The UN Expert Group on Wellbeing Measurement – a brief update

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UN Expert Group on Well-being Measurement

Our Journey

2022 Sprint Series – What is 'Beyond GDP'? → The Research Prospectus → 2023 Sprint Series – How are we delivering 'Beyond GDP'? → 2024 UNSC Report → Expert Group for Wellbeing Measurement
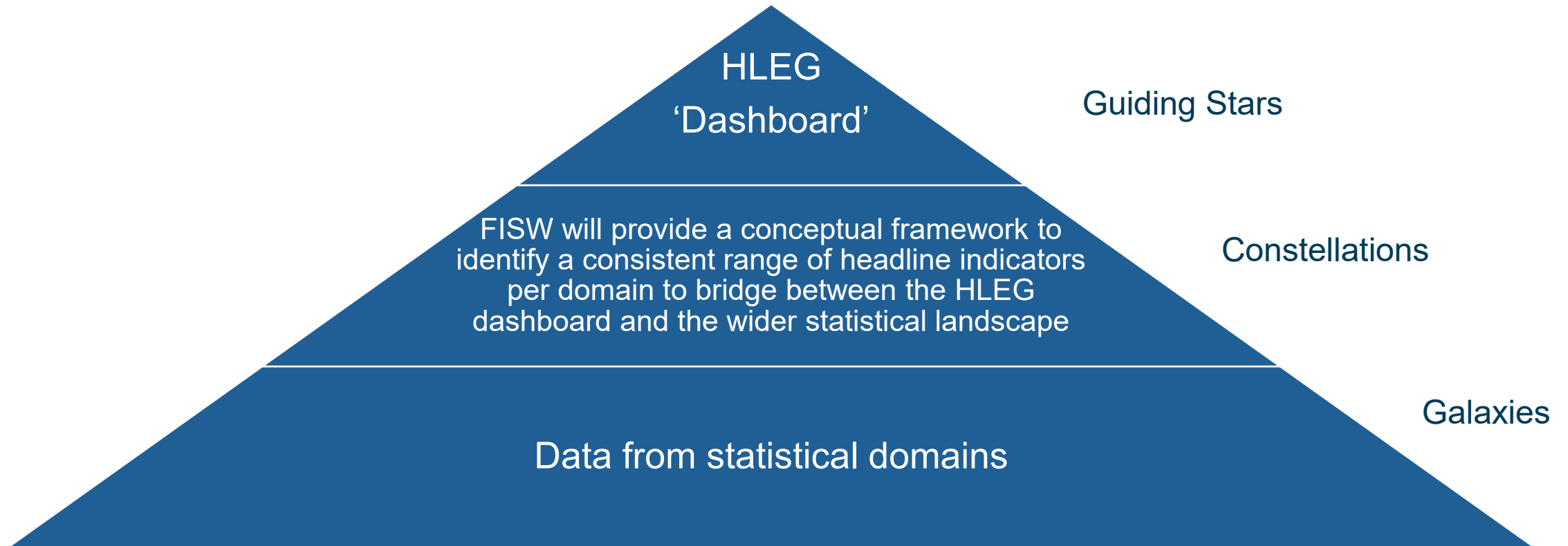
The aims of the EGWM

- *'There is a strong and active interest in this agenda from a varied set of bodies and agencies, and that it is not possible for a single group to address all the varied and complex issues and relationships in this space alone. [We] recommend the formation of a multi-disciplinary expert group (like the ISWGNA). This would be comprised of experts from the social   and demographic statistics, national accounts, environmental-economic accounting, environment statistics and geospatial communities, academia and, where appropriate, the private sector, to explore how to take forward the various recommendations.'*

- The Expert Group would develop and submit to UNSC the FISW, taking into account the work of the Friends of the Chair on Social and Demographic Statistics, and the SNA 2025.

- The Expert Group would:
    - i)   Accommodate diverse communities and methods and **synthesize a consensus** on the contents of the FISW, whilst recognizing the imperative of a streamlined set of metrics which best meet user need.
    - ii) Commission, review and propose to the United Nations Statistical Commission a draft text of the FISW for consultation and testing.
    - iii) Commission appropriate pilot compilation of statistics and data, from a diverse range of countries to fully explore suitability and feasibility. Pilot exercises which demonstrate the capacity of NSIs with limited resources to deliver should be prioritized.
    - iv) Develop a communications strategy to aide uptake and appropriate usage of the data made available. User and producer interest is vital to secure access to well-informed resources with the required skills and knowledge to make this proposal a reality.

