

**A review of policy strategies
around the world** through the
lens of Wellbeing, Inclusion,
and Sustainability



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IMPRINT

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ABOUT WISE HORIZONS

The WISE Horizons project, funded by the European Union, seeks to accelerate systemic change beyond the dominant economic paradigm towards one that prioritises wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability (WISE). This work aims to create a unifying theoretical framework which synthesises the current beyond-growth literatures and initiatives. This synthesis provides WISE metrics, a WISE accounting framework and WISE models for evidence-based policymaking and narratives.

The resulting WISE data, available for up to 180 countries will be provided in a special database, which includes long-term time series (going back to the 19th century) as well as contemporary data relevant to policy and media. These datasets will be used to analyse historical patterns and policy trade-offs and win-win opportunities.

The project will deliver nine partial policy models, which provide a vision of 2050, from the perspective of wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. The topics covered include living within planetary boundaries, sustainable wellbeing, the circular economy, the welfare state, productivity and the environment, gender inequalities and tax policy etc. Two integrated WISE models will also be created including a model of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The metrics, accounts, models, and visions of 2050 will be developed using various co-creation “labs” to be held in Brussels and online. The participants will be chosen from the WISE Stakeholder Network which is a “network of networks” of a global community of policymakers, researchers, activists, among others. At least five events will be organised to gather feedback from the various stakeholders in order to create a vision of the future and the necessary policies to achieve wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability.

REVIEWS OF METRICS, MODELS AND POLICIES

This document is part of a series of three reviews carried out at the beginning of the WISE Horizons project (which started on January 1st 2023). This report provides a review of policy strategies and initiatives worldwide and their relation to wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability as well as a discussion of the economic dimensions of these policies.

There are also two other reviews in this series. Firstly, there is a synthesis of Beyond-GDP metrics. Secondly, the consortium has also reviewed models to assess their applicability to models for wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. All three reports can be read in isolation, but the review of metrics provides a more comprehensive discussion of the underpinnings of the WISE framework.

The three reports will be foundational for the WISE theoretical framework that will be published at the end of 2023. See the www.wisehorizons.world website for the other reviews as well as all the latest reports of the WISE Horizons project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores policy strategies and initiatives from Africa, China, the EU, Latin America, the US, and the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo), by employing a conceptual framework based on the Brundtland and Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report. This “WISE” framework distinguishes the dimensions of wellbeing (wellbeing of current generations), inclusion (distribution of wellbeing), and sustainability (wellbeing of future generations). It also considers the economy, viewed as a means to achieve these dimensions rather than as a goal itself.

The aim of this report is to gain understanding of how WISE aspects are being integrated within the policy debate worldwide and the underlying narratives within political priorities, goals, and policies. We also aim to provide insights for the development of the WISE theoretical framework and models that will be developed in the WISE Horizons project.

We find that the WISE lens is useful for investigating policies through a broader, more holistic perspective, avoiding focusing only on economic concepts with their limited scope or those that might be specific to certain locations. This is in line with the need for context-sensitive policies and approaches. Our analysis reveals that while most reviewed policy strategies relate to aspects of wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability, these dimensions are not fully integrated in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

Overall, despite global and regional diversity, it is possible to find some common ground. In terms of sustainability, the environmental dimension takes primary emphasis in most policy strategies. The report argues that the concept of sustainability needs to be further expanded to cover a broader range of topics around future generations. Inclusion is frequently emphasised, particularly in terms of poverty, inequality, and protection of vulnerable groups. However, the spatial dimension of inclusion beyond borders, i.e. considering the distribution of global wellbeing, is rare. Wellbeing is relevant in many but not all policy strategies and it mostly lacks holistic integration. Wellbeing often refers to living conditions, health, education, housing, employment, and energy availability. Aside from material considerations, cultural aspects, and heritage (especially in Africa, China, and Latin America), life satisfaction (especially in the WEGo and Latin America), and quality of the environment are mentioned.

The interlinkage between WISE dimensions is evident, with the potential to reinforce (win-win) or hamper (trade-offs) each other. For example, using mineral revenues to enhance wellbeing today may compromise future wellbeing, while prioritising sustainability could limit wellbeing current. Peace is another example of a factor cutting across both present and future wellbeing, and its distribution. The demographic dimension emerged as an important aspect in all regions as well, encompassing variations in rural-urban settings, age structure (aging or youthful population), population density, migration etc. We will delve deeper into these aspects while advancing the WISE framework.

Finally, the governance dimension also emerges as an important aspect from our analysis. In short, while WISE dimensions mostly address the *what*, there should also be attention given to the *how*. This includes looking at policymaking processes, policy implementation, and institutional structures.

1. INTRODUCTION

The delicate balance of planetary boundaries is being disrupted. Climate change and other environmental issues such as biodiversity loss put at risk everything that holds significance for present and future generations. Furthermore, inequality within and between nations remains a persistent and growing challenge. Yet, government responses have been primarily shaped by priorities and policies linked to economic growth, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP).

However, there is a widespread recognition of the need to move beyond such a paradigm and redefine progress to encompass aspects of wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and come to a new understanding of how the economy can deliver on these goals (WISE). This debate is not new, but it has been gaining significant traction in recent years. Governments and policymakers have been called upon to approach the question of progress and development from a more comprehensive perspective, taking into account not only economic goals but also social and environmental ones.

While a part of this debate focuses on indicators and metrics (Beyond GDP), the policy dimension also plays a key role as it ultimately guides governmental action. In this context, a number of policy initiatives around the world emerged that call for a shift towards a more sustainable and inclusive society. This review aims at looking into existing policy strategies through a WISE lens in order to gain an understanding into which and how wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability aspects are being integrated within the policy debate worldwide. Moreover, exploring policy strategies allows us to gain insights into the underlying narratives¹ within political priorities, goals, and policies.

This study also provides a contextual backdrop to explore more technical matters. Hence, it will also contribute to the advancement of the WISE theoretical framework and identify topics for future WISE discussion. For example, in the models that will be created in the WISE Horizons project, this global review of policy strategies will help to identify the most important policies to consider.

¹ Narratives are the predominant belief systems and discourses that support certain worldviews. They serve as an underpinning for policies and strategic direction, shaping the course of action taken by governments (Kaufmann et al., 2023)

1.1 The WISE Framework

A full description of the history and science of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Beyond-GDP metrics and the WISE Framework can be found in our report *A synthesis of Beyond-GDP metrics for Wellbeing, Inclusion and Sustainability - including a deep-dive into EU metrics and their role in governance* which is available on www.wisehorizons.world. This section provides a brief synopsis.

It has been known for a long time that equating economic growth to social progress is incorrect. Even one of the founding fathers of modern-day GDP, Simon Kuznets, famously said that “*The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measure of national income*” (Kuznets, 1934). Nevertheless, in the post-war period, economic growth increased its dominance in government policies and GDP became the most important measure of success for countries.

