

# Economy of wellbeing in the EU: people's wellbeing fosters economic growth

Finland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union wants EU decision-makers to recognise that wellbeing of people is a prerequisite for economic growth and social and economic stability. Economic growth also creates more opportunities to improve people's wellbeing.

Wellbeing is one of the cornerstones of the EU and a common European value. In the economy of wellbeing, public resources are allocated for improving people's wellbeing. Wellbeing means that people are healthier, more innovative and productive, and they work and pay taxes.

A wellbeing ageing population curbs the growth of costs in healthcare and social welfare. The European Commission estimates that the share of people aged 65 or over in the population will increase from the current 17.4% to 29.5% by 2060, while at the same time the population of working age is decreasing in the EU.

## Wellbeing policy and economic policy should go hand in hand

The economy of wellbeing approach is a comprehensive tool for developing policy-making in the EU and its member states. Wellbeing policy and economic policy are not exclusive but are interlinked. The EU should also strengthen the links between gender equality policy and economic policy. Promoting gender equality, reducing inequalities, creating more employment opportunities for women and helping people reconcile work and private life are all key objectives in terms of sustainable economic growth.

The cost of women's lower employment rate is estimated at around 2.8% of the EU's GDP. A higher level of gender equality would raise the GDP by 6.1–9.6% by 2050, according to the European Institute for Gender Equality.

The economy of wellbeing approach aims to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities for all. Investing

in wellbeing makes sense in economic terms even in times of economic downturn. Studies indicate that investing in education and training gives a significant boost to economic growth. There is also evidence that efficient preventive health services pay for themselves many times over. Yet, at present preventive services account for only 3% of health budgets in the EU, while curative services account for 97%.

## Council conclusions on the economy of wellbeing as a goal

Finland proposes that the Council adopt conclusions on the economy of wellbeing in October. The conclusions would include recommendations for measures to EU member states and the Commission.

It is important that we improve the wellbeing of EU citizens at the same time as we strengthen the social, economic and ecological sustainability of our societies. Within its competence, the EU must do more to promote occupational health and safety and gender equality, among other policies. The EU must also ensure that other policies have positive impacts on the health, social protection, employment and education of EU citizens.

The European Semester monitors the member states' budgetary stability, and the Council can adopt recommendations requiring member states to take action to correct identified imbalances. We need to identify the importance of policies and schemes that promote people's wellbeing to achieve sustainable economic growth and stability. It is essential that decision-makers in the EU and the member states collaborate horizontally across policies. Recognising people's wellbeing as a clear, long-term priority in the EU will increase the EU's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens.

**Efficient preventive health services pay for themselves many times over.**

### Inquiries:

Veli-Mikko Niemi, Director-General  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
tel. +358 295 163 425 [firstname.lastname@stm.fi](mailto:firstname.lastname@stm.fi)

Pasi Korhonen, Counsellor  
Permanent Representation of Finland to the EU  
tel. +32 473 534 081 [firstname.lastname@formin.fi](mailto:firstname.lastname@formin.fi)

