

**European Evangelical Alliance
Rue Archimède, 55-57
B-1000 Brussels – BELGIUM**

**Tel. / Fax +32 (0)27 32 16 08
www.europeanea.org**

**Christel Lamère NGNAMBI – Manager
christel.ngnambi@europeanea.org**

*I still can't believe that all we are
And that all of our dreams are nothing
more than material...
Souls aren't built of stone,
Sticks and bones.*

Song "4:12" by Jonathan Foreman, 2006

Foreword by Gordon Showell-Rogers, General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance

The EEA is very pleased to submit this contribution.

The EEA believes passionately that conversation is essential as Europe seeks to agree social norms and criteria for community building.

The EEA believes that the faith communities of Europe have a particularly important contribution to make to the debate about 'Well-Being': we humbly submit our citizens' contribution to that debate on behalf of Europe's evangelical Protestant communities.

Gordon Showell-Rogers

Brussels, February 2008

Table of contents

Foreword by Gordon Showell-Rogers, General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance	1
Table of contents	2
Technical notes	3
1. About the European Evangelical Alliance	3
2. How this document was put together	3
Methodology	3
Vision and Motivation	4
A principled contribution to the debate on Europe’s social reality	5
1. Europe’s social reality: arguing from a Judaeo-Christian worldview	5
2. Issues for discussion: a response from Europe’s evangelical Protestants	6
2.1. About observed trends	6
2.2. About Well-being	6
(A) Answer	6
(B) Rationale	6
What is well-being?	8
(A) Answer	9
(B) Rationale	10
Societal obstacles	10
TABLE 1 – Towards an objective assessment of obstacles to social well-being according to the <i>Relational Proximity Model</i>	12
Policy and regulatory obstacles	16
2.3. About Opportunity and Access	19
3. Concluding remarks	21
Bibliography	22

Technical notes

1. About the European Evangelical Alliance

The EEA is an Alliance of more than 50 European grassroots national and transnational evangelical movements from all Protestant traditions present in 33 European countries. The EEA serves as a platform for common action and a voice for Europe's 15 million Evangelicals. The Brussels office of the EEA promotes active citizenship of its constituency and represents it to the European Institutions.

The Brussels office is part of the socio-political network of the EEA. It actively engages its **grassroots membership** with European political developments and pan-European socio-political cooperation. The EEA is involved in monitoring broad or specific areas of proposed EU legislation. Our main areas of interest currently include *religious freedom and secularity, development, immigration, awareness-raising on environmental issues, non-discrimination, as well as cultural and religious diversity*. The EEA, therefore, aims to facilitate interaction between its members as well as to act as an interface to the European institutions. The EEA's Brussels office actively represents the concerns of the EU Institutions to its 34 national Evangelical Alliances (2 in Belgium), and affiliated networks and agencies, and vice versa.

The EEA **facilitates activities** around issues of culture, values, society and politics. The EEA is committed to a consensual and cooperative style of political engagement, and encourages its whole constituency to follow its (significantly influential) lead locally, nationally and at the European level. It has the privilege of a wide range of connections both inside and outside the faith communities. The EEA has a wide range of activities, including monitoring legislation, launching several actions at European level such as conferences, a European Platform on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination, interactive electronic communication and consultations across all Europe, visits to our member Alliances in 33 countries, and networking, to name but a few.

2. How this document was put together

Methodology

As part of EEA's activity in Brussels and its engagement with active citizenship, the Brussels office had been monitoring the Commission's "Social Reality Stocktaking" since the spring of 2007. When the public consultation was announced in July by the Commission, EEA leadership took the decision to

promote a principled response to the Commission's call representing the voices of Europe's 15 million evangelical Christians.

The EEA is a membership organisation, which means that we have a strong ethos of bottom-up, rather than top-down, strategic planning. The proposal coming from the Commission had thus to first be presented to representatives of our more than 50 member national Evangelical Alliances and transnational or pan-European networks and agencies. The "Social Reality Stocktaking" was presented at the occasion of a plenary meeting during EEA's annual general assembly in mid-October 2007 in Greece. The membership's response was very positive.

The EEA is a grassroots movement, which according to practices held in local evangelical churches across Europe elect their representatives. As for socio-political issues, the EEA has appointed a representative organ, namely the Public Policy Authorisation Team (PPAT) composed of elected delegates and EEA staff. The PPAT's task is to initiate EEA's global policies and to ensure a democratic control. It is also a loose working group directly representing local/national views to the European outfit, and conversely conveying pan-European social and political concerns at the grassroots level. The PPAT wholeheartedly endorsed the Brussels office's initiative to produce a principled response to the Commission's public consultation representing evangelical Protestantism and its 15 million citizens.

With the help of the PPAT, a Europe-wide overall call to responses from members was launched. Various contributions and inputs have been collected from places like **Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland and Scotland)**. We were even encouraged by the kind comments of our members from non-EU countries. In parallel, the Brussels office has activated its think tank resources and contacts to articulate and add to the EEA's common response with a European perspective and other relevant insights perhaps not available at national levels.

Vision and Motivation

As a grassroots movement, the EEA can legitimately claim to represent 15 million citizens. We are very pleased to be actively asked for our views, something which does not happen often to Europe's evangelicals. As an Alliance of Alliances and organisations, we thus feel compelled to participate and join the debate: we believe that we have important things to contribute to this public consultation, and a duty to speak up!

It is an exciting opportunity to make a difference to the future of Europe through participation in EU decision making for a generation.

