From (un)economic growth to future well-being

co-organisers: European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU)

15-16 October 2012
Maison des Associations Internationales, Rue Washington 40, 1050 Bruxelles

Draft agenda

Monday 15 October

16.30 Welcoming participants

17.00 – 17.15
Introduction by Philippe Pochet, General Director ETUI and Penny Clarke, Head of EU Policy EPSU

17.15-19.00 Session 1 – The crisis of the GDP-led growth model
This session will investigate why the existing model of economic growth measured by GDP is in crisis in developed economies. Why is it that despite strong economic growth in the last 30 years, feelings of happiness and well-being have not increased in Western societies? Why has growth (as defined by increasing GDP) caused environmental degradation and over-exploitation of scarce resources? Can economic growth at some point become “un-economic” growth? Are we confronted with ecological, resource and social limits to growth?

- Andrew Simms, New Economics Foundation, London
- Philippe Van Parijs, University of Louvain (UCL)

19.00 warm and cold dinner buffet
Tuesday 16 October

9.30-11.00  Session 2 – From productivity growth to growth of well-being: the role of public services
Chair: Sotiria Theodoropoulou, ETUI Senior researcher

Session 2 will focus on the contribution that public services can make to increasing well-being. Can we provide a better measure of the value-added of good public services and long-term public investments (social care, education, parks, tax collection) to accurately reflect their contribution to social progress?

- Wouter Van Dooren, University of Antwerp
- Robert Anderson, Eurofound
- Miriam Kennet, Green Economics Institute

11.00 – 11.30  coffee break

11.30-13.30  Session 3 – Maximising well-being in the era of austerity: the role of public services in mitigating inequalities
Chair: Richard Pond, EPSU Policy Officer

Session 3 looks at inequality as a major determinant of well-being and the role of public services in mitigating it in the context of a new well-being-based view of progress. How can we move from the dogma of relentless austerity to a new model of social well-being and equality and what does this imply for public services? Is there a case to be made for reducing working hours or working life and for a guaranteed minimum income? Is there a need to break the link between our social protections systems and GDP-growth if we want to maximise societal well-being? How can economies shift taxes more from positive factors (income from labour) to negatives ones (resource consumption, social inequality)?

- David Hall, PSIRU/University of Greenwich
- Fabian Zuleeg, EPC
- Paul de Beer, AIAS
- Bea Cantillon, University of Antwerp

13.30 – 14.45  buffet lunch and networking

14.45 – 16.30  Session 4 – The politics of well-being
Chair: Willy De Backer, ETUI Head Communication & Publications

The last session will look at the process of decision making and how strategic choices for social and sustainable well-being should be made in society. How should society define the targets for new well-being-based economic policies? How can we integrate the negative impact of (un)economic growth into our societal measures of progress and well-being? What new monetary and fiscal policies are needed to foster well-being?

- Ole Busck, Aalborg University
- Florence Jany-Catrice, Université de Lille 1
- Agnes Hubert, BEPA European Commission
- Jean Lambert, Member of the European Parliament, Greens / EFA group

16.30 – 17.00  Conclusions

- Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU Deputy General Secretary
- Valeria Ronzitti, CEEP General Secretary

Interpretation will be provided: English - French – German, passive: Spanish and Italian

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