Wellbeing in Ireland 2013 Conference
Designing Measures and Implementing Policies

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NUI-Galway

Preliminary Conference Report
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Overview

Internationally, there is increasing interest in, and analysis of, human wellbeing and the economic, social, environmental and psychological factors that contribute to it. Current thinking suggests that to measure social progress and national wellbeing we need something more than GDP, which is inadequate as an indicator of progress, especially as the link between economic growth and psychological and social wellbeing is not always positive. There is a wider question of what matters in life, and the ongoing debate about individual and societal wellbeing seeks to address this question.

In a report published by The National Economic and Social Council (NESC, 2009), *Wellbeing Matters: A Social Report for Ireland*, it is proposed that a person's Wellbeing relates to their physical, social and mental state. It requires that basic needs are met, that people have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important goals, to participate in society and to live the lives they value and have reason to value.

The report further suggests that people's Wellbeing is enhanced by conditions that include:

1. Financial and personal security
2. Meaningful and rewarding work
3. Supportive personal relationships
4. Strong and inclusive communities
5. Good health
6. A healthy and attractive environment, and
7. Values of democracy and social justice.

The NESC report makes an important distinction between individual and collective wellbeing. Individual wellbeing is based on ratings of emotional experience, life satisfaction, quality of life, and other aspects of individual psychological and social wellbeing. Collective wellbeing is based on the common good, equality, justice, freedom, democracy, and warrants a lifespan, intergenerational perspective. The relationship between individual and collective wellbeing has always been seen as important, but the nature of the relationship has been hard to characterise. Many believe that the search for a universal account of the relationship between individual and collective wellbeing is difficult to achieve, in part, because each individual's wellbeing is influenced by a unique combination of factors. An implication of this perspective is that individual and collective wellbeing are best understood in the context of ongoing individual reflection and social interaction. The diversity of perspectives on wellbeing and the many different ways to achieve higher levels of wellbeing both at the individual and collective levels has important implications for the way in which we think about the role of public policy. Specifically, as described in the NESC (2009) report, it implies that public policy should aim to secure and provide three

kinds of 'goods': sufficient freedom for each individual to pursue their idea of the good life; a degree of order and uniformity, to protect both the individual and the common good; and a range of public and private goods tailored to individual needs. The NESC report suggests that a developmental welfare state approach may help to meet these requirements, and help each individual to pursue their idea of the good life.

We agree that this is a useful starting point and we would add that multidisciplinary scientific input and knowledge transfer can help to facilitate the development of a coherent and effective national strategy to move beyond GDP and embrace the challenge of facilitating more wellbeing for everyone in society.

Facilitating the transfer and exchange of knowledge to bring about more wellbeing for everyone is a major goal of science. However, the relationship between science and public policy is complex and there is a need to create new spaces where dialogue is fostered and where knowledge is translated into action. Following on from last year's successful conference on wellbeing in Ireland, where it was identified that the absence of holistic approaches to healthcare, lack of a space for dialogue on holistic views of wellbeing, and no national measurement of wellbeing were critical barriers to wellbeing in Ireland, this year's conference focused on wellbeing measurement and the design of a national wellbeing index for Ireland. The conference featured keynote presentations from the directors of the Canadian, UK, Scottish, and Japanese wellbeing indices, along with a closing address from Minister Alex White, Minister of State for Primary Care at the Department of Health. The conference also included a series of wellbeing perspective lectures that focused on gender and wellbeing, equality and wellbeing, and sustainability, the built environment and wellbeing. There were also a set of wellbeing conference posters on display and a number of good opportunities over coffee and lunch and evening drinks to discuss important issues and network and learn from one another. The conference booklet included a set of essays from conference participants that provide critical, reflective and integrative perspectives on wellbeing measurement, policy, and practices.

Importantly, conference delegates participated in a *Collective Intelligence* (CI) design session focused on the development of a new Irish index of Wellbeing. *Collective Intelligence* is a software supported collaborative design process that allows a group of individuals with a vested interest in understanding complex issues to reach a consensus about system interdependencies among sets of ideas such as problems, barriers, obstacles, goals and strategic objectives. CI taps into and enhances our largely underdeveloped cognitive capacity for graphical, systems thinking. It enhances the collaborative power and action potential of groups who seek to work together toward the resolution of problems and the realization of possibilities. Derived from Interactive Management (see http://warfield.gmu.edu/im), CI draws upon a long history of development in the fields of mathematics and systems science and is neutral as regards its scientific and social applications. *Collective Intelligence* is a key piece of design infrastructure that the new Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change is promoting and using in collaboration with members of the Health, Ageing and Lifespan Development research cluster.