A principled contribution to the debate on Europe's social reality

1. Europe's social reality: arguing from a Judaeo-Christian worldview

This short section aims at raising some implications related to the worldview from which this document has been produced, especially key relevant characteristics of our thinking as well as the values pertaining to this worldview.

Unity within a hugely diverse community is one of the major marks of the EEA's constituency. This unity reflects remarkable unanimity about values, across the social, economic, racial, national, and political variety within the constituency. A Christian emphasis on integration of individual life choices with the values of the community as a whole help to provide some real cohesion to the EEA's public policy proposals. The afore-mentioned shared value system and the community's experience of processing its diversity further inform the EEA's proposals.

As evangelical Protestants we believe in the endeavour to think through the implications of the faith in all areas of life. Throughout modern history a host of individuals, famous or less well-known (e.g. John Wesley, Revd Martin Luther King) have been propelled by their faith to further their commitment to justice, peace, equality and social welfare in the public arena. Still today, many institutions and people promote thinking and action of individuals to live and act according to Christian values, whether in charities, deaconship (social action of churches), voluntary action, think tanks, and many other.

As believers confronted to the new as well as the old challenges in this day and age, Christians have an incentive to continuously reflect on the state of the world and their responsibility both as believers, as 'neighbours', and as citizens. Concerned by the business of our 'common house', we then join the debate on well-being with our contribution informed by the Judaeo-Christian values, a contribution which we also wish to be politically effective, in the desire to achieve constructive change in public policy.

2. Issues for discussion: a response from Europe's evangelical Protestants

2.1. About observed trends

Generally agree. For sources we use, please refer to footnotes and bibliography.

2.2. About Well-being

2.2.1. Questions 4.2. (What is well-being?)

(A) Answer

Literally all contributors to this response paper raise a certain level of dissatisfaction with the way well-being is being usually perceived as hedonistic satisfaction, or happiness. The very phrase used in BEPA's Consultation Paper, '**hedonic treadmill**' (p. 13), actually resonated in many respondents. "The 'hedonistic treadmill' does indeed not satisfy", an EEA contribution mentions. A Spanish contribution states, "finally it appears that these targets [employment, education, GDP, health, etc. ... don't] guarantee real personal satisfaction. One wonders if personal happiness should be included in the agenda of any political institution." On the whole, respondents' understanding of well-being witnessed a strong element of *a missing dimension in the way we deal with well-being*.

Answering to the question, "What really matters in making our lives happy and satisfied?", and listing key factors to well-being, respondents acknowledged the importance of factors suggested in the Consultation Paper, with a stronger insistence on factors such as opportunity for a good family life (including the extended family), good neighbours and friends, good health, and feeling secure. Some factors like an environmentally-friendly living were also mentioned. More materialistic factors, such as being in work, satisfaction in job or adequate housing are certainly seen as 'basic', but in several instances it is stressed that "beyond a certain point ..., an increase in wealth has no impact at all on the increase in happiness" (based on the works of Richard Layard¹), and that, **ultimately, there is more to well-being than focusing on happiness.**

(B) Rationale

The Consultation Paper rightly acknowledges that, in a society in which individuals define themselves by the choices they make as consumers, most of us find the 'hedonic treadmill' ultimately unsatisfying, and as it may indeed prove harmful, we tend to value post-materialistic products of consumption (p. 13), like fitness, relaxation and food promoted as healthy, and thus tend to value increasingly more nonmaterial things which could make us feel happy. This is suggested in the

¹ Richard Layard (2006) *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*.

way in which question 4.2 of the Consultation Paper is worded; not only absolute levels of material possessions, education and health, but *perceptions of how much we are comfortable* will equally influence our well-being; or rather, *how happy* we may say we are.

In these terms, BEPA makes the point that, beside lifespan (pp. 18–20), *subjective* well-being, which is defined by pleasurable elements in our lives (e.g. being in work, job satisfaction, good family life, adequate housing, good health, access to educational opportunity, etc.), is the one dimension which constitutes our well-being (Section 3). This reflects a view of happiness in which happiness is to be understood or perceived essentially as *hedonic happiness*, a view which believes the goal of life to be the experience of pleasure or feeling happy².

To our eyes the ‘hedonic treadmill’ phrase can thus drive us to two quite differing observations on what well-being is and how to understand it. Firstly, **a minimalist observation that merely material possessions are unsatisfying**, and appeal for post-materialistic ‘feelgood’ consumption and choices—thus setting a policy orientation: in this case we limit ourselves to define well-being as hedonic (or pleasure-based) happiness. Social policy should then content itself with maximising subjective pleasure. However, for several reasons³, and from what the reaction of Europe’s evangelicals has communicated⁴, something else certainly is needed than a pleasure dimension alone. As argued on page 18 of the Consultation Paper, feeling happy is not an argument to say that a person is necessarily well-off. A second, more comprehensive approach would then affirm that **we need a broader understanding of happiness which also embraces objective measures assessing the quality (and not just the quantity) of well-being**, classically termed as a *eudaemonic* understanding of happiness, or ‘flourishing’⁵. Furthermore, the European Evangelical Alliance subscribes to the view that **measures of social well-being** need go beyond the subjective, psychological dimension to include **the pro-social dimension**:

- Assessing and improving social well-being collectively cannot avoid considering the essentially relational nature of the human being.