This economic paradigm came under intense scrutiny in the late 1960s and early 1970s with rising social unrest and environmental concerns. This change in mood was symbolised by a speech Robert Kennedy where he claimed that GDP “measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile”. An important catalyst at that time was the *Limits to Growth* report (Meadows et al., 1972), which showed the incompatibility of perpetual economic growth with our natural system. In the same year, 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was instrumental in creating national and international governance structures for the environment. It was also the first year when economists started to think of Beyond-GDP alternatives, with Nordhaus and Tobin suggesting the Measure of Economic Welfare (MEW) (Nordhaus & Tobin, 1972).

Since the early 1970s, the idea to look for alternative development models has been discussed in plethora of meetings, reports and action plans. Many hundreds of Beyond-GDP indexes and indicator dashboards have been suggested (see (Hoekstra, 2019)). Some of the most important ones are Welfare accounting approaches such as the Genuine Progress Indicator, Human Development Index, U-index, Sustainable National income, Comprehensive Wealth, Inclusive Wealth Index, Better Life Index, Sustainable Development Goals, Doughnut Economics, Social Progress Index, Planetary Boundaries and the Ecological Footprint.

A seminal report was the so-called Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) which stressed that economic development, social progress, and environmental sustainability are interdependent. It also provided a definition for sustainable development: *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* The Brundtland report however also stressed the importance of overcoming global inequalities and poverty.

Later, the so-called Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report (Stiglitz et al., 2009), which was published in 2009 at the behest of President Sarkozy of France, also stressed that progress can be seen as current and future wellbeing, with inequality also being a vital component. The Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report did say that these dimensions should be viewed separately., As the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report says *“the assessment of sustainability is complementary to the question of current well-being or economic performance, and must be examined separately.”*

The WISE framework follows the conceptual framework laid down in the Brundtland and Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi reports, labelling these three dimensions as Wellbeing, Inclusion and Sustainability (WISE). These are very broad categories which are related to the intertemporal dimensions of sustainable development (wellbeing vs sustainability) and distribution (inclusion). Table 1 provides more clarification of these dimensions by showing a short slogan and a more formal definition. We also provide a longer clarification, association and policy domains that are typical for these dimensions. Note that splitting these conceptually does not mean that all themes can be neatly split into one or the other category. For example, education is known to be something that affects current wellbeing, but for policy makers is also important because it is also important for building up human capital, which is vitally important on the long term.

As we will see in the WISE Horizons review of metrics, this WISE Framework is consistent many of these indexes and indicator dashboards that have been proposed are consistent or can be linked to these definitions.

What is the role of the economy in the WISE framework? It is clear that, what happens in the economy and economic policy has profound impacts on the current quality of life, distributional issues and long-term sustainability. The economy is therefore a means to end, and should aim to achieve wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability, rather than being a goal in itself. However, currently economic goals are often still seen as a goal. The WISE framework seeks to change this paradigm.

Table 1. What are Wellbeing, Inclusion and Sustainability?

Term	Wellbeing	Inclusion	Sustainability
Slogan	Wellbeing today	Wellbeing for all	Wellbeing in the future
Definition	Relates to wellbeing of the current generation.	Relates to the distribution of wellbeing ²	Relates to the wellbeing of future generations
Clarification	Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept which encompasses both experienced wellbeing and factors such as social relations, mental health, and living standards.	Inclusion is a multidimensional concept which encompasses the distribution of wellbeing determinants and opportunities across spatial scales (within countries, between countries, and globally) and social groups (gender, background, race, etc.).	Sustainability is a multidimensional concept which encompasses social and economic conditions for future wellbeing, such as education and infrastructure, as well as environmental conditions, such as planetary boundaries.
Associations	Happiness, quality of life, prosperity, welfare, life satisfaction, flourishing, fulfilment,	Equality, fairness, equity, opportunities, minorities, poverty, social floors, subsistence, (global) disparities	Resilience, long term, wealth, planetary boundaries, natural limits, resources, natural capital, human capital, social capital,
Typical policy domains	Health, social connections, housing, air pollution	Poverty, Gender and racial disparities, global north-south divide,	Climate change, biodiversity, aging society, Research and Development, Infrastructure

Source: Own elaboration

² Inclusion covers the distribution of current and future wellbeing. However, in practice, measurement is usually restricted to wellbeing of current generations.

1.2 Reading Guide

This review is structured as follows. The first part consists of this introduction and the WISE Framework. Our scope is outlined in section 2, while section 3 offers a summary of the selected policy strategies examined in this paper, along with regional analyses covering Africa, China, Latin America, United States, European Union, and the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo), which are group of national governments leading the discussion on Wellbeing economy policies. In section 4, the findings from the various regional analyses are discussed in an integrated way, shedding light on the insights gained. Finally, section 5 concludes and presents recommendations for advancing discussion on the WISE framework.

2. SCOPE

This review covers a vast array of policy strategies and provides an analysis of their main features, including which and how aspects of wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and the economy are integrated in them.

It brings a global perspective by incorporating policy strategies from around the world. The study is structured around specific geographical regions chosen to encompass diverse aspects related to WISE. These include: Africa, China, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the United States (US), the European Union (EU), and Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) governments³. The initial division of the world into these regions was based on the researchers' prior expertise and research, ensuring a comprehensive and diverse understanding of the policy strategies involved. Although the selection has limitations, we believe it to be a representative sample of the world's regions and national characteristics.

There are two levels of analysis. First, a regional analysis, whereby we have broken down the world into different countries and regions and analysed them within the confinements of such categories. This is presented in Section 3. With the second level, we aim at bridging the regional analyses by integrating the parts into a holistic

³ The Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) are a group of national governments that are working towards building Wellbeing Economies. The group was formally launched at the OECD's World Forum in Incheon, South Korea, in 2018 (Scottish Government, 2022). Currently it comprises six members: Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Wales, Finland, and Canada.

and global assessment of current policy strategies from a WISE framework perspective. This is presented in Section 4.

One should note that this review is not meant to be exhaustive; it should rather be seen as a descriptive analysis that employs the WISE framework as a tool to look at policy documents. In essence, this is a desk-based effort that focuses on policy initiatives and their intentions. By adopting this methodology, we can test the functionality of the WISE framework and gain insights into areas that require consideration for its advancement and further theoretical development.

A limitation of this study is the fact that we do not investigate actual implementation and evaluation of policy strategies discussed. As a result, our findings do not capture effectiveness or real progress towards WISE. We also do not explore challenges and barriers to implement the studied policies. In addition, we look at a specific number of policy strategies for each country or region. Therefore, the absence of a particular element in our review does not necessarily imply that the respective government is not working on that topic at all. Finally, though we consider the policymaking process as being an integral part of each policy strategy, it not our primary focus, and is mostly omitted from the analysis for clarity purposes. For example, though the policy strategies are carefully scrutinised as to their focus on inclusion, we do not necessarily trace the methodological process of how the plans emerged – e.g. by identifying participative processes or other forms of contribution.