We would like to thank the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change and the National University of Ireland, Galway for their generous support in funding and hosting this event. We would like to thank our colleagues in TASC for their generous support in collaborating, facilitating and promoting this event.

About our conference

In organizing our conference we had five objectives:

1) Establish a new national and international network of scientists, community organizations, policy-makers, and other key stakeholders to discuss the latest advances in wellbeing measurement and policy
2) Introduce conference participants to *Collective Intelligence*, a collaborative systems design methodology
3) Use *Collective Intelligence* methods to foster a dialogue on strategic objectives that should guide efforts to enhance the wellbeing of the people of Ireland over the coming decade and develop a systems model describing how selected strategic objectives are related
4) Use *Collective Intelligence* methods to consider barriers to the implementation of national and international wellbeing policies and develop a systems model describing how selected barriers are related
5) Propose options to overcome barriers to wellbeing policy implementation.

In advance of the conference, we asked participants to reflect on the broad issue of wellbeing in Ireland and generate a list of strategic objectives in response to the following question:

In the context of developing a new national wellbeing index for Ireland, what are strategic objectives that should guide our efforts to enhance the wellbeing of the people of Ireland over the coming decade?

We analysed the survey responses and identified ten domains of strategic objectives. Conference participants then engaged in discussion to further develop strategic objectives within each domain. Strategic objectives were posted on display walls and participants were given time to clarify objectives. Participants were given time to study all objectives before voting to select their top objectives from the full list (see Appendix A for full list of domains and objectives). A smaller group of conference participants worked the following day using the *Collective Intelligence* software to structure interdependencies among the highest ranked objectives (see Appendix B).

A second group consisting of international wellbeing leaders focused on the following question:

What are the barriers to implementing national and international wellbeing policies?

Participants generated 40 barriers and categorised them into eight domains (see Appendix C). They selected the top ranked barriers and used the *Collective Intelligence* software to structure interdependencies among the highest ranked barriers (see Appendix D). Wellbeing leaders considered two of the categories and proposed options to overcome barriers in each of these categories (see Appendix E).

A Call to Get Involved

There was a strong positive response to the conference and the CI methodology and there is significant interest in hosting similar workshops in local communities and across a variety of different sectors (e.g., education, health, policy design) to facilitate more dialogue and debate and systems thinking in relation to wellbeing in Ireland. The conference participants have started a linkedIn discussion group focused on Wellbeing in Ireland (Changing the System: Overcoming Barriers to Wellbeing in Ireland) and it is hoped that Wellbeing researchers across Ireland can continue to connect with one another and work in new and innovative ways to advance the Wellbeing of people in Ireland.

Some of the options discussed at last year's conference are still relevant and important:

1. Conduct research to establish the factors that individuals and communities consider important for Wellbeing
2. Encourage community and voluntary organisations to showcase initiatives of best practice that are currently working well
3. Change aspects of the education system to incorporate understanding of Wellbeing
4. Organise a "National Day of Wellbeing" to raise awareness
5. Set up Wellbeing "think-tank" similar to the New Economics Foundation (NEF) in Ireland

This year's conference highlights another important option, specifically, to consider developing indicators to track the wellbeing of people in Ireland in relation to the ten domains identified in this report. A fundamental step in this process would be a national wellbeing consultation to collect further input from key stakeholder in relation to measuring wellbeing in Ireland. We are very grateful for the support received from Minister Alex White's office and we are ready to provide any support and assistance we can to further the national health and wellbeing agenda.

As it stands, both last year's and this year's wellbeing conference reports are open for additional input and the conference organisers welcome further dialogue, discussion, and collaboration. It is important that this report and the work and dynamism of this group continue to breathe life into our efforts to promote wellbeing in Ireland and inspire us to work together in new and innovative ways.