² John Ashcroft, Phil Caroe & The Relationships Foundation (2007) *Thriving Lives: which way for well-being?*

³ There are several objections to limiting oneself to a subjective, pleasure-based understanding of happiness. The main one probably is that pleasure is not a good measure of well-being, especially if the pleasant experience is unsustainable, limited to short term, or results in greater harm later. Other objections include the impossibility of appreciating the long-term validity of a specific pleasurable experience, or other theoretical problems (e.g., the subjective impossibility to evaluate risk properly and thus render an accurate appreciation of one’s well-being) [Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 9].

⁴ For instance, referring to modern positive psychologist Martin Seligman’s understanding of happiness, an English contribution stated that “it is virtually impossible to contemplate [authentic happiness life] without regard to goodness and virtue.”

⁵ Happiness is classically understood in two Greek concepts, *hedonismos* (the pleasant life) and *eudaimonia* (the good life). ‘The pleasant life’ and ‘the good life’ are terms coined by Seligman together with ‘the meaningful life’, which altogether forms what he calls ‘authentic happiness’ [see Martin Seligman (2003): *Authentic Happiness*].

- Individuals' experience of well-being is deeply influenced by connections⁶, whether within family, workplace, local community, friendship networks, or the wider society. This means that our collective well-being depends on choices not only done for the sake of our individual happiness, but also for that of people whom we are connected to in one way or another.

Principle 1

"The *quality* of people's social relationships is crucial to their well-being."⁷ *Pro-social* criteria allow us to distinguish between socially 'good' and 'bad' forms of subjective well-being, thus not only on grounds of personal and subjective experience but based on *the objective ability to make positive social contributions with or without seeking personal gain*.

What is well-being?

We perceive well-being as three-dimensional:

- pleasurable lives
- sustainable/sensible lives
- pro-social lives

Because of reasons cited above and in footnotes, using pleasure/happiness as a ground to understand well-being limits it to a very subjective, very private, and somewhat elusive, notion, tied to a subjective valuing of material elements in our lives. Enlarging the concept to the qualitative notions of sensibleness and sustainable subjective experience of well-being adds psychological validity⁸, and a possibility to explain some people's preference for purposeful and meaningful choices which are in accordance with their own selves rather than sheer pleasure or material comfort (e.g., volunteering or care for the environment). The more

⁶ "... **social connections, including marriage, of course, but not limited to that, are among the most robust correlates of subjective well-being.** People who have close friends and confidants, friendly neighbours and supportive co-workers are less likely to experience sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem and problems with eating and sleeping. **Indeed a common finding from research on the correlates of life satisfaction is that subjective well-being is best predicted by the breadth and depth of one's social connections.**" Helliwell & Putnam (2004): The Social Context of Well-Being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (London), Series B, 359: 1435–1446 (31 August 2004). Emphases added.

⁷ Diener & Seligman (2004): Beyond Money: Toward an economy of well-being. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5, 1-31. Emphasis added. Authors add, "People need supportive, positive relationships and social belonging to sustain well-being. Evidence [shows] that the need to belong, to have close and long-term social relationships, is a fundamental human need, and that well-being depends on this need being well met. People need social bonds in committed relationships, not simply interactions with strangers, to experience well-being."

⁸ See e.g., Waterman (1993): Two conceptions of happiness: contrasts of personal expressiveness (eudaimonia) and hedonic enjoyment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 678–691. — Ryff & Keyes (1995): The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 719–727.

People usually prefer to do a sensible or good thing rather than simply a pleasurable one, unless they have a stronger incentive to do otherwise. Indeed choices founded on pleasure-based happiness can lead to irresponsible or even self-destructive behaviours. A Scottish contribution raised the issue of **irresponsible parenting** which strikes Scotland, particularly the de-responsibilisation of parents who move responsibility for disciplining their children onto the education system. This seems to be true particularly in lower-income families.

objective, pro-social dimension, stresses the importance of individuals being able to make a positive contribution to society **in order to ensure the social sustainability of well-being**, whether or not their actions create a personal sense of well-being, either immediately or in the long run. Besides, it is a widely accepted fact that **relationships play a greater role than any other factor on well-being**.⁹

Therefore, and given that social connections are fundamental to our well-being:

Principle 2

We contend that policy and regulations aiming at advancing social well-being should primarily pursue one goal: maximising the quality of social relationships, or connectedness, so that the best of the manifold contributions to well-being from social bonds is achieved. As BEPA most rightly states, “[t]his question should be at the heart of everything the EU and its Member States do.”

2.2.2. Question 4.2. (Obstacles to well-being)

(A) Answer

Many obstacles have been cited or evoked by respondents from various places in Europe: the lack of values, poverty, the impact of secularisation, intolerance, lack of recognition of diversity (esp. the diversity of value systems), inequality, lack of mutual trust in society, environmental problems, individualism, materialism, insecurity, liberalisation, indifference, and a few others.

This pell-mell citation of perceived obstacles actually reveals a constant of underlying principles behind the ideas raised, revolving around **the importance of values**.

Therefore we find it hardly feasible to ‘pontificate’ on obstacles to well-being in Europe. This said, a key principle to understanding obstacles to well-being emerged especially in a French contribution, stating that: **the economy serves the human, and not the other way around**.

Concerning economic liberalism coupled with globalisation, there is a way to be found, and Europe can be a favourable place for this (if only European institutions want it); there is a way to be found so that ‘the economic’ [*l’économique*] be not a supreme value, and so that humankind stays at the centre of decision-making, far from being the adjustment value of decision-making (particularly, this is one of the recommendations of the last report in France from the CERC – Conseil de l’Emploi, des Revenus, et de la Cohésion sociale [Council for Employment, Revenue and Social Cohesion], chaired by Jacques DELORS).

