited to share information and data for the “definition” of better statistics beyond GDP involving society at large. These participatory platforms, enabling virtual communities to interact, change the way in which statistical producers and consumers of information access the data bridging the gap between what statistics say and what people perceive. The e-FrameNET is experiencing the interactivity between communities by enlarging the discussion and empowering crowd sourced information and data.

**Key words:** Web2.0, information and data sharing, beyond GDP

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## Introduction

**Internet has shown the power of sharing information and data.**

Internet era has radically changed the approach in which information is produced and shared. The process is increasing its impact on statistical data collection, dissemination, visualization and retrieval. The Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), launched within the Europe 2020 strategy, has endorsed the process with the aim to deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra-fast internet and interoperable applications. All the actors belonging to the European Statistical Systems are pushed to adopt the DAE actions to leverage the Internet improving ways from data collection to data dissemination.

**Web 2.0 tools and platforms are largely contributing to the “GDP and beyond” debate**

Web 2.0 platforms are the “tools” in an era of mass-collaboration and participation. Blogs, wikis, Facebook, as well as, the innovative concepts of “collective intelligence” and “crowd sourcing” have transformed the manner in which information is accessed. Web 2.0 allows the interactivity between producers and consumers of data, implementing the opportunities for producing ‘new data’ in a global perspective. Web 2.0 brings to the involvement of communities for data collection (Big Data, grass root generated data). The process redefines statistical construction by bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches for better statistics beyond GDP which allows for non-official sources to be standing along-side the official.

Over time the “beyond GDP” debate has been strongly empowered by Web 2.0 creating a global movement willing to voice its opinions. European and global initiatives have been set up to enlarge the discussion and to better interact with the communities.

**On the side of the EU NSIs stakeholder’s consultations and discussions with society at large began to be carried out**

On the side of the EU NSIs, in order to develop official statistics beyond GDP, stakeholder’s consultations and discussions with society at large began to be carried out. In 2010, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) and the Italian National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) created the ‘BES’ initiative ([www.misuredelbenessere.it](http://www.misuredelbenessere.it)) designed to measure ‘Equitable and Sustainable Wellbeing in Italy’. A deliberative process for the definition of a theoretical framework for the measurement of well-being and the definition of the indicators

which are composing it was carried out. The selection of the indicators has been done through the dialogue between a scientific commission of experts, a national steering committee with entrepreneurs, unions and the civil society at large, supported by public meetings, a national survey, a blog and an online questionnaire. The result of the consultation has provided a decision co-established by the Italian society at large.

**Notable bottom-up initiatives include the OECD's Better Life Index**

Others recent notable bottom-up initiatives include the OECD's Better Life Index, which was launched in 2012 to answer one of the world's most pressing questions: are our lives getting better? The index is designed to invite users to visualise and compare some of the key factors – like education, housing, environment – that contribute to well-being in OECD countries. The aim is to allow understanding what drives well-being of people and nations and what needs to be done to achieve greater progress for all. With the awareness that there is more to life than the cold numbers of GDP and economic statistics, the Index is an interactive tool that allows seeing how countries perform according to the importance the user gives to each of the 11 topics that make for a better life.

## The Network and its activities

**e-FrameNet was launched to institute a European position over “GDP and beyond”**

The e-FrameNET “European Network on Measuring Progress was launched at e-Frame Initial Conference, “European Conference on Measuring Well-Being and Fostering the Progress of Societies”, 26-28 June 2012, in Paris.

e-FrameNET was set up by the Italian National Institute of Statistics with the overarching goal of stating a European position on the measurement of well-being and progress beyond GDP and enable interaction at global level through the Wikiprogress platform (hosted by OECD) [www.wikiprogress.org](http://www.wikiprogress.org).

The Network's structure allows members to communicate through the e-Frame website and the Wikiprogress platform in order to connect stakeholders, researchers, organisations, citizens and policymakers in the on-going debate on what constitutes the most “accurate” measurement of well-being and societal progress. Members of the e-FrameNET are organised in a database, centrally managed by Istat, to respect the privacy rules, which allowed for the creation of mailing lists and for disseminating details about relevant activities.

**The Network offers interactivity through online discussions, blogs, eBrief, monthly news alerts**

During the 30 months of the e-Frame project the Network has released Monthly New Alerts and offered interactivity through on line discussions, blogs, eBriefs, aiming to elevate the visibility of the findings of pertinent projects on beyond GDP and impacting over the global debate. The Network participated in various of the online discussions launched by Wikiprogress on the themes linked to progress and wellbeing (e.g. “Reducing poverty is achievable” -March 2013, “How Should Child Well-Being be Measured?” -June 2013, “How Should Older People's Well-being be Measured?” -October 2013, “Engaging citizens in well-being and progress statistics” - April 2014,..).

The position of e-FrameNET on the Wikiprogress platform represents its key strength driving the European local, national and international debate towards a highly global perspective. It constitutes the European Network, running alongside the Regional Networks of Africa and Latin America. It contributed to discussions at a regional and subject-specific level.