Appendix A

Well-Being in Ireland Conference Strategic Objectives

Domains

A - Education   F - Environment
B - Business and Employment   G - Sustainability
C - Community   H - Governance
D - Health   I - Lifestyle
E - Democracy   J - Equality

Strategic Objectives (top ranked objectives indicated by *)

A. Education
- To facilitate personal development and the development of critical life skills in Irish youth (A8)*
- To educate people about the dimensions of wellbeing (A9)*
- To ensure that everyone has the best possible, lifelong access to education and educational supports (A1)
- To improve the future of our children through the integration of a more open and inclusive system of learning (A2)
- To enhance and improve people's awareness of well-being – what it is, why it's important and how to enhance it (A3)
- To reduce stigmas associated with mental health issues in order to promote healthy mental attitudes throughout the education process (A4)
- To reduce basic deprivations in/through education as a prerequisite to educating for wellbeing (A5)
- To identify the strengths in Irish education and make it more explicit (A6)
- To facilitate dialogue regarding subjective wellbeing directly involving those concerned (A7)
- To promote the overall value of education across the lifespan (A10)
- To provide direct experiences of empathy/relatedness to other persons and the natural environment (A11)

B. Business and Employment
- To provide employees in Ireland with rewarding and fulfilling employment opportunities and conditions (B7)*
- To develop ethical frameworks in business to promote wellbeing (B12)*

- To promote transparent values in business, including ensuring fair contribution to revenue (B5)
- To learn from and build on the work already done in other countries (B14)
- To ensure that Ireland is an attractive place for doing business (B1)
- To enhance innovation and entrepreneurship in Ireland (B2)
- To reduce the risk associated with starting your own business by providing support (i.e. social welfare) if the business fails (B6)
- To realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people (B3)
- To realise meaningful employment opportunities for young people (B9)
- To give Ireland a competitive advantage as a place where work improves wellbeing and in turn drives productivity (B8)
- To promote an appropriate and fair relationship between business and society (B10)
- To provide structured access opportunities to start up business i.e. from large corporations) to help businesses get off the ground (B11)
- To maximise the long-term value contribution and sustainability of Irish business (B13)

C. Community
- To ensure that all citizens have the freedom and agency to bring about positive change in their communities (C2)*
- To promote the stimulation of peoples' intrinsic values (i.e. autonomy, competence, relatedness) (C8)*
- To facilitate "thinking-outside-the-box" in relation to the economic and cultural changes taking place (C7)
- To promote a greater sense of community identification and involvement among the population (C1)
- To promote strong, resilient safe and supportive communities where people take responsibilities for their own actions and how they affect others (C3)
- To enhance peoples' ability to identify positive and negative aspects of their local community and thereby facilitate people to choose what changes they can make in their community (C4)
- To enhance the natural environment of the communities where people live (C5)
- To empower individuals within our communities and enable them to bring about collective wellbeing for all (C6)
- To encourage people to take personal responsibility for their actions and how they affect others and the environment (C9)
- To encourage the creation of beautiful spaces within communities (C10)
- To reduce the destructive man-made elements in the environment (C11)

- To ensure that positive health (both physical and mental) is a priority at a community level (C12)
- To facilitate a greener environment for the health of our future generations and present communities (C13)
- To ensure the availability of measurable information in useful formats which will empower evidence-based decision-making among both citizens and policy-makers (C14)

D. Health
- To make healthy choice the easy choice (D9)*
- To promote access to healthcare for all citizens in Ireland (D1)*
- To help ensure that people live long and healthy lives (D2)
- To enhance a sense of competence, relatedness, purpose in life and other aspects of psychological health (D3)
- To enable each person to realise their health potential (D4)
- To help people gain increased health and wellbeing through physical activity (D5)
- To build community initiatives to facilitate change at a local level (D6)
- To ensure that people have opportunities to learn about psychological health at the early stage of development (D7)
- To facilitate patterns of exercise, activity and contact which are appropriate to individuals, groups, contexts and resources (D8)
- To reduce the presence of alcohol in our society (D10)
- To facilitate values-based living (D11)
- To enhance the physical environment to promote an active lifestyle (D12)
- To enhance awareness of choices (e.g. diet, exercise) (D13)
- To reduce the incidence of chronic diseases in the population (D14)
- To reduce health inequalities (D15)