⁹ See e.g., Diener & Seligman, *op. cit.*; Helliwell & Putnam, *op. cit.*, Rutherford & Shah (eds.) (2006): *The Good Society*, 55. This fact is widely accepted by academics and on both sides of the political divide.

(B) Rationale

Principle 3

Economic progress should be treated as an element of, not a precondition for, social well-being.

The French concept of “*délitement du lien social*” (disintegration/breaking up of social bonds) encompasses the reported perceptions of what the obstacles to well-being are. With disintegrated social relationships, the effects of strategies and policies e.g. aiming at better purchase power, integration of migrants, tolerance, etc. will not be fully received or diffused in society.

As the Public Consultation paper states, “[p]ublic policy imperatives, such as 'Growth and Jobs', the Lisbon strategy, and the drive for greater competitiveness are not ends in themselves – but means to an end - the well-being of European citizens.” (p. 6). This statement highlights the existence of immediate policy implications in advancing well-being in Europe. Evangelical Protestants in Europe, as we observe, share the view that there exists policies and regulations concerning economic and social activity which can hinder social cohesion and sustainability. As we observe, a major aspect of hindering well-being is thus hampered social connectedness. But before turning to policy and regulatory obstacles, comments made by respondents to the public consultation lead us to consider elements in the state of society as such which form obstacles to thriving lives.

Societal obstacles

The hotchpotch of perceived obstacles to well-being cited either by BEPA in the Consultation Paper, or by respondents to the European Evangelical Alliance, only reveal how difficult it may be to refer to overarching models to assess social progress, and thus target the obstacles to well-being in the fullest sense implied by question 4.2 of the background document—pages 17 to 20 explain this difficulty quite well. Likewise, *measures of the quality of social relationships* are rather inconsistently reported. It is in fact not simple to (1) agree on the social objectives of the European society, (2) quantify social inputs and outcomes, (3) predict behavioural outcomes; in addition, attempts to evaluate social progress are often made in isolation from a solid, tested framework.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Relationships Forum & Relationships Foundation (2007): *Stating the Obvious? The Case for integrated public policy*

Considering this, and drawing on the approach devised and the work carried out by the Relationships Foundation¹¹, the EEA would propose a distinct approach to relational analysis. The goal is not especially to explain perceived obstacles to well-being according to pre-existing categories (whether insecurity, intolerance, inequality, secularisation, indifference, liberalisation or whatever—for each obstacle evoked have very diverse impacts), but to **elucidate the extent to which relationships are affected by certain societal trends, i.e. what dimensions of social cohesion and well-being are affected by these trends—we call this *relational assessment***. Only after having done this will we be able to identify the extent to which a trend is in fact an obstacle to well-being.

Principle 4

Relationships are the core of social cohesion and well-being, and this appeals for *incorporating relational measures in public policy assessment*. The basis for a solid, tested framework to do so points towards:

1. Identification of key groups of relationships in the society
2. A preliminary set of relational indicators specific to each of the groups
3. An understanding of the underlying characteristics of relationships that contribute to social well-being
4. Insight as to the mechanisms by which public policy can affect the underlying attitudes and behaviours that determine the quality of relationships.

Table 1 on the next pages shows how we can use an objective assessment of obstacles to social well-being while focusing on relationships, in order to be able to incorporate relational measures in public policy assessment.

As we would like to use and test this framework, it shall serve as a basis for the response to other questions of the stocktaking's background document.

¹¹ The Relationships Foundation defines itself as “the think tank for a better connected society”. They describe: “[w]e study the effect that culture, business and government have on relationships. We create new ideas for strengthening social connections and campaign on issues where relationships are being undermined. And we train and equip people to think relationally for themselves.” The Relationships Foundation, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge, CB1 2NZ. Website: www.relationshipsfoundation.org. E-mail: info@relationshipsfoundation.org.

TABLE 1 – Towards an objective assessment of obstacles to social well-being according to the Relational Proximity Model