- The Expert Group Membership is drawn widely from countries, international organisations and academic experts, and has been composed to ensure a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Providing a link between the HLEG and existing statistical domains

HLEG 'Dashboard'

Guiding Stars

FISW will provide a conceptual framework to identify a consistent range of headline indicators per domain to bridge between the HLEG dashboard and the wider statistical landscape

Constellations

Galaxies

Data from statistical domains

What we have delivered to the High Level Expert Group
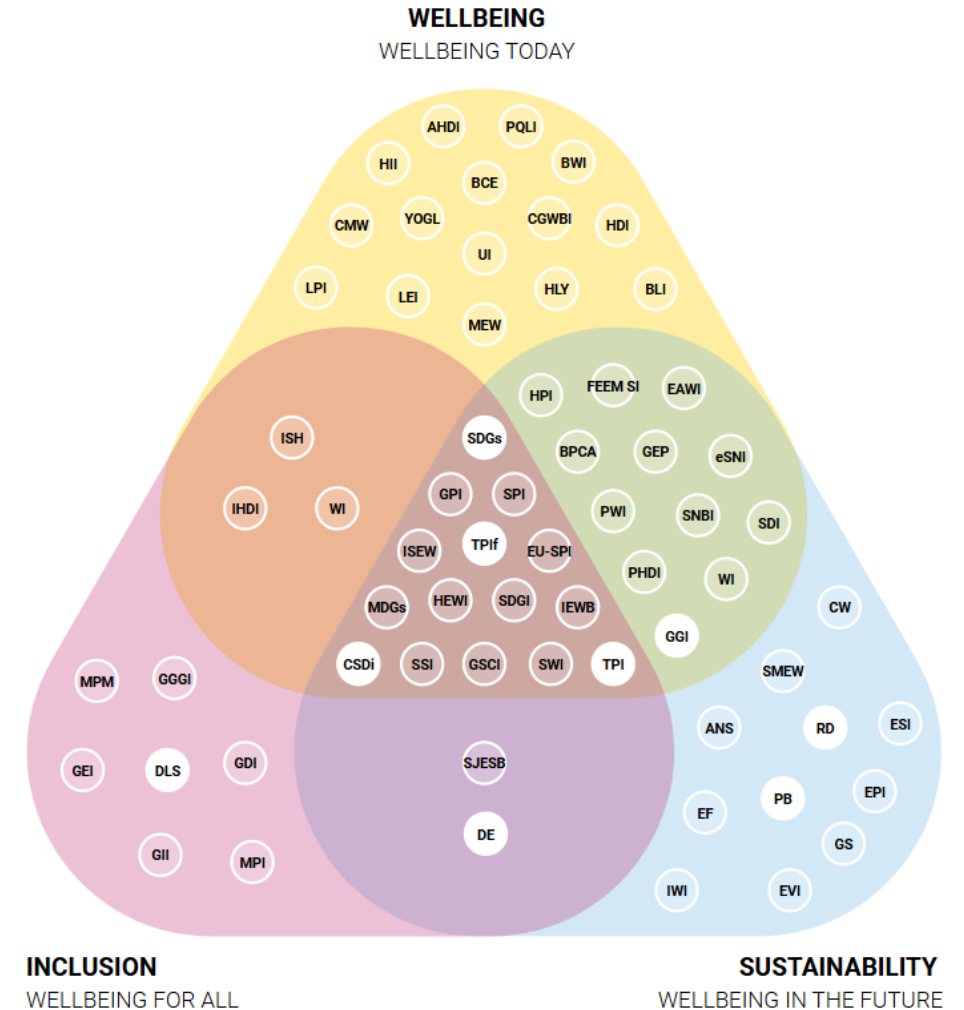
A cover note and six briefing notes, covering:

- Two evidence reviews of what is possible in 'traditional domains' – work and housing

- Two evidence review of 'new domains' – digital well-being and subjective measures of well-being.

- Two papers on substantial outstanding challenges – how to use composite indicators and how to overcome barriers affecting the communication of well-being.

In parallel establishing three new task-teams relating to Environment, Health and Education.

Key lessons from the sprints

1) Huge amount of international work, there has been no lack of effort…

2) …but the key outstanding gap is bringing together a standardised consensus which is widely and uniformly used.

3) There are a number of key dimensions which are widely used in conceptual frameworks…

4) …and it is feasible to bring these together.