E. Democracy
- To educate people about the need for and importance of democracy (E8)*
- To ensure the voice of vulnerable groups is heard (E2)*
- To facilitate democracy where possible through new technology (E10)
- To prevent powerful interests from undermining democracy (E9)
- To ensure that democratic collective decision-making becomes an empowering part of peoples' lives not an activity of the remote elite (E1)
- To improve transparency in decision-making (E4)
- To establish a research network that adheres to rigorous methods to document and disseminate research findings that reflect the opinions of people with disabilities – in a way that is meaningful to them (E5)
- To encourage political leaders to engage with citizens using everyday language (E14)

- To introduce gender quotas when selecting candidates for election (E13)
- To celebrate democracy (E12)
- To educate young people on political issues in a meaningful and engaging way (E11)
- To promote interest and active engagement in local and national politics (E3)

F. Environment
- To recognise and respect the multi-dimensional aspects of the environment and how vital they are   (F7)*
- To create beautiful and enjoyable environments for people to live, work and spend time in (F10)*
- To create beautiful and enjoyable environments for people to live, work and spend time in (F10)
- To improve the quality of unhealthy and degraded environments and restore their ecological and social integrity (F8)
- To value and protect our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations (F1)
- To ensure that there is ample public access to clean green areas or spaces around urban locations (F2)
- To enhance our rural and urban landscapes so that Ireland becomes a "green" island to live and work on (F3)
- To promote the societal and individual benefits of actively participating in eco-friendly solutions (F4)
- To increase understanding about fundamental aspects of the environment and reasons for sustaining them (F6)
- To establish baselines to understand what an acceptable quality of environment is (F9)
- To enhance citizens' knowledge of alternatives available in the areas of transport (public and private), housing and dietary choices and to facilitate the adoption of these alternatives (F5)

G. Sustainability
- To ensure future planning and development is sustainable (G7)*
- To enhance appreciation of Ireland's uniqueness in terms of its rich linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage (G6)*
- To promote alternative ways of consuming and living in order to make our consumption more environmentally sustainable (G2)
- To promote a sustainable marine eco-system (G3)
- To promote access to fresh local goods (G4)
- To promote energy efficient housing (G5)

- To reduce reliance on cars and promote public transport (including walkways) (G8)
- To ensure Ireland capitalises on but protects the long-term value of its natural resources (G9)
- To encourage meaningful use and development of "waste land" (G10)
- To promote awareness of the value of sustainable behaviour over expedient behaviour (G12)

H. Governance
- To ensure that research is promptly fed back at a government level so that policy change can occur (H5)*
- To promote leadership and governance with an emphasis on community participation (H12)*
- To enhance accountability of elected representatives to the electorate (H6)
- To ensure that politicians understand their role is to serve the people – not outside vested interests (H7)
- To realise round table joined-up-evidence governance approach and stop the silo culture (H8)
- To ensure that policy aims to reflect the main concerns of citizens – not necessarily GDP (H9)
- To promote individual wellbeing i.e. facilitate people to make their own choices regarding what is important for their wellbeing and not decide for people what wellbeing involves (H10)
- To ensure citizen engagement in decision-making which affects their own lives (H11)
- To promote a different vision which is an alternative to the media-led campaigns on "necessary" government policy (H13)
- To facilitate quality input to wellbeing policy formulation and implementation (H1)
- To ensure that agencies delivering public and social services are continually improving, efficient and responsive to people's needs (H2)
- To promote fairness as a central guiding principle for all policy decisions (H3)
- To diminish barriers to wellbeing within our contemporary moment via a more informed, bottom-up approach to decision-making at policy level (H4)