Key groups of relationships in the society	Preliminary set of relational indicators	<i>Policy-sensitive group characteristics</i>	Characteristics of relationships that contribute to social well-being (bold means specific to group)	Possible objective relational indicators
NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILIES	<p align="center">Intra-family trust and commitment</p> <p align="center">Marriage rate</p> <p align="center">Partnership rate</p> <p align="center">Divorce rate</p> <p align="center">Birth rate</p> <p align="center">Levels of household debt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key component of individual well-being • Specific form of inter-generational relationship • Important source of social support • Interaction of work and family stress • Nuclear family is importantly affected by working hours, time spent together with parents & children • Extended family is importantly affected by relocation 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u> Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u> Frequency of physical and emotional encounter, length and stability of marriages and of partnerships, length and stability of family relationships, time spent with family, total working hours, and extent of unsocial working hours</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u> Knowledge of family members' activities, skills and interests, knowledge of working practices and working times</p> <p><u>PARITY</u> Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect in family relationships, power sharing</p> <p><u>COMMONALITY</u> Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of diversity</p>	<p>Number of physical encounters with family</p> <p>Number of phone calls to family</p> <p>Number of electronic communications</p> <p>Perceived quality of communication</p> <p>Frequency of contacts with family</p> <p>Length of marriages and of partnerships</p> <p>Stability of marriages and of partnerships</p> <p>Length of family relationships</p> <p>Stability of family relationships</p> <p>Total working hours</p> <p>Extent of unsocial working hours</p> <p>Extent of knowledge (several items), <i>Perception gap analysis</i></p> <p>Accountability to spouse/parent/child</p> <p>Pecuniary independence</p> <p>Modes of conflict resolution</p> <p>Perceived burden-sharing</p> <p>Appreciation of diversity within family</p>
NEIGHBOURHOOD AND LOCAL COMMUNITY (N&LC)	<p align="center">Social isolation of older people: number of contacts per week, percentage who feel lonely</p> <p align="center">Intra-community relations: crime levels, proportion knowing names of neighbours,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importantly affected by anti-social behaviour • Greater risk of loneliness • Greater risk of isolation of elderly people in single person households • Importantly affected by low levels of trust • Importantly affected by reduced associational activity 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u> Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication, visits to neighbours</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u> Frequency of physical and emotional encounter, stability of neighbourhood and local community relationships, time spent with neighbours, length of residence within N&LC</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u> Knowledge of neighbours' activities, skills and interests, knowledge of working practices and working times</p> <p><u>PARITY</u> Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect in family relationships, power sharing</p>	<p>Number of physical encounters with N&LC</p> <p>Number of phone calls to N&LC</p> <p>Number of visits within N&LC</p> <p>Number of electronic communication within N&LC</p> <p>Proportion knowing names of neighbours</p> <p>Percentage who feel lonely</p> <p>Rate of associational activity</p> <p>Number of neighbourhood meetings</p> <p>Perceived quality of communication</p> <p>Frequency of contacts within N&LC</p> <p>Length of residence within N&LC</p> <p>Stability of N&LC relationships</p> <p>'Favours' given and received within the N&LC</p> <p>Extent of knowledge (several items), <i>Perception gap analysis</i></p> <p>Perceived respect from/for neighbours</p> <p>Openness to neighbours</p>

	<p>incidents of vandalism, percentage drug addiction, suicide rate</p>		<p><u>COMMONALITY</u> Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of diversity</p>	<p>Crime levels (both big and petty crimes) Percentage drug addiction Suicide rate Modes of conflict resolution Perceived burden-sharing Appreciation of diversity within N&LC</p>
<p>BETWEEN NEIGHBOURHOODS</p>	<p>Levels of income inequality within defined geographic areas</p> <p>Mix of housing tenure within defined areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatened by extremes of inequality, segregation of communities by income, reduced willingness to fund services that are seen to benefit only 'others' Strengthened by dispersal of social housing Positively affected by integrative and inclusive schools 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u> Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u> Frequency of physical and emotional encounter, stability of relationships between richer and poorer neighbourhoods, time spent with persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u> Knowledge of activities, skills and interests of persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood, knowledge of working practices and working times</p> <p><u>PARITY</u> Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect between socioeconomic groups, power sharing</p> <p><u>COMMONALITY</u> Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of diversity</p>	<p>Gini indexes within and differentials between defined geographic areas</p> <p>Number of encounters with persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood</p> <p>Number of friends from a different socioeconomic background</p> <p>Socioeconomic mix in schools</p> <p>Mix of housing tenure within defined areas</p> <p>Infrastructure connectedness between defined geographic areas</p> <p>Extent of knowledge (several items), <i>Perception gap analysis</i></p> <p>Perceived respect from/for persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood</p> <p>Number of public places and activities favouring socioeconomic mix and encounters with persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood</p> <p>Availability of public places favouring socioeconomic mix and encounters with persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood</p> <p>Equality of access to power</p>
<p>BETWEEN COMMUNITARIAN GROUPS (ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, LINGUISTIC, ETC) AND GENDER GROUPS</p>	<p>Inter-ethnic relations, incidents of ethnic violence, comparative income/education levels</p> <p>Gender relations: incidence of domestic violence/ rape/ prostitution, hits on pornographic websites, gender ratio at different</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues of integration Public perception of migration Public focus on Muslim communities Current greater fragility of relations with communities from Muslim backgrounds (perceptions, clichés, etc) Relation between general segregation along religious, ethnic or other lines, and diversity and inclusion within the workforce 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u> Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u> Frequency of physical and emotional encounter, stability of relationships between communities and genders, time spent with persons from different backgrounds</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u> Knowledge of activities, worldviews, values and interests of persons from different backgrounds, perception of migration, knowledge of cultural and religious practices, knowledge of other communities' values, knowledge of other groups' languages</p> <p><u>PARITY</u> Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect in</p>	<p>Gini indexes within and differentials between communitarian groups, and men and women</p> <p>Number of encounters with persons from other community</p> <p>Number of friends from a different other backgrounds etc</p> <p>Number of intercultural/interethnic/interfaith activities</p> <p>Ethnic and religious mix in schools</p> <p>Geographic segregation rates</p> <p>Media and other public visibility of ethnic, religious or other groups</p> <p>Extent of knowledge (several items), <i>Perception gap analysis</i></p> <p>Perceived respect from/for persons from other backgrounds etc</p> <p>Number of public places and activities favouring mix and encounters with persons from other backgrounds etc</p> <p>Availability of public places favouring mix and encounters with persons from other backgrounds etc</p> <p>Number of multi-lingual speakers</p> <p>Equality of access to power</p>

