

Beyond GDP

Measuring progress, true wealth, and the well-being of nations

Background and history of the Beyond GDP Initiative

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. Economic indicators such as GDP were never designed to be comprehensive measures of well-being. We need adequate indicators to address global challenges such as climate change, poverty, resource depletion, quality of life and health.

Initial conference in 2007

In 2007, the European Commission, European Parliament, Club of Rome, OECD and WWF hosted the high-level conference “Beyond GDP”. The objectives were to clarify which indices are most appropriate to measure progress, and how these can best be integrated into the decision-making process and taken up by public debate. The conference brought together over 650 policy makers, experts and civil society representatives to address these critical issues. Preceding the main conference, leading practitioners discussed the development and application of indicators of progress, true wealth, and well-being at an expert workshop. All the documents from the conference including a brief conference summary are available for download on the Beyond GDP website: www.beyond-gdp.eu/2007_conference.html.

EU Roadmap 2009 with five key actions

Spurred on by the success of the 2007 conference, the Beyond GDP partners have continued to work on improving our measures of progress, wealth and well-being. In August 2009, the European Commission released its Communication “GDP and beyond: Measuring progress in a changing world”. The Communication outlines an EU roadmap with five key actions to improve our indicators of progress in ways that meet citizens’ concerns and make the most of new technical and political developments:

- Complementing GDP with highly aggregated environmental and social indicators
- Near real-time information for decision-making
- More accurate reporting on distribution and inequalities
- Developing a European Sustainable Development Scoreboard
- Extending National Accounts to environmental and social issues.

Key issue on European and national agenda

These developments pushed the topic high on the European agenda. Having formerly been a subject mainly discussed among researchers and scholars at universities, the necessity of developing new indicators to show the prosperity of nations is now discussed at high level among European policy makers and national governments. The Beyond GDP initiative follows the debate and presents the latest news on its website at www.beyond-gdp.eu