I. Lifestyle
- To enhance quality of life-work balance (I2)*
- To improve childcare and maternity/paternity leave to enhance early family experience (I10)*
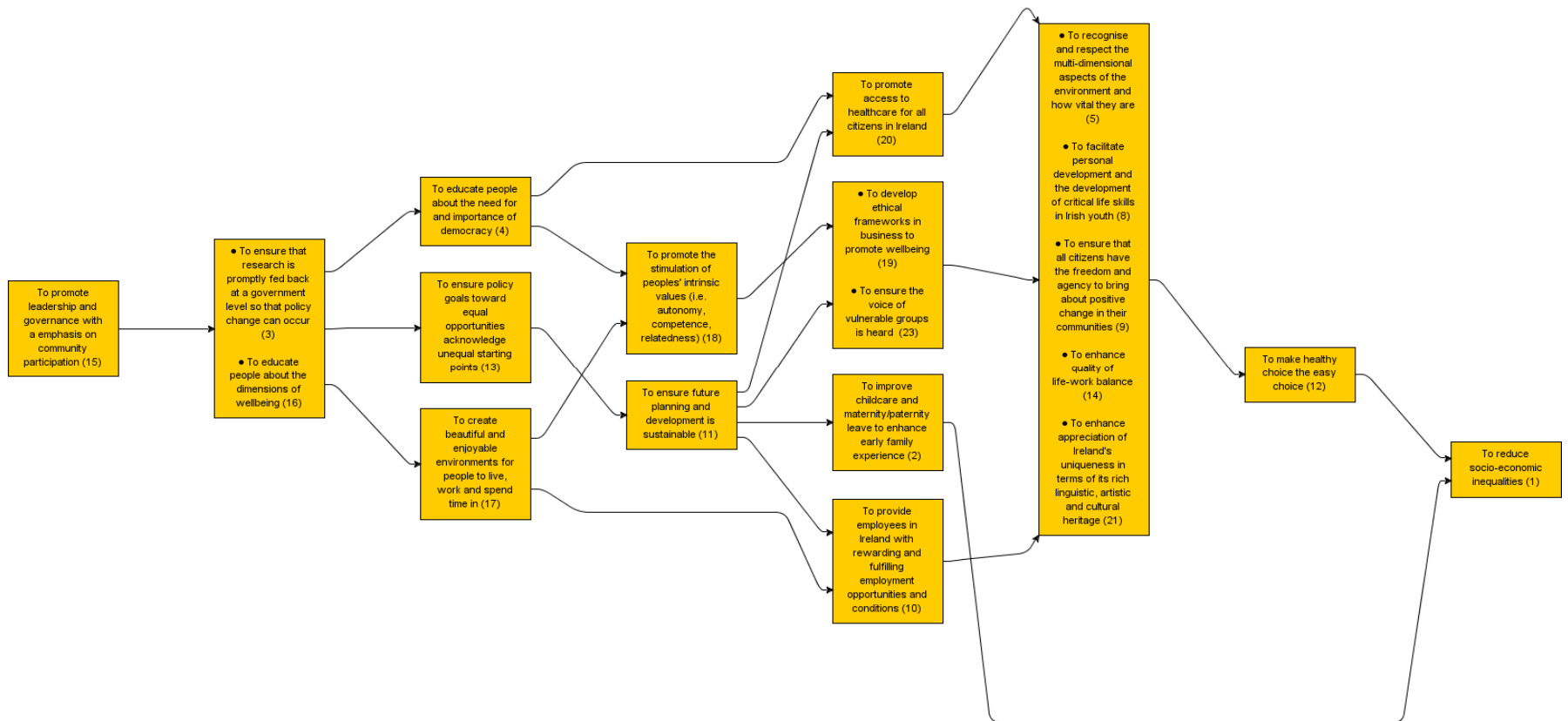- To reduce smoking levels in the population (I8)

- To reduce alcohol consumption across the entire population (I5)
- To make active travel the norm (I9)
- To help parents achieve health gains for their families through lifestyle change (I11)
- To promote positive mental health (I12)
- To implement national healthy eating and national physical activity guidelines (I14)
- To consider the impact of lifestyle on others and the environment (I7)
- To ensure that people can enjoy leisure and culture activities without spending much money (I4)
- To enhance the infrastructure to promote free play in a safe environment that allows children to grow healthily and develop social and life skills (I1)
- To facilitate the understanding of work-life balance (I6)
- To ensure that people have the opportunity to enjoy leisure and cultural activities (I3)
- To maximise the use of the living landscape (I13)