To determine which policy strategies to include in the review, we use the following criteria:

1. We focus on:
 - the regional, national, supranational, and continental level, whereby the local level has been excluded from the analysis;
 - governmental policy strategies, instead of, for example, initiatives supported by non-governmental organisations, and;
 - policy strategies, plans, and initiatives, instead of specific policies that are part of a larger framework.
2. Documents are selected based on their relevance to the current policy debate
3. We follow a holistic perspective, whereby we consider policy strategies that adopt a cross-sector approach, include goals across different areas of the economy or society, and may incorporate other sectoral strategies within them.

The scope of the review is intentionally broad to accommodate the heterogeneity of governance schemes present across the various regions. The documents selected therefore capture different ‘angles’ of governments’ strategies and directions that are being put forward. Whereas some policy strategies are explicitly focused on wellbeing, others for example are more related to the economic dimension. However, all policy strategies selected are related to at least two dimensions of WISE, and they are analysed within the context of wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and the economy, bringing coherence to the review.

Informed by the above, desk research was characterised as such:

1. The use of previously acquired knowledge by the institution and the corresponding researchers/personnel.
2. Capitalising on the ‘snowball’ effect by investigating a particular reference through research.
3. Identification of relevant institutions and structures in the geographical region, from the highest level, down to the national, and identifying which policy strategies are in place.

Special attention is paid to ensuring diversity in the analysis. This is achieved through: (i) promoting a global perspective, (ii) selecting countries that represent different income groups (low-income countries, lower-middle-income countries, and upper-middle-income countries).

To guide our analysis of the policy strategy documents, we devised an analytical structure rooted in the WISE framework. This structure enabled us to comprehensively capture various WISE aspects present in a wide range of policy strategies and initiatives. By aligning our research with this structure, we were able to effectively compare policy strategies and derive valuable insights and lessons learned.

For more details on the analytical structure as well as the specific process for selecting the policy strategies of each region, please see annex A and annex B.

3. REVIEW OF POLICY STRATEGIES

This section explores the policy strategies in various regions: Africa, China, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), United States (US), European Union (EU), and the members of the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo), which are group of national governments leading the discussion on Wellbeing economy policies. It first presents an overview of the selected policy strategies and WISE dimensions they incorporate. Following, it delves into discussing the main features of the policy environment of each region, and more specifically what elements are considered within the WISE dimensions.

Table 2 below provides a comprehensive overview of the policy strategies and initiatives examined in this review. The table indicates the different governance levels and localities to which these strategies pertain. Additionally, it includes the year of release and the name of each policy strategy. It also presents whether WISE aspects are integrated into the analysed policy documents. The categories used for assessment are as follows: 'x' indicates that different components of the aspect are considered in goals, objectives, and actions of the policy strategy; 'partly' indicates that fewer components are considered; and 'little to no' indicates minimal consideration or mention.

It is important to note that our assessment does not imply that wellbeing, inclusion and/or sustainability are the central frame or guidelines of these policy strategies, but rather that certain components of the WISE framework are incorporated into them. For example, while the Social Economy Action Plan in the European Union clearly aims at improving the business environment and conditions for social economy organisations to thrive rather than having a specific wellbeing lens, it captures wellbeing aspects by incorporating e.g. better working conditions, high quality social services, and socially responsible actions.

On top of that, as mentioned earlier (see section 1.2), the economy is included in the review as part of WISE, but it does not mean we comprehensively investigate 'pure' economic policies in place.

Table 2 and the subsequent discussion presented here are the result of a thorough examination of the documents pertaining to each policy strategy. Please refer to the supplementary excel file for the detailed analysis, and annex B for a thorough understanding of the analytical structure used in the development of the analysis.

Table 1. Policy Strategies around the world and link to Wellbeing, Inclusion, Sustainability, and the Economy

Governance level	Where	Year	Name	Policy strategy refers to aspects related to			
				Wellbeing	Inclusion	Sustainability	Economy
Africa							
Supranational	Africa	2015	Agenda 2063	x	x	x	partly
Supranational	Africa	2018	African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)	partly	partly	little to none	x
Supranational	Africa	-	The Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA)	partly	partly	x	x
Supranational	Southern Africa	2020 vision	Southern African Development Community Vision 2050	x	x	x	x
Supranational	Africa	2012	Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa	partly	partly	x	
National	Botswana	2021	Vision 2036: Prosperity for all	x	x	x	x
National	Ghana	2017	Long Term National Development Plan 2018-2057	x	x	x	x
National	Morocco	2010	The New Development Model (NDM)	x	x	x	x
National	Rwanda	2020	Vision 2050	x	x	x	x
National	Uganda	2016	Uganda Vision 2040	x	x	x	x
China							
National	China	2021	The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and Vision 2035	x	x	x	x
National	China	2021	The "1+N" Policy Framework for Carbon Peaking and Carbon Neutrality	partly	x	x	x
National	China	2021	Working Guidance for Carbon Dioxide Peaking and Carbon Neutrality in Full and Faithful Implementation of the New Development Philosophy	partly	x	x	x
National	China	2021	Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking before 2030	partly	x	x	x

National	China	2022	Implementation Plan for Promoting Green Consumption	partly	little to none	x	x
National	China	2010	China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030)	little to none	little to none	x	little to none
National	China	2021	The Medium- and Long-term Plan for Responding Proactively to Population Aging	x	little to none	little to none	x
National	China	2023	No. 1 Central Document for 2023	x	x	x	x
Regional	China	2021	Outline of the Yellow River Basin's Ecological Protection and High-quality Development Plan	x	x	x	partly
Regional	China	2021	"1+N" Planning Policy System for the Development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt in the 14th Five-Year Plan Period	partly	partly	x	x
Regional	China	2020	Guideline on Advancing Western Development in New Era	x	x	x	x
Regional	China	2019	Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area	x	x	x	x
Latin America and the Caribbean							
Continental	LAC	2023	Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development: Halfway to 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean	x	x	x	x
National	Ecuador	2008	Constitution	x	x	x	x
National	Ecuador	2017	National Plan for Buen Vivir 2017-2021	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2008	Programa Nacional Biocultura y Cambio Climático	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2009	Constitución Política del Estado	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2010	Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Ley 071)	x	partly	x	partly
National	Bolivia	2012	Framework Law on Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well (Ley 300)	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2015	Patriotic Agenda 2025 - General Economic and Social Development Plan for Living Well	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2021	Economic and Social Development Plan 2021-2025: Rebuilding the Economy to Live Well, Towards Industrialisation with Import Substitution	x	x	x	x
National	Bolivia	2006/ 2021	Productive Social Community Economic Model	x	x	x	x