	educational levels		<p>intercultural/interethnic/interfaith relationships, diversity and inclusion within the workforce, power sharing</p> <p><u>COMMONALITY</u></p> <p>Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity</p>	<p>Beliefs on gender, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation etc</p> <p>Incidence of domestic violence/ rape</p> <p>Incidence of prostitution</p> <p>Hits on pornographic websites</p> <p>Gender ratio at different educational levels</p> <p>Levels of appreciation of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity</p>
INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	<p>Wealth transfers between generations</p> <p>Levels of contact between children and grandparents</p> <p>Attitudes of the elderly towards youth, and vice versa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of on the choices and resources available to future generations is a key sustainability • There is a fiscal dimension to the relationship through national debt and welfare commitments as well as an environmental dimension • The social aspect includes both the current state of relationships, as well as the social capital, or possibly cycles of disadvantage, bequeathed to the next generation 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u></p> <p>Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u></p> <p>Frequency of physical and emotional encounter, time spent with persons from different generation</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u></p> <p>Knowledge of elders' activities, skills and interests, public perception of eldership, knowledge of other generations' values, knowledge of other generations' (hi)stories</p> <p><u>PARITY</u></p> <p>Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect in interethnic relationships, equity of wealth transfers between generations, power sharing</p> <p><u>COMMONALITY</u></p> <p>Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of generational diversity</p>	<p>Gini indexes (within and) differentials between generations</p> <p>Number of encounters with persons from other generation</p> <p>Number of connections with persons from other generation</p> <p>Number of intergenerational activities</p> <p>Generational mix in public life and discourse</p> <p>Media and other public visibility of the elderly</p> <p>Extent of knowledge (several items), <i>Perception gap analysis</i></p> <p>Perceived respect from/for persons from other generation, esp. the elderly</p> <p>Number of public places and activities favouring mix and encounters with persons from other generation, esp. the elderly</p> <p>Availability of public places favouring mix and encounters with persons from other generation, esp. <i>for</i> the elderly</p> <p>Numbers of young, middle-aged, and senior workers</p> <p>Equality of access to power</p> <p>Equality of access to employment</p> <p>Attitudes of the elderly towards youth, and vice versa</p> <p>Levels of appreciation of generational diversity in the public square</p>
LOCAL POLITICAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS	<p>Trust in the institutions</p> <p>Numbers of cases of fraud, corruption, censures by standards offices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social capital theorists have focused on the importance of the health of institutions for social and economic progress, as well as for the protection of the environment. 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u></p> <p>Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, quality of communication with politicians, and with official institutions or representatives thereof</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u></p> <p>Frequency of physical and emotional encounter</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u></p> <p>Knowledge of debates, activities and interests of public institutions, public understanding of the workings of public institutions, knowledge of institutions' missions and founding values</p> <p><u>PARITY</u></p> <p>Participation in decision-making, equity in distribution of risk and reward, dignity and respect in implementation and use of public service, levels of transparency, public fairness, non-</p>	<p>Levels of trust in the institutions</p> <p>Access to public information</p> <p>Percentage who feel close to their institutions</p> <p>Incidence of violence against public servants</p> <p>Turnout rates to elections</p> <p>Responsiveness to public consultations</p> <p>Perceived representativeness of public servants</p> <p>Perceived representativeness of local/regional/ state institutions</p> <p><u>Support for the EU (e.g. see Eurobarometer 67)</u></p> <p>Perceived representativeness of European Institutions</p> <p>Assessment of the national economic situation</p> <p>The main concerns of European citizens</p> <p>Decision-making level for certain policies</p> <p>Support for membership of the European Union</p> <p>The benefits of membership of the European Union</p> <p>Image of the European Union</p>

			<p>corruption <u>COMMONALITY</u> Sharing of purposes and views, appreciation of public service and of service offered by public/political institutions</p>	<p>Trust in the European Commission Trust in the European Parliament Support for further enlargement</p> <p>Numbers of cases of fraud, corruption, censures by standards offices</p>
EMPLOYER– EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS	<p>Workplace relationships: extent of absenteeism and pay differentials within organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This relationship is of particular concern where unrestrained power differentials create potential for exploitation. • Purposeful work, opportunities for personal development, job security, employee welfare, health and safety, as well as provision for old age, incapacity and unemployment are all important considerations 	<p><u>DIRECTNESS</u> Rate of physical encounters, rate of non-physical encounters, good working practices, employee representation on management boards</p> <p><u>CONTINUITY</u> Open-ended contracts of employment, incentives to retain personnel long-term, frequency of physical and emotional encounter</p> <p><u>MULTIPLICITY</u> Employer recognition of employee domestic commitments when planning work rotas & atypical working time, recognition of employee aspirations when planning training/ promotions</p> <p><u>PARITY</u> Ability of employees to influence decisions relating to their work, delegation in multi-national/site organisations to national/site management, absence of abusive relationships, levels of transparency in corporate governance</p> <p><u>COMMONALITY</u> Employee share option schemes, works councils, employee representation in decision making boards & committees</p>	<p>Number and quality of contact between employer and employee Satisfaction expressed in appraisals Turnover rates Number of strikes Absentee rates Rates of competition to fill vacancies Internal promotions Take up of share option schemes</p>

Inspired from: | John Ashcroft, Phil Caroe & The Relationships Foundation (2007) *Thriving Lives: which way for well-being?*, 38-40
 | Relationships Forum & Relationships Foundation (2007): *Stating the Obvious? The Case for integrated public policy*, 28-31

Please also refer to the attached appendix |

Policy and regulatory obstacles

Relational well-being as a European expectation

To be sure, economic/material well-being is, and should always be, a concern for *pleasurable lives* in Europe. But is ‘*growth and jobs*’ the golden way to advancing *social well-being*, at the centre of which relationships lie?