J. Equality
- To ensure policy goals toward equal opportunities acknowledge unequal starting points (J10)*
- To reduce socio-economic inequalities (J2)*
- To teach people to be empathetic from an early age (J8)
- To value each member of our community equally (J9)
- To ensure physically accessible buildings in all 1st, 2nd and 3rd level educational facilities to place all students on equal ground (J4)
- To promote equality of condition above equality of opportunity (J5)
- To tackle the significant inequalities in Irish society (J1)
- To engage in "levelling up" strategies (J17)
- To teach the history of equality in this country and others (J15)
- To educate what actions individuals and groups can progress to ensure equalities are defended (J16)
- To differentiate between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity (J11)
- To educate people about the importance of equality (J12)
- To encourage public debate about what equality means (J13)
- To enforce laws in relation to the provision of accessible information in public and education settings (J14)
- To identify where inequalities exist (J7)
- To educate people on the importance of relative position in society (J6)
- To ensure the equality of access to services and resources (J3)

Appendix B

Well-Being in Ireland Conference Strategic Objectives Structure

- To promote leadership and governance with a emphasis on community participation (15)

- ● To ensure that research is promptly fed back at a government level so that policy change can occur (3)
- ● To educate people about the dimensions of wellbeing (16)

- To educate people about the need for and importance of democracy (4)
- To ensure policy goals toward equal opportunities acknowledge unequal starting points (13)
- To create beautiful and enjoyable environments for people to live, work and spend time in (17)

- To promote the stimulation of peoples' intrinsic values (i.e. autonomy, competence, relatedness) (18)
- To ensure future planning and development is sustainable (11)

- To promote access to healthcare for all citizens in Ireland (20)
- ● To develop ethical frameworks in business to promote wellbeing (19)
- ● To ensure the voice of vulnerable groups is heard (23)
- To improve childcare and maternity/paternity leave to enhance early family experience (2)
- To provide employees in Ireland with rewarding and fulfilling employment opportunities and conditions (10)

- ● To recognise and respect the multi-dimensional aspects of the environment and how vital they are (5)
- ● To facilitate personal development and the development of critical life skills in Irish youth (8)
- ● To ensure that all citizens have the freedom and agency to bring about positive change in their communities (9)
- ● To enhance quality of life-work balance (14)
- ● To enhance appreciation of Ireland's uniqueness in terms of its rich linguistic, artistic and cultural heritage (21)

- To make healthy choice the easy choice (12)

- To reduce socio-economic inequalities (1)

Appendix C

Barriers to implementing wellbeing policies

A. Conceptual

Conceptual confusion

Too much argument amongst the believers about technical details

The gap between Rhetoric and Reality

Failure to recognise diversified needs across gender, class, disability and ethnicity

Tension between an emphasis on productivity versus efficiency

B. Political

Lack of leadership at political and administrative level

Inability to deal with backlash from power structures/interests

Lack of a political mandate

Resistance to wellbeing as a priority in time of crisis

Conflict for public resources (e.g, Health versus Education)

Short-termism of political electoral cycle

C. Data measurement, analysis, and interpretation

Lack of data

Misinterpretation of data

Distrust and suspicion of subjective wellbeing measures in terms of quality, resulting in unwillingness to make decisions based on wellbeing data

Governments and Ministers manipulating indicators

Lack of processing capacity to give the public clear, robust data and analysis and understanding of causality

Lack of inclusion in EU statistical work programme mean that wellbeing is not a priority to member states

Difficulty measuring progress in the context of the non-linearity of 'wicked problems'

D. Evidence

Lack of evidence that this approach makes a difference

Lack of evidence-based alternative to economics and economic policy

Shortage of good case studies

Lack of a compelling reason to change

E. Support

Lack of public awareness, buy in and demand

Shortage of philanthropic support to kick-start and advocate

Resistance from politicians to embrace wellbeing because of fear that it is too 'fluffy'

Lack of belief in the value of wellbeing as a policy objective

Lack of mainstream media interest in wellbeing

No Advocacy Lobby

Lack of NGO support

F. Attitude

Opposition from vested interests

Resistance to changes that might incur extra cost and are hard to manage

Resistance to paternalism (state/NGO)

Inability to innovate and think outside the box in the wellbeing policy space

Fear and hostility towards measurement that could show up policy failures

Hostility towards a composite index

Resistance from statisticians/analysts/academics that this is not the role for official statistics

G. Collaboration and Integration

Lack of incentives for collaboration across government departments and the wider public sector

Lack of integration (vertical & horizontal)