United States							
National	United States	2022	Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (ELTRR) for Social, Behavioral, and Community Health	x	x	x	partly
National	United States	2021	America the Beautiful	partly	x	x	x
National	United States	2022	Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) (started out as the Build Back Better Act)	x	x	x	x
National	United States	2022	National Nature Assessment & Natural Capital Account	little to none	little to none	x	x
National	United States	2021	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law)	partly	x	x	x
European Union							
Supranational	European Union	2019	European Green Deal (EGD)	x	x	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2023	The Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP)	little to none	x	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2021	Fit for 55 Package	little to none	x	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2020	NextGenerationEU (NGEU)	x	x	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2022	8th Environmental Action Programme (8th EAP)	partly	partly	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2021	European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan	x	x	little to none	partly
Supranational	European Union	2020	new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)	little to none	x	x	x
Supranational	European Union	2022	Social Economy Action Plan	x	x	partly	x
Wellbeing Economy Governments							
National	Finland	2016	Towards the Finland we want by 2050	x	x	x	x
National	Iceland	2018/2020	Iceland's 2020 Action Plan	x	little to none	x	x
National	Aotearoa New Zealand	2022	Wellbeing Budget: a Secure Future	x	x	x	x
National	Canada	2021	Towards a Quality of Life Strategy for Canada	x	x	x	x

National	Wales	2015	Wellbeing for Future generations Act	x	x	x	x
National	Scotland	2018 - update	National Performance Framework	x	x	x	x

Source: Own elaboration based on analysis of selected policy documents.

3.1 Africa

Most reviewed policies are long term development plans. Others concern the establishment of regional economic communities and their development strategies (COMESA and SADC) and of the African free trade area (AfCFTA). The reviewed policies have different durations (15 to 48 years) and end dates (ranging from 2035 to 2063). COMESA, SADC and AfCFTA are permanent and still evolving. Long-term policies are implemented through series of National Development Plans of variable duration (2 to 10 years). Development plans also guide the further building and operations of COMESA and SADC. The reviewed policies are interlinked. Country policies are linked to the continental and regional policies and regional policies contribute to the continental Agenda 2063 and the AfCFTA. Most policies are also linked to the global Agenda 2030 and associated SDGs.

Rapid economic growth is a key element in most policies to unlock the WISE aspects of WISE. In the African context, the terms ‘beyond GDP’ and **broad-based development** (e.g., Agenda 2063) are more appropriate⁴. The term post-growth is not used; sustainable growth, green economy and green growth are. Natural capital accounting⁵ (e.g for minerals, energy, water, forests and ecosystems) and adjusted macroeconomic and wealth indicators (adjusted net national income and adjusted national savings) have been developed in several African countries such as Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and Rwanda (‘beyond GDP’). Most visions focus on increasing economic growth, output, and incomes; growth benefits are expected to contribute/trickle down to wellbeing, inclusiveness, and sustainability⁶. Governance and institutional aspects are also covered, often as a pre-condition for the WISE aspects.

The continental long-term vision (Agenda 2063), which is the basis for long-term plans of regional economic communities (RECs) and countries, does not have an economic focus in terms of its aspirations. Most aspiration deal with wellbeing, inclusiveness, sustainability, and governance. However, goals, priorities and action areas do have many economic components, along with wellbeing, inclusiveness, sustainability, and governance. RECs and countries strongly emphasise economic

4 Terms like post-growth are not found in the policy documents.

5 Natural capital accounts record the stocks of natural resources over time and the resource flows between the economy and the environment as well as the flows within ecosystems. Flows and stock are expressed in physical and monetary terms under the UN System of Environmental Accounting (<https://seea.un.org>).

6 This does not necessarily happen as we know.

aspects (growth, integration, and diversification) and seek to achieve higher income status, but cover WIS aspects too. For example, COMESA has adopted a remarkable and ambitious Social Chapter (2015), with emphasis on wellbeing, inclusiveness, sustainability, and governance⁷.

Visions and plans all seek to address energy and climate change and are committed to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, the targets differ; most countries realise that their contributions to GHG emissions are modest in global terms, and yet they are seriously affected by climate change, raising issues of adaptation, technology transfers and financing. Countries with oil and gas reserves are also aware of the prospect of a shrinking future export market, but seek to exploit their non-renewable resources while at the same time rebalancing the mix of non-renewable and renewable energy sources. In several countries revenues from non-renewable resources (energy & minerals) are "reserved" for future wellbeing. For example, Botswana uses the sustainable budget index that seeks to ensure that mineral revenues are used for the country's development projects and not for recurrent expenditures (other than education). However, examples also exist of countries that have fallen in the resource curse trap (e.g. Nigeria).

The policies call for major transformations, covering economic, human, and social development as well as institutional transformation. The different aspects of transformation constitute the main pillars of most reviewed policies. There is an appreciation for African culture, values, and networks, such as family and traditional leaders. Social transformation, for example, plays a crucial role in reducing poverty and inequality. It involves ensuring the inclusion of gender, youth, and vulnerable groups in all aspects of development. Efforts are also directed towards addressing spatial disparities both within and between countries. Human transformation encompasses various challenges associated with migration, urbanization, population growth, and population density. Environmental transformation involves shifting towards an energy mix that relies more on renewable resources, promoting efficient use of natural resources, and building resilience to climate change and other hazards.

Most policies are ambitious, as countries seek to become upper middle income or high-income countries, reduce their dependency on development assistance by raising domestic financial sources and foreign direct investment (FDI) and seek to

⁷ Few countries have ratified this chapter, so it is not yet operational (this deserves further investigation).

better exploit existing and new opportunities (e.g., modernising agriculture, industrialisation and value addition, and export of renewable energy to Europe). Policies also seek to include more home-grown solutions (e.g., community based natural resource management).

Africa has experienced a range of human and environmental disasters and seeks to increase its resilience by conflict resolution, creating peace and stability, and increasing resilience to manage disasters (e.g. by early warning and preventative capacities). Covid-19 has set back achieving the ambitious targets but is also seen as an opportunity to “reset” its development path. Green growth and green economy feature as part of the reset agendas.

The common perception is that post-colonial development has leaned too heavily on the western development model and has insufficiently incorporated in traditional African values and culture (e.g., extended families as social welfare systems, community based natural resource management, traditional land tenure systems, indigenous knowledge, and traditional leadership). Virtually all reviewed policies recognise the development importance of African culture, norms and values.

On governance, shift of the role of governments as ‘lead developer’ towards development partnerships between public and private sector and civil society; encouraging peace and stability, and the creation of accountable and transparently operating institutions. Collaboration between African countries and institutions makes individual countries stronger and offers new opportunities through regional integration and strengthens the African position globally.