5) However, some key questions remain to be resolved.

Constructing a consensus framework – agreeing the key dimensions

Brundtland lenses
Here and Now
Elsewhere
In the Future

Key Dimensions
Well-being
Inclusion
Sustainability

Dimensionality
Stocks
Flows
Distributions

Normative nature
Subjective
Objective

Statistical Pillars
Economic
Social
Environmental

Domains
SDGs
OECD Better Life
Assorted alternatives

Data composition
Natural indicators
Composite indicators

The interplay between Brundtland and the key dimensions

Brundtland lenses	Key Dimensions	Dimensionality	
Here and Now	Well-being	Stocks	
Elsewhere	Inclusion	Flows	
In the Future	Sustainability	Distributions	

Normative nature	Statistical Pillars	Domains	Data composition
Subjective	Economic	SDGs	Natural indicators
Objective	Social	OECD Better Life	Composite indicators
	Environmental	Assorted alternatives	

Constructing a consensus framework – subjective and objective measures

Brundtland lenses	Objective Wellbeing	nclusion	Sustainability
Here and Now			
Elsewhere			
In the Future			

Normative nature
Subjective
Objective

Data composition
Natural indicators
Composite indicators

Statistical Pillars
Economic
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Domains
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Assorted alternatives

Dimensionality
Stocks
Flows
Distributions

Constructing a consensus framework – pillars and dimensions

Brundtland lenses	Subjective Well-being	Objective Well-being	Inclusion	Sustainability
Here and Now				
Elsewhere				
In the Future				

Data composition	Statistical Pillars	Domains	Dimensionality
Natural indicators	Economic	SDGs	Stocks
Composite indicators	Social	OECD Better Life	Flows
	Environmental	Assorted alternatives	Distributions

Constructing a consensus framework – pillars and dimensions

Brundtland lenses	Subjective Well-being	Objective Well-being	Inclusion	Sustainability
Here and Now	Individual subjective well-being Business Sentiment	Economic, social, and environmental flow measures	Economic, social, and environmental distributional measures	Economic, social, and environmental stock measures
Elsewhere	Regional & International wellbeing data and distributions	Economic, social and environment cross-border measures	Economic, social and environment cross-border distributional measures	Economic, social and environmental cross-border investment measures
In the Future	Social Capital stocks	Economic, social, and environmental investment measures	Economic, social and environment investment measures	Economic, social and environmental depreciation and depletion measures

Data composition
Natural indicators
Composite indicators

Domains
SDGs
OECD Better Life
Assorted alternatives

A hypothetical housing example

Brundtland lenses	Subjective Well-being	Objective Well-being	Inclusion	Sustainability
Here and Now	Contentment with housing quality and availability	Property prices Citizens able to access housing in their community. Energy / carbon consumption per property	Distribution of housing quality by income groups Number of people without access to quality housing	Sustainable housing stock Energy consumption of housing
Elsewhere	Regional contentment with housing, including distributions	Economic, social and environment cross-border measures	Distribution of housing quality by income groups by region Number of people without high quality housing by region	Regional investment in sustainable / quality housing
In the Future	Business Sentiment in the Construction sector	Investment in sustainable / quality / social housing	Investment in sustainable / quality / social housing by income group	Depreciation and depletion of the housing stock

Subjective measures of well-being

Objective drivers of well-being

Outstanding 'big questions'

- **A 'person-centric' perspective** – as opposed to embedding people within their environmental context. Different societies (and groups within society) vary on this question – is what is good for humanity also good for the environment?

- **Which domains really matter?** – which domains should feed into the FISW and the high level dashboard?

- **Should subjective life satisfaction be the 'guiding star' / headline indicator pf the top-level dashboard** – is what matters the 'outcome' or the key drivers of these outcomes, or should the headline dashboard cover both 'outcomes' and 'drivers'? Which provides greater policy traction?

- **Provision or gaps?** – is what matters what we have or what we do not? Data on unavailability of services or lack of opportunities is as important as data on what is available

Proposed Next Steps

1) 16-17 July 2025 – virtual workshop to agree the domains and content of chapters for the FISW to enable task-teams to begin development.
2) Autumn-winter 2025 – task-teams develop chapter drafts (not all chapters*)
3) December 2025 – preparation of report to UNSC
4) Spring 2026 – EGWM review of chapters prior to consultation
5) Summer 2026 – consultation of chapter drafts.

* Chapters identified may be worked on sequentially given resource constraints