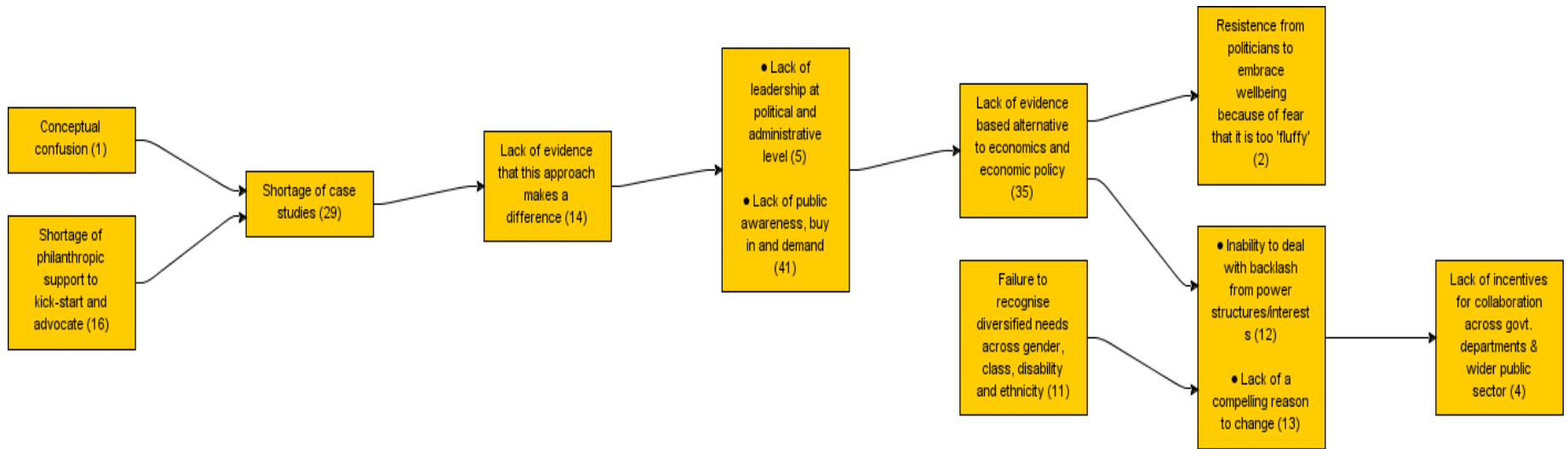Unwillingness to embrace co-production and participation

H. Resources

Inadequate resources, human and financial

Shortage of knowledgeable and passionate staff

Reduction in resources in government leading to a feeling that this is a thing we don't have time for

Appendix D

Structure of Barriers to Implementing Wellbeing Policy

<u>**Options for Overcoming barriers**</u>
<u>**for Support and Conceptual Categories**</u>

Support Category

-Create wellbeing movement, led by champion to speak to public, through media and public sector/business/NGOs through existing networks to advocate for change.

-Develop local and locally relevant case studies to consider compelling reasons for change.

-Approach government/philanthropists for co-funding of a roundtable.

-Identify group of individuals interested and with expertise in wellbeing to produce clear paper on how well-being issues could be incorporated into policy and advocated for.

-Get groups to prepare coherent arguments for funding proposal to philanthropic organisations.

-Identity ways that existing policy initiatives could be seen through wellbeing lens.

-Build consensus on well-being issues though communications strategy.

-Engage with journalists to start a conversation about well being.

-Find a small quick and cheap project about wellbeing to support and do it well.

-Find a political champion.

-Engage with the Irish Civil Service.

-Explore local as well as national dimensions.

-Promote awareness of issue with public- wellbeing independent!

-Look for support from academia/philanthropic groups- single issue groups, international bodies.

-Get support from senior politicians/civil servants to champion the issue.

-Capture media attention on the issue in a positive way, using a wellbeing index.

Conceptual Category

-Establish a roundtable of key influences to agree on what a wellbeing approach to public policy in Ireland would look like.

-Promote agreed concept of wellbeing in Ireland.

-Propose recommendations to political and administrative leaders.

-Create wellbeing groups to clarify meaning and logic of wellbeing for policy in Ireland.

-Show how engagement with wellbeing issues can deliver efficiency and address problems in public sector.

-Create a government sponsored group to define what wellbeing means to Ireland.

-Invite external experts (Stiglitz) to form a commission to make recommendations as to how to incorporate wellbeing into policy making.