Africa has made development progress, but many challenges remain, e.g., poverty, inequality, unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure/connectivity. Progress has been sometimes slow and is not continuous. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) needs to be fully integrated in policy implementation and the M&E results need to be fed back into development planning and policies. SDG progress reports show that data are currently a serious limitation for progress assessment. Therefore the WISE metrics will be essential for the project.

On a country level, it is important to notice that many Africans have migrated to other parts of the world (irregular and regular). For some countries, remittances have become important financial resources (e.g., Ghana and Morocco). However, it may also contribute to the brain drain of scarce human resources and cause inhumane situations (e.g., boat refugees). On top of that, several countries seek to exploit the

youth dividend. While most European countries have an ageing population, most African countries have a youthful population. This creates opportunities for future wellbeing. A youth population puts pressure on current public services and facilities as well as the labour market (youth unemployment of often very high), it offers future opportunities as youth are generally better educated, more innovative and technology literate.

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

Increased wellbeing is central to the policies which have been reviewed. Different terms are used such as prosperity and quality of life. Policies refer to different levels of wellbeing: individual, family and community wellbeing. Wellbeing has different components: material aspects (e.g., cash and in-kind income, jobs, means), infrastructure and services, available options & choices (jobs, resources & services), capabilities & strategies (e.g., diversification, including recreation & sports), resilience and self-reliance, positive attitudes (e.g., dignified life)/ norms and values such as heritage.

All policy documents seek a better quality of life, prosperity, and higher living standards/incomes; better infrastructure and access: health facilities, educational facilities/(digital) literacy, food (nutrition), housing, water & sanitation as well as digital infrastructure. Free movement of people within the continent, economic region or between neighbouring countries.

Inclusion

Inclusion is prominent in most visions and development plans. Inclusiveness refers to inclusion of all population groups (e.g., people driven development), partnerships (public & private sector and civil society as well as the regional and global community) and to inclusion of areas with different development levels (e.g., depressed areas, low-income countries). RECs aim to reduce regional inequalities and benefit all countries.

All policies refer to poverty reduction (absolute, multidimensional, inequality) or eradication, gender (equality), youth (dividend & assistance), and protection of vulnerable groups. Inclusiveness often also refers to incorporating marginal/vulnerable groups: the poor, people with disabilities, orphans, and elderly. A few policies refer to ethnic minorities/groups and refugees. Key inclusiveness

components are also job creation and higher wages, affordable housing, affordable access to public infrastructure, social transformation & protection. Geographical and physical differences between countries are sometimes recognised and addressed in policies (land locked, islands and countries with coastal areas; aridity, elevation, population densities). Inclusion is a requirement to realise the benefits of economic integration (e.g. AfCFTA).

Sustainability

Most policies cover sustainability issues, e.g., sustainable natural resource management (water, forests, energy (switch in energy mix in favour of renewables but with continued exploitation of fossil energy resources/ stocks), land and fisheries (blue economy). AfCFTA has, however, little environmental sustainability issues.

Most policies cover climate change, either through a separate strategy to be integrated in all facets of development planning or as a cross cutting issue. The point is clearly made that Africa has historically contributed little to GHG emission but faces major adverse impacts, risks, and likely future development restrictions. The focus of most climate change plans is on adaptation and mitigation and building resilience. Countries aim at low-carbon or zero-carbon economies. Disaster risk management and reduction are integral part of resilience building at the local and national/regional level. Revenues from non-renewable resources are destined for the future (e.g., Ghana heritage development fund) and their use is measured through a sustainable budget index (Botswana).

In terms of concepts, green economy and circular economy are mentioned in some policy documents (e.g., Rwanda, Uganda, and SADC). Some policies also refer to handling hazards and their impacts (covid-19, genocide, HIV-AIDS).

Economy

Africa seeks rapid economic growth (to upper middle and/or high-income country status), but in combination with wellbeing, inclusiveness, and sustainability. Growth is seen as an essential requirement for wellbeing. Key economy components are: value chain development and connectivity, greater (foreign direct) investments, agricultural modernisation, industrialisation, higher productivity, supporting macroeconomic and infrastructural conditions, formalising the informal economy, special economic zones, and competitiveness.

SADC has a Regional Development Fund to support regional investments. Ghana has an RDF-Wealth Fund with mineral revenues for future wellbeing. Botswana has a similar provision and uses the sustainable budget index to ensure that minerals revenues are used for future wellbeing.

Others

Other WISE relevant remarks relate to policies emphasis on good governance and stability; this covers a broad area of attainment of peace, conflict resolution, unity in diversity, transparency, reducing corruption, democracy, adherence to the rule of law etc. In addition, elements that appear and do not necessarily fit the WISE boxes very well are: importance of the diaspora (remittances- illegal migration), partnerships between private, public and third sector, and that complementary measures are needed to make trade liberalisation a success.

3.2 China

China is entering a new development stage in which the government is targeting “high-quality development”. Both national and subnational governments have released a set of policy strategies supporting China’s economic and social development towards realising Chinese modernisation, covering the wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability aspects of the WISE framework. Specifically, Chinese modernisation refers to the process of modernising a huge population, and the pursuit of common prosperity, material and cultural-ethical advancement, and a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

From an international perspective, China has put forward the concept of ‘A community with a shared future for mankind’, which aims to promote world peace and development through the win-win cooperation. From a domestic perspective, the government has introduced the concepts of ‘New Development Stage, New Development Philosophy, New Development Pattern’ for realising Chinese modernisation. New Development Stage represents the high-quality development. New Development Philosophy includes five aspects, which are innovation, coordination, green development, opening-up, and sharing. New Development Pattern is ‘dual circulation’, which takes domestic market as the mainstay, and enabling domestic and international development reinforcing each other.

The long-term policy strategy, 14th Five-Year Plan and Vision 2035, provides a future landscape of how China will realise its modernisation. In the context, it has delivered five development goals that are related to WISE aspects, including ‘China will strive to make new strides in economic development during the period’, ‘New steps will be taken in reform and opening-up’, ‘China’s social etiquette and civility will be further enhanced’, ‘New progress will be made in building an ecological civilization’, ‘The well-being of people will be boosted’, and ‘Further progress will be made in China’s governance capacity’. Following the guidance of the leading policy, some key points of China’s future development are summarised, including innovation-driven, rural vitalisation, regional development, and green and low carbon development.

