

Well-being is a multi-dimensional concept that spans a variety of life domains and time scales, affected by variable determinants across the life course. As such, it eludes simple analytical frameworks and calls for an integrated perspective. Data limitations, however, significantly constrain empirical analyses. The relationship between subjective and objective measures of well-being is also challenging to analyse in the absence of retrospective information on individual histories and prospective information reflecting expectations for the future, all of which bear upon a broad interpretation of well-being.

The WELLSIM project aims to advance the analysis of well-being and its inequalities in Europe by using a dynamic, life course microsimulation approach, integrating insights from various fields such as economics, demography, psychology, public health, epidemiology, and sociology. Focusing on five European countries, WELLSIM plans to go beyond typical cross-sectional studies to provide a more nuanced understanding of how well-being changes over the course of a person's life, influenced by both personal circumstances and broader societal factors.

At the core of WELLSIM's investigation is the desire to uncover the determinants of subjective well-being and how individual and societal crises affect its development. The project will study the impact of life events like job loss, health challenges, and changes in family dynamics on well-being, as well as the role of welfare policies in buffering these effects. It also aims to assess the implications of social processes such as labour market downturns, demographic ageing, and immigration on well-being and the capacity of societies to adapt. The overall well-being will be measured multi-dimensionally considering both objective measures (income, work quality, housing, education level) and subjective ones (self-assessed health, happiness). The project will measure how multi-dimensional well-being is affected by individual life events and general social and economic forces like labour market crises or population ageing. In addition, the impact of these forces on inequality in well-being will be studied.

Methodologically, WELLSIM builds on the existing microsimulation framework, enhancing it to include dimensions like subjective well-being, chronic pain, and skill levels, alongside macroeconomic scenarios. This enriched model will be developed for the UK (liberal welfare regime), Germany (conservative welfare regime), Spain (Mediterranean welfare regime), Poland (post-communist welfare regime), and Sweden (Nordic welfare regime), providing insights into how different welfare systems contribute to improving well-being. A key focus of research interest will be the efficacy of policy interventions designed to enhance individual and social well-being resilience to considered events and crises.

WELLSIM's approach to modelling well-being through the life course stands out for its comprehensive, dynamic perspective that captures the intricate interactions between individual life events and broader economic and societal trends. The project is set to contribute significantly to our understanding of well-being dynamics and offer a strong basis for policy-making aimed at enhancing societal well-being and resilience in Europe.