In fact looking at Special Eurobarometer 273 on “European Social Reality”, it is striking to see that **people tend to value family, friends and leisure more highly than work**.¹² Similarly Special Eurobarometer 273 acknowledges the huge relational importance and social role of the family as a support network.¹³ Also, *available time* is the nonmaterial item of life satisfaction with which Europeans feel most unhappy,¹⁴ and above all, very striking is the fact that **economic growth scores very low as an issue of national concern** for either present or next generations.¹⁵ This appears to us as a strong indication that relational well-being is a significant expectation of European citizens, and that relational improvement constitutes a central leverage for *social well-being* in Europe—with compelling implications for policy.

Do some dimensions of public policy hamper social connectedness? Considering the importance given by Europeans to relationships (family, friends and leisure), one must not ignore the interactions that economic policies have with social well-being, especially when these are based on the assumption that economic growth or being in work is the solution to enhance Europe’s social situation. Instead, our observations lead us to posit the following:

Principle 5

- Public policy should not prioritise material wealth at the expense of relational well-being.
- Policy in Europe should consider Europeans’ greater concern for social connectedness than for economic growth.
- Pro-social connectedness, or relational well-being, seems to play a far greater role in social well-being than economic growth or jobs.

Assessing the pro-social (and other) quality of public policy

¹² Special Eurobarometer 273 “European Social Reality” / Wave 66.3 – *TNS Opinion & Social*, p. 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7. One could deplore the fact that only two nonmaterial items of life satisfaction were proposed to respondents, whereas elements such as family support are proved to powerfully contribute to psychosocial wellness, and thus well-being.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 43 and 52. Only 7% of Europeans list economic growth among the three main issues of concern to them. Roughly as few people (10%) believe it will be a concern for the next generation.

Better Regulation lies at the heart of the European Commission’s “Partnership for Growth and Jobs”, whilst there are principled efforts to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of well-being into policymaking in Europe. The concern with Europe’s social situation brings us to ask whether societal trends, and particularly policies and regulations produce good results in terms of well-being. Put differently, this begs the question whether *Better Regulation* should also be a reform process aiming at *advancing the pro-social quality of public policy*.

The framework laid out in Table 1 allows the identification of certain inputs (trends in relationships) with certain outcomes (contributing to increased social well-being), if based on the current state of knowledge. For instance we might consider “business relationships”, i.e. the set of relationships between employees and employers and among employees.

TABLE 2 – An example of assessing the pro-social quality of social trends and policies and regulations

Inputs	Intermediary outputs	Main outcomes
Work is purposeful	Increase of personal satisfaction	Increased productivity Higher probability to stay longer
High pay differentials	Increased frustration	Less productivity Higher antagonism among workers
Low transparency in corporate governance	Increased frustration	Increased fragility of corporate relationships Higher probability for workers to go on strike
Work is healthy and secure	Increase of personal welfare	Less complaints
Personal development is possible	Increase of personal satisfaction	Increased productivity Personal development is experienced
Not-open-ended contracts of employment	Feelings of insecurity in work	Higher stress at work
Flexibility to domestic commitments is allowed	Better family-work balance	Better family life for workers
Employee representation on management boards	Higher ownership	Increased sustainable management Care of the work environment

The background document’s question on obstacles reveals the need for a basis for reviews on social realities in Europe. **We suggest the Commission’s use of Regulatory Impact Analysis to identify appropriate standards for economic growth and employment shows a suitable method specifically to identify appropriate standards for good quality in people’s social relationships and thereby bridge the link between societal trends and policy.**

Principle 6
Assessing obstacles to well-being requires to benchmark inputs that evidence

shows are associated with less desirable outcomes.¹⁶ Conversely, in order to identify trends which support well-being (i.e., pro-social trends), one needs to benchmark inputs associated with outcomes more desirable in terms of the quality of relationships in society (i.e., pro-social inputs). This way we can think of each individual's input to a social system as socially neutral, socially positive or socially negative.

This is the practical application of Principle 1 above.

Policy-relevant benchmarking results from the increasingly refining use of indicators of efficiency on social well-being. Also, for appropriate benchmarking, inputs should be assessed against certain desired outcomes, i.e. efficiency on social well-being, or in other words, relational quality.

In our example (Table 2), less desirable outcomes (bold characters in a darker grey line) evidence obstacles to social well-being and desirable outcomes (in a lighter grey line) evince relational trends which foster increased social well-being. **This analysis method makes it possible to make substantive policy recommendations.** In reality however, it is probable that the distinction between more and less desirable outcomes will not be as clear-cut as in our example.

Principle 7

In parallel to relational improvement, **regulatory impact analysis (RIA)** needs to systematically consider all of the three dimensions of social wealth or collective well-being—economic, environmental and social—as well as the interactions between them.

- On the economic front, tools to better regulate (RIA in particular) need to conscientiously retain integration of *environmental*, *social*, as well as *economic* improvement in the assessment processes as *desired outcomes*. In this way, 'better family life', 'stronger community involvement', 'equality and integration' or 'sustainable living' could shape a more **integrated social and economic policy assessment system for well-being** for the European Commission than the current use of RIA tied only to 'cutting red tape' for the sake of business competitiveness.
- On the environmental side, incentives for sustainability can arguably be nurtured by good community relationships (bringing about better care for the

¹⁶ OECD (1997): "Meeting of management experts on 'Benchmarking for Regulatory Reform: Identification of appropriate standards for economic growth and employment'". Discussion paper from the Labour Management Programme [SG/RE/LMP(97)4], page 4, Section II, §4.

local environment) and good business relationships (bringing about increased productivity and sensibleness, and thus better energy efficiency).¹⁷ At the same time “[l]ack of choice about housing, with limited opportunities to move, combined with feelings of limited control over the local environment are all detrimental to well-being.”¹⁸ Considering this we suggest that the Commission could **use Eurostat’s Environmental Accounts (EAs)** which analyse inter-linkages between economic activities and the environment. If developed and used (as is increasingly the case with Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting), these tools could prove to be a powerful method to integrate social, economic as well as environmental concerns in policy assessment.