In China, innovation-driven strategies have taken centre stage, as innovation plays a crucial role in driving the country’s industrial green development and providing new impetus to boost productivity and develop regional competitive advantages. Digital economy is one of the essential national development strategies and has already become the major growth engine in China. Regarding how innovation is integrated into policy strategies, the governance capacity fosters technological innovations in all aspects. For example, some key documents were launched, such as the 14th Five-Year Plan for the development of the Digital Economy and the Intelligent Manufacturing Development. In addition, major national science and technology infrastructure includes strategic orientation, application support, and pioneering and improving people’s wellbeing to promote a digital economy, a digital society, and a digital government.

Another core aspect that emerges from the analysis is the focus on rural vitalisation. Rural vitalisation outlines the comprehensive and in-depth strategies to facilitate the rural area development with Chinese characteristics. All policies mentioned how to implement their strategies specifically in rural areas, and it mainly includes agriculture industry, living standards and personal development of rural people, and sustainable governance in rural areas.

To achieve the goals of Rural Vitalisation Strategy, several uniquely approaches to promote the agriculture and rural development are needed in the 14th FYP and Vision 2035, such as improving quality and competitiveness in the agricultural sector, implementation of rural development initiatives, integrated urban-rural development, and the upgrading supports on poverty alleviation achievements. All regional policies have discussed their own rural development plans to solve the imbalanced problems, including eco-security protection in Yellow-River basin,

accelerate the development of modern agriculture and traditionally competitive industries in appropriate regions.

Still with a spatial focus in mind, the government strives for supporting regional development and narrowing the development gap between regions. Policy strategies further aim at improving regional economic structure and promoting coordinated regional development. Eastern Coastal areas have taken the lead in economic development in China during past few decades. Specifically, in Yangtze River Delta, part of Yangtze River Economic Belt, the strategies in developed regions are focusing on high-tech development and to promote green transition in economic and social development. In recent years, the government began to implement the strategies of developing the middle and western regions which guide more initiatives to strengthen the rural development and ecological protection.

The regional development strategies in China are based on the carrying capacity of a particular environment, the comparative advantages of various regions, to ensure the policies with their special features, such as key development areas, ecologically fragile areas, and areas rich in energy resources. More importantly, ‘major regional development strategies focus on strategic objectives that are likely to have spillover effects and will spur action or drive growth in neighbouring areas or in related fields. These strategies promote regional integration, interaction, connectivity, and complementarity.’

The green and low-carbon transition development strategy takes the domain position of current national policy strategies, prioritising the ecology, resources utilisation efficiency, circular and green economy. First, the government has started to implement policies on energy conservation improvement in industry, construction, transportation, and public institutions. Second, the measurements of promoting circular economy include efficient resource recycling in industrial parks, utilisation of bulk solid waste, resource recovery system for production enterprises and extending producers’ responsibilities, as well as the promotion of green delivery packing. Third, the concept of green economy in China are not only focusing on develop the industries covering clean production, energy conservation and environmental protection, but representing a green lifestyle for using efficient and energy-saving household appliances.

Overall, policy strategies incorporate sustainability to a greater extent than wellbeing and inclusion. This is the case particularly in relation to environmental protection

and promoting green development, and policies call for addressing issues such as pollution and advancing sustainable practices. Therefore, policy strategies on sustainability provide for systematic policy frameworks in China – e.g. the 1+n policy framework proposed by the government in 2021 has significant influence on green development in China and contributes to carbon reduction targets. The social dimension still lacks to be fully integrated into policy strategies.

Finally, China aims to build a rule-based governance system with clearly defined responsibilities and improve macroeconomic governance system and the effectiveness and efficiency of governance. First, the macro-level regulation is guided by the national development plans, with the core instruments of fiscal and monetary policies, as well as coordinating policies on employment, industries, investment, consumption, environmental protection, regions. The guiding principles of policy strategies not only emphasized on key sectors, but delivering the relevant supporting measures to ensure the implementations such as fiscal supports, standard measurements, technological innovation, green finance market development and talent cultivation. In addition, the government strives to facilitate the market dynamism, guiding a favourable business environment with better regulation. With improvements in the administration system, a well-functioning government and an efficient market are established, and the performance and credibility of the governance system will be significantly enhanced.

The current policies have set up comprehensive development goals with more appropriate indicators to measure the developments with all aspects, rather than to focus only on economic performance. For example, the leading policy strategy has put forward the main indicators of economic and social development, including economy, innovation, wellbeing, ecological, and security. Also, many strategies have set the targets of emissions reduction or energy consumption for carbon neutrality goal and sustainable development. Additionally, several Chinese institutes have developed some measurements to value the nature, such as the Gross Ecosystem Product (GEP). These methods have already introduced to some regions as the experiments, but they still need time to develop further and apply the measures for the national use. Currently there is no official dashboard or index to measure the social development in China and improving policy support is necessary for promoting GEP approach at a country scale in the future.

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

Wellbeing usually refers to improving the living standards and serving interests of their citizens, and the concept of “people-centred development philosophy” is central to most policy strategies. The national government has proposed as the goal of the reform bringing a sense of gain, happiness and security to the people.

Main components of wellbeing integrated into policy strategies can be divided into two parts. One refers to material progress, including public services improvement, income level, employment and jobs, and social security system. The other part relates to cultural-ethical progress and human development. It considers components such as: quality of education, health, and the national strategy in response to population aging.

Inclusion

Inclusion is linked to ‘common prosperity for all’, as an important feature of Chinese modernisation. Key inclusiveness components are: poverty alleviation, integrated urban-rural development, and redistribution regime, to ensure that people equally share the fruits of reform and development.

Regarding the spatial dimension, a major focus that emerges from the policies is tackling China’s unbalanced development. This refers especially to inclusive urbanisation, integrating urban-rural areas and reducing differences, and coordinated regional development strategies.

Sustainability

Promoting a sustainable development is the fundamental governing principle of China, and it is reflected in most policy strategies. Sustainable development further refers to China’s concept of ‘harmony between human and nature’, i.e. advance the green transition of economic and social development as the lead. Key components of sustainability are: carbon reduction and neutrality (by 2060), reduction of other major pollutants, protection of forest and biodiversity, efficient energy system, low-carbon transport. In this sense, China has launched a systematic policy framework with related action plans in key sectors and comprehensive support measures to achieve its goals.

Other concepts that emerge are circular development and circular economy, urban and rural green development, and green industry. Less frequent components are monitoring systems, research on green technologies, waste management, and green consumption.

Economy

China is pursuing the modernised reforms on better quality, higher efficiency, and more robust drivers of economic growth. Policy strategies are foreseen to maintain economic growth, although there is no specific national target for GDP in the period of current five years. The R&D spendings and urban residents' rate have set up the specific targets in enhancing the industrial base and modernisation.

Key components are: boosting domestic demand, strengthen the leading role of domestic circulation, industrial modernisation, development of real economy, and green finance. The digital component is at the core of policies, and there is focus on ensuring significant improvement of innovation capacity in the following policy-targeted years. 'Dual circulation' is a concept that guides the new development pattern, and refers to mutual development of domestic and international circulation.