**The Network forms a consolidated community**

Actually, the Network forms a consolidated community around the subject of measuring well-being able to contribute to the definition of “better statistics” produced by the EU NSIs and beyond. Key members include European National Statistical Institutes, civil society organisations, academia and research centres. The members are geographically spread all over Europe and abroad representing twenty-four countries up to date.

**The Network will continue its activity after the end of the e-Frame project**

The e-FrameNET has become and currently represents a consolidate tool to foster the European position on “GDP & beyond” debate. Its community has given a significant contribution to foster the debate at European and global level.

The Network will continue its activity, in charge of Istat, after the end of the e-Frame project with the aim to keep on to create an increasing critical mass over the “GDP & beyond” debate.

## The experience and the lesson learned

**e-FrameNET can undoubtedly attest the real need of people to be part of the “beyond GDP” debate**

The experience of e-FrameNET can undoubtedly attest the real need of people to be part of the “beyond GDP” debate to reduce the gap between what official information and data say about economic performance and how people perceive their own living conditions.

Web 2.0 tools give the voices to all stakeholders and to all the components of the society at large contributing to bridge the gap between research and policy makers, between policy makers and citizens and between research and citizens.

At all levels the dialogue via Web 2.0 to share information and data for the evaluation and the measurement of subjective and objective well-being is growing up.

The e-participation and the consultations on line are felt as crucial to give to all the opportunity to contribute to the definition of specific actions and to contribute to take decisions co-established by policy makers and by citizens for a sustainable societal progress.

Among all of the positive aspects of Web 2.0, there are a few lessons learned along the way of e-FrameNET that might be useful to note going forward:

-Online crowd sourced platforms require both financial and staff resources and time to develop a substantial mass of content and participation.

-Web 2.0 is cheaper than some tools but still costs money. While wiki’s can be termed as “plug and play” or “off the shelf”. Your communities will have constant

**e-FrameNET experience confirms the importance of having an open dialogue with society at large for “better statistics”, for “better policies”, for a “better quality of life”**

demands that need to be met. So, strong technological staff needs to be in place to capitalize the crowd sourced contributions.

The experiences of the e-FrameNET, carried out by the Italian National Statistical Institute, confirms the importance for the NSIs to involve the communities for an open dialogue to reshape the ways in which statistical information and data are created, shared and disseminated, integrating official and non-official information, on the way to the definition of new indicators for measuring well-being and societal progress.

Finally, the experience of e-FrameNET leads to confirm that as the power of online communities grows ever stronger all the institutions of diverse type and scope cannot ignore their centrality for the definition of “better statistics” to set up “better policies” for a “better quality of life”.

## PROJECT PARAMETERS

The key purpose of e-Frame coordination action was to provide a European Framework for the debate over the measure of well-being and progress among all relevant stakeholders. e-Frame project aimed at taking into account all significant aspects of the debate on measuring economic performance, development, well-being and more generally the progress of societies in order to coordinate the activities of relevant stakeholders (NSI, European institutions and policy makers, researchers and civil society) and propose the way forward.

The consortium, formed by 19 partners and co-chaired by Istat and CBS, was composed by major European National Statistical Institutes and included universities, research centres and civil society organizations and with the participation of the International Organization OECD.

e-Frame focused its activities on the achievement of the following general objectives:

- Stocktaking of available results and of ongoing research activities on the measurement of well-being and societal progress, including issues of sustainability and social as well as human capital;
- Fostering a European debate over the issue;
- Defining guidelines for the use of existing indicators;
- Proposing a coherent way of “delivering” information (areas of interest, statistical information);
- Identifying new topics to be put at future research agendas;
- Harmonising National Statistical Institutes initiatives in progress measurement area.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

### Co-ordinator

**ISTAT- Italian National Statistical Institute**

Project Coordinator: **Marina Signore**

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### Consortium

**ISTAT** - Italian National Institute of Statistics

**CBS** - Statistics Netherlands

**ONS** - Office for National Statistics

**INSEE** - Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques

**CFMR** - Romanian Academy National Institute for Economic Research

**FEEM** - Fondazione ENI Enrico Mattei

**GESIS** - Leibniz Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

**OFCE** - Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques

**OECD** - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**NEF** - New Economics Foundation

**YOUNG** - The Young Foundation

**UNISI** - University of Siena

**UNIVPM** - Marche Polytechnic University

**UOB** - University of Birmingham

**RUG** - University of Groningen

**ZEW** - Zentrum für Europäische Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH

**UT** - University of Trier

**UNIPI** - University of Pisa

**UM** - University of Maastricht

### EC contacts

Marianne Paasi, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation

### Duration

1 January 2012 – 30 June 2014 (30 months)

### Budget

EU contribution: 1,495,065 €

### Website

[www.iframeproject.eu](http://www.iframeproject.eu)

### Further reading

Research papers and reports are available at

<http://www.iframeproject.eu/index.php?id=28>

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