- Concerning social well-being, the main concern is about the impact of policy on social relationships. Therefore a need to **assess the pro-social quality of policies** in Europe would mean that policymakers have to analyse inter-linkages between economic activities, policies and regulations on the one hand, and social (not simply material) well-being on the other hand. Similarly, a push for behavioural changes toward environmentally sustainable living in EU policy could prove a significant leverage for more community-based and relationships-relevant lifestyles, (e.g. car-pooling building relationships, public transport leading to more encounters, shorter commuting and thus more time, etc), therefore advancing satisfaction with neighbourhood and local community, and increasing ‘social time’ (family, friends and leisure).

2.3. About Opportunity and Access

Education

Social capital literature strongly indicates that social capital provides communities with efficient, extended social networks and especially that “weak” ties matter because they allow individuals to access resources outside their immediate and close networks.¹⁹

*A broad review of theory and research in the field of education*²⁰ shows the following: **social capital (particularly manifested in supporting, extended friend and family networks which cultivate trust, as well as in voluntary action) assists students’ self-confidence, which can foster motivation and academic success.** Therefore an argument to answer to the background document’s question about how to expand educational opportunity for all throughout life resides in the concept of social capital, or the tendency to have a dense network of relationships

¹⁷ John Ashcroft, Phil Caroe & The Relationships Foundation, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹ In particular, see Granovetter (1973) “The Strength of Weak Ties”, *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360–1380.

²⁰ Peter John (2005) “The Contribution of Volunteering, Trust, and Networks to Educational Performance”, *The Policy Studies Journal* 33, 4, 635-656.

and a high level of social trust. **Increasing social capital** seems to be an argument to expand educational opportunity and even success.

This said, research also leads us to strongly **nuance** the plain idea that more ties lead to more positive contributions in the area of education. *Indeed children of socio-educationally disadvantaged parents will more probably have a poorer educational record if the former have a strong social capital (in particular, parents which socialise).*²¹ There is an important indication that, because poor attitudes toward education can be transmitted among parents through their social networks, the mere existence of connectedness can play against educational opportunity. **Widening access to successful further and higher education through social capital, especially for the socially disadvantaged, requires a more subtle approach which differentiates between key groups of relationships in society, in this case on a socioeconomic basis.**

In this is we can refer to our framework set out on Table 1. This framework based on the Relational Proximity Model stresses the **need to enhance the quality of relationships between richer and poorer neighbourhoods** with schools as a powerful space for integration and social mobility. With a high number of public places and activities favouring **socioeconomic mix** and encounters and joint activities with persons from richer/poorer neighbourhood, as well as a high availability of these places, neighbourhoods would offer people—especially the socially disadvantaged—better relationships and thus more opportunity and access to further and higher education.

²¹ *Ibidem.*

3. Concluding remarks

We wish to express thanks for the opportunity given as 15 million European citizens' views are represented and expressed in this document. At the same time we warmly welcome the European Commission's will to significantly involve civil society in this reflection on the reform of the Social Agenda.

The perspective which we have tried to develop in this document aimed at underlining the centrality of *the quality of social relationships* to finding policy priorities with the view of advancing well-being in Europe. Evidence clearly shows that social bonds, and indeed pro-social relationships have a decisive impact on people's satisfaction about life as well as on social cohesion and individuals' opportunity and access. The relationships perspective also allows objective measurement and constructive assessment of obstacles to well-being in several areas, as we have tried to show. In addition, as Special Eurobarometer 273 has shown, time for leisure, friends and family (i.e., good relationships) turns out to be of greater importance to Europeans than economic growth.

With this in view, our contribution drives us to the following key recommendation: the endeavour to mitigate obstacles to well-being in Europe should then focus on **favouring social, policy and regulatory environments which foster quality relationships, i.e. pro-social ties.**

Bibliography

- Ashcroft, Phil Caroe & The Relationships Foundation (2007) *Thriving Lives: which way for well-being?*
- Granovetter (1973) "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360–1380
- Helliwell & Putnam (2004): The Social Context of Well-Being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (London), Series B, 359: 1435–1446 (31 August 2004)
- John (2005) "The Contribution of Volunteering, Trust, and Networks to Educational Performance", *The Policy Studies Journal* 33, 4, 635-656
- Layard (2006) *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*.
- OECD (1997): "Meeting of management experts on 'Benchmarking for Regulatory Reform: Identification of appropriate standards for economic growth and employment'". Discussion paper from the Labour Management Programme [SG/RE/LMP(97)4]
- Relationships Forum & Relationships Foundation (2007): *Stating the Obvious? The Case for integrated public policy*
- Rutherford & Shah (eds.) (2006): *The Good Society*
- Ryff & Keyes (1995): The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 719–727
- Seligman (2003): *Authentic Happiness*
- Special Eurobarometer 273 "European Social Reality" / Wave 66.3 – *TNS Opinion & Social*
- Waterman (1993): Two conceptions of happiness: contrasts of personal expressiveness (eudaimonia) and hedonic enjoyment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 678–691