3.3 Latin America and the Caribbean

The focus of the review of policy strategies for Latin America was twofold. On the one hand for the continent as a whole the status of the SDGs was investigated, and their translation into National Development Plans, and on the other hand the concept of Buen Vivir and its translation into policy in Ecuador and Bolivia.

Sustainable Development Goals

When looking at the Continental level, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play an increasingly important role – that spills over to the national level with institutional changes and their incorporation into National Development Plans. Continentally, there is an extensive governance structure centred around UN ECLAC's Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development⁸. The Forum is the regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

⁸ For a detail overview of Latin America's governance structure around the 2030 Agenda see <https://agenda2030lac.org/en/forum-countries-latin-america-and-caribbean-sustainable-development-and-regional-follow-2030-agenda>

including the SDGs and targets, its means of implementation, and the Addis Abeba Action Agenda on financing sustainable development (Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development 2023, n.d.). Each annual meeting of the Forum, the ECLAC Secretariat issues a report on the region's progress and challenges. At the most recent meeting, the Forum concluded that they are not yet halfway along the path to fulfil the targets for 2030, with only 25% being on target currently and the trend for almost half of the targets being in the right direction but insufficient (UN ECLAC, 2023a).

Concern for the economy is prominent, as shown by the fact that the macroeconomic situation is the first subject of the progress report “Halfway to 2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean: Progress and recommendations for acceleration” (UN ECLAC, 2023a). A big concern described is the low economic growth and investment rate. The past 10 year-period growth averaged 0.8%, lower than the 2% in the “lost decade” of the 1980s following the Latin American debt crisis. What is more, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the continent hard, with the sharpest annual contraction in the last 100 years, of 6.8%. This has reversed progress in key social objectives, like employment, poverty and inequality, disproportionately affecting women and thereby reinforcing gender inequalities, while also exacerbating the region's structural problems (low investment and productivity, informality, unemployment, low coverage of social protection and health systems, high levels of inequality and poverty).

In 2021 and 2022, the situation was worsened by strong inflationary pressures, high levels of sovereign debt due to the crisis, and the effects of the war in Ukraine. While the region has seen growth of 6.7% and 3.8% in 2021 and 2022 respectively, the estimates foresee a return to the “sluggish pre-pandemic growth path”. Before the pandemic, the region's fiscal position was already weak, with high global deficits and central government debt, especially in Caribbean countries who also suffered multiple natural disasters. Measures to decrease deficits in turn inhibited robust economic recovery, so the pandemic could not be responded to with adequate capacity as shown in the low levels of investment in public health and limited social protection systems. The economic and social aftermath of the crisis continue, undermining potential growth in the medium term.

The “sluggish growth” led to a low investment-to-GDP ratio as well, which stalled at around 19% of GDP for the past three decades, the lowest in the world. As a consequence, the countries' public capital stock is insufficient to provide the public services needed to build dynamic economies. Reversing this trend is difficult, with

rising capital costs, interest rate hikes, heightened sovereign risk levels, currency depreciations and potential credit rating downgrades. There is also low and not improving labour productivity, low-quality job creation and gender and age asymmetries in labour markets. The female unemployment rate is on average 3 percentage points higher than male rate since 2000 (9,5% vs 6.5%). Job creation has been declining since the '70s, with the past decade seeing the lowest growth rate of seven decades of 1.5%. Not just job creation, but quality jobs is the challenge, with 48% of informality in 2022.

Going forward, the Halfway to 2030 report marks several focus points for interventions to reach the 2030 Agenda. Goals highlighted in the press release are eradicating poverty and tackling inequality, and the targets with 2020 as deadline that have not been fully achieved needing reinforced actions: protecting biodiversity, developing disaster risk reduction strategies, increasing the availability of timely, quality and disaggregated data, engaging youth, and enhancing financial resources, capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries (UN ECLAC, 2023c). The report proposes seven transformative initiatives that “have synergistic capacity to simultaneously drive the achievement of a number of SDGs”: energy transition and related industries, bioeconomy: sustainable agriculture and bioindustrialisation, digital transformation, export of internet-enabled modern services, care society and gender equality, sustainable tourism, and regional economic integration.

Governance and the role of the state are also stressed. Foresight and long-term thinking should be brought into policymaking. A transition from government policies to State policies is needed, which should overcome “vagaries in the exercise of government power that are common in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially when governments change”. This means going “from consideration of immediate situation to foresight analysis, from economic growth to sustainable development, from crisis management to development planning, from focussed approach to strategic vision, from dealing with the present to managing structural change”.

Looking at the national level and national development plans, 31 countries in the LAC region (out of 33) have submitted one or more Voluntary National Review(s) between 2016 and 2022 (UN ECLAC, 2023b). Moreover, the SDGs have found their way into national policymaking. As the Halfway to 2030 report states, the efforts countries have made so far to achieve the SDGs have “left a positive institutional footprint”.

Public, private and civil society bodies have been transformed to incorporate elements of the 2030 Agenda.

The OECD's How's Life in Latin America (OECD, 2021) study shows that many countries have adapted their institutional frameworks to comply with the 2030 Agenda and many have aligned their national development plans (NDPs) with the SDGs. The region's strong tradition of national development planning in combination with the uptake of the 2030 Agenda, have contributed to longer-term and whole-of-government approaches to policymaking. The NDPs are important mechanisms for both horizontal coordination across sectors of government as vertical between different government levels. In several countries specialised planning agencies have been created to co-ordinate the policy planning process and in some cases also monitoring and evaluation.

At the same time, the report notes that national planning, budget allocation and policy design are still separate processes in many countries, with their own criteria and functioning. This means that that the objectives of NDPs provide a vision, sometimes even embedded within a constitution, but might not have much influence on crucial elements of government decision-making like budget allocation. Only in a few countries budgeting is linked to the development planning process, such as Costa Rica, Ecuador and Colombia. Moreover, funding is often insufficient to fully implement the plans.

Buen Vivir

Buen Vivir is probably one of the most serious beyond GDP concepts worldwide that has actually found its way into the policy sphere. A well-known example is the incorporation in among others the constitution of Ecuador⁹. The 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution presents a social vision based on the values and worldview of the native Quechua peoples of the Andes and Amazon called *Sumak Kawsay*, translated in Spanish as *Buen Vivir*, or Good Living/Living Well in English. Note that such a simple translation does not do justice to the richness of the original concept. While there are various views on the term, the Constitution was the result of a democratic process with a citizen assembly of 130 Ecuadorians who found common ground in the following: *Buen Vivir* can be understood as the achievement of internal harmony, of harmony within the community and among communities, as well as of harmony with Nature. Notably, Ecuador's Constitution is the first in the world to bestow rights

⁹ See for instance Durand (2018) and Exton and Shinwell (2018) for a case study.

to Nature. Next to the Constitution, the concept was elaborated on and put into policy in the National Plan for Buen Vivir 2013-2017 and 2017-2021. In addition, Ecuador's statistical office has made efforts to measure *Buen Vivir* (Léon, 2015), although a *Buen Vivir* dashboard does not seem to be in place as of yet.