-Be consistent in use of language

-Consult widely with civic society to find out what matters to the people of Ireland.

-Develop a communication strategy: who are you talking to, what is the message?

-Develop a clear conceptual framework that responds to issue that this is (not?) just fluffy and demonstrates clearly that this is more than happiness.

-Establish evidence that shows wellbeing is not in opposition to productivity and efficiency- e.g. happy workers = productive workers.

-Set up an engagement exercise with public/policy that develops what wellbeing is.

-Encourage dialogue around what is wellbeing and develop/establish clear definition for Ireland.

-Create a well-being index.

About the Whitaker Institute

The Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change is inspired by the legacy of pioneering statesperson Dr. T.K. Whitaker, and aims to adopt a similarly innovative, multidisciplinary and transformative approach to the challenges currently facing business and society, both in Ireland and internationally.

Over 200 members make up the faculty, creating the largest critical mass of business and social science researchers in Ireland, with expertise spanning across the College of Business, Public Policy and Law and the College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies. Subsuming the University's Centre for Innovation and Structural Change (CISC), the Whitaker Institute builds on a decade of research-excellence and policy-focused contributions supported by over €11 million in competitive national and international research funding.

The Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change applies a multi-perspective research approach to business and social issues, with an impact-led focus at the core of its endeavours. One of its key values is the promotion of a sustainable and inclusive society, influenced by the broad dissemination of rigorous and relevant research. Furthermore, the Whitaker Institute seeks to continue the tradition at NUI Galway of critically pursuing knowledge discovery that stimulates academic debates and opens public conversation to advance the greater good.

The Institute is named in honour of eminent economist and former Secretary of the Department of Finance, Dr. T.K. Whitaker, who played a central role in devising the economic plan that set Ireland on the road to regeneration in the early 1960s. Drawing inspiration from his unparalleled service to Ireland, the newly formed Whitaker Institute has over 200 members and serves as the country's largest research body focused on contemporary and relevant business, social and policy issues.

Dr. T.K. Whitaker

Dr. T.K. Whitaker is regarded as a pivotal figure in the economic and social development of modern Ireland. During his long and illustrious career, he was Secretary of the Department of Finance, Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, and founder of the Economic and Social Research Institute. He was also a member of Seanad Éireann from 1977 to 1982 and Chancellor of the National University of Ireland from 1976 to 1996.

The Institute houses twelve Research Clusters grouped under six Priority Research Themes:

- Business Performance, Agility and Governance
- Conflict and Collective Action
- Environment, Development and Sustainability
- Gender, Equality and the Knowledge Society
- Health and Wellbeing
- Innovation: People, Place and Society

For more information, please visit www.nuigalway.ie/whitakerinstitute

Health and Wellbeing Priority Research Theme

A main focus for the Health and Wellbeing research cluster is to use behavioural and social sciences to understand and improve health and Wellbeing across the lifespan. This reflects the collective expertise of members of the cluster in disciplines that contribute to understanding how biological, psychological, social and a range of contextual factors interact to impact on individual and population health and Wellbeing during the life course. The outcomes we are interested in encompass measures of health gains at the level of the individual, family, community and society, as well as appraisals of Wellbeing and life satisfaction. The cluster members are active in positive approaches such as prevention and resource development as well as identifying and tackling health and Wellbeing deficits and problems in our society.

Five key objectives for the cluster are to (i) produce high quality scientific outputs, (ii) attract major research funding to conduct high quality and sustainable programmes of scientific research, (iii) produce high quality scientists through PhD and postdoctoral training, (iv) translate research findings into implementable policy and practice changes that improve health and wellbeing, and (v) integrate these advances into teaching activities and engagement with the wider community.

We aim to achieve objectives (i) to (iii) by better enabling cluster members to conduct high quality science on health and wellbeing in a systematic and coordinated way that builds on existing strengths. The associated actions include supporting collaborative research and events between cluster members who work in complementary areas, the use of cluster resources and infrastructure to support conducting and disseminating research, and finally the nurturing of PhD, postdoctoral and early career academic staff to develop their programmes of research. Objectives (iv) and (v) are predicated on collaboration with research partners and end users, including (but not restricted to) people with chronic illness, health professionals, health and education policy makers, teachers, and the wider community.