Similarly, in Bolivia an alternative, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, vision of development was put forward rooted in the worldviews of the Aymara peoples of the Andes, *Suma Kamaña*, translated as *Vivir Bien*, and *Madre Tierra* (Mother Earth) which was incorporated into the 2009 Bolivian Constitution and the Framework Law on Madre Tierra and Integral Development for *Vivir Bien* of 2012. *Vivir Bien* means living in complementarity, in harmony and balance with *Madre Tierra* and different societies, living in equity and solidarity while eliminating inequality and the mechanisms of domination. It means *Vivir Bien* amongst ourselves, *Vivir Bien* in our environment and *Vivir Bien* with ourselves. The concept was the basis for the National Bioculture and Climate Change Programme 2008-2019, the Patriotic Agenda 2025 and the Economic and Social Development Plan 2021-2025. Moreover, the Law of Mother Nature in 2010 was the first national-level legislation that gives rights to Nature.

At the same time, it is important to realise that words on paper do not mean action in practice. Bolivia's 2010 Mother Earth law dictates the creation of an Ombudsman's office for Mother Earth. This is still not in place. In 2021 there were renewed efforts with a law being discussed in the legislative assembly (Nortesur, 2021). Execution and continuance are also heavily dependent on the person or party in power. In Ecuador, it was President from 2006 till 2017 Rafael Correa from the centre-left social democratic PAIS Alliance who pursued *Buen Vivir*. He was succeeded by Lenín Moreno from the same party, but who distanced himself from Correa's leftist legacy after the elections. In turn, he was succeeded by Guillermo Lasso in 2021, the first conservative president in nearly two decades. Where the 2013-2017 and 2017-2021 National Development Plans were entitled "for *Buen Vivir*", the 2021-2025 plan does not contain the term at all and instead is called "for creating opportunities", after the name of Lasso's party.

Moreover, the implementation of the *Buen Vivir* visions is not without critiques and contradictions. For instance, Ecuador's development strategy despite *Buen Vivir* is heavily (oil) extraction based (Caria & Domínguez, 2016), and Bolivia constructed a highway through indigenous territory and a national park and mines natural resources from protected areas and indigenous territories (Weyer, 2017). This shows that there are different interpretations of *Buen Vivir*, competing ideological currents within the

Latin American Left. The three main ones are (Weyer, 2017): 1. An indigenous understanding based on identity; 2. A socialist and statist conception based on equity; and 3. An environmental vision that emphasises sustainability. The socialist and statist interpretation gives priority to improving living conditions, including by using extraction of raw materials.

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

In the worldview of Buen Vivir, the wellbeing (and rights) of Mother Earth *is* the wellbeing of humans and vice versa. This way, human as well as wellbeing of nature are valued – not in a utilitarian perspective, but for its own intrinsic worth (Durand, 2018).

In Buen Vivir policy documents, frequent reference is made to quality of life, basic services, health and health care, (quality) food, (formal) employment, education and sports. In addition, culture, arts and heritage are also integrated, specifically acknowledging and celebrating diversity and indigenous peoples. What is more, enjoyment and happiness, of festivities, music, rivers, jungle, mountains, air, sea, dreams, is mentioned. Next to this, sovereignty and independence are prominent, as well as judicial reform and reducing violence and crimes, security, defence and public order. Lastly, stability of the state and legitimate government are crucial.

The *How's Life in Latin America* report reviews the National Development Plans. The main components of wellbeing considered are income and wealth, in line with the poverty concerns of the region. Policies also commonly refer to: knowledge and skills, environmental quality, safety, civic engagement, and health. Topics of work and job quality, housing and social connections are referenced more limitedly and subjective wellbeing and work-life balance least commonly. Least frequently mentioned is child malnutrition and tobacco consumption.

Inclusion

In reference to the SDGs and the continental level, key components are addressing poverty and income inequality. In policy strategies related to Buen Vivir, inclusion refers to identifying material, social and spiritual dimensions of poverty and economic, social and gender inequalities. Redistribution of income and wealth are key components. “Justice”, “just”, “equitable”, “solidarity” are frequently used terms.

There is also a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion of indigenous people, knowledge and practices in all fields (such as intercultural and plurilingual education and traditional ancestral medicine). In other words, “plurality in legal, economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual terms”.

Harmony with nature is also key, which can be seen as inclusion of nature. Reducing differences in access to land, water, forests etc. is also mentioned. Lastly, eradication of racism and discrimination, and the advance of decolonisation and depatriarchialisation, “breaking the system where privileges existed for a minority that subordinated the majority” is core.

Sustainability

The *How's Life in Latin America* review of National Development Plans uncovered a strong focus on economic capital, and limited references to other resources needed to sustain wellbeing over time. Plans commonly refer to the development of economic capital, such as gross capital formation, infrastructure investment, research development, and managing external debt. Other aspects integrated are trust in government and institutions, perceptions of corruption, and tax morale. The environmental dimension appears less frequently. Key components are: greenhouse gas emissions, endangered species, and deforestation.

Mother Earth takes centre stage in the indigenous worldviews that led to the formulation of Buen Vivir and has the rights to life and diversity of life. This means there is a focus on conservation, protection, sustainable management and regeneration of forests, wetlands, surface and groundwater etc. as well as on preventing pollution. Important for harmonious coexistence with Mother Earth is ancestral and indigenous knowledge. Both production and consumption should be sustainable and respecting the regenerative capacity of Mother Earth. At the same time, (sustainable) industrialisation of natural resources is core to the economic strategy. There is reference to climate change mitigation, adaptation and monitoring. Another focus is on science, research and technology, as well as on transport infrastructure. Future needs of society are explicitly mentioned when determining that part of the economic surplus is constituted as basis for the capital stock for regeneration of new surpluses.

Economy

The Halfway to 2030 report makes it clear that there are major continent-wide macroeconomic concerns. Important topics are increasing economic growth, the

investment-to-GDP ratio, and labour productivity, and tackling the issues of informal jobs and government debt.

Both Ecuador and Bolivia position Buen Vivir as anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and anti-imperialist, critical of the growth and consumerist paradigm. Sovereignty, “without dictatorship of the capitalist market”, is a core goal. It aims at diversification and industrialisation of domestic production to replace imports, and community financial sovereignty “without servility to financial capitalism”. Economic (output) growth is still aimed at however, but not as a goal but rather as a means for e.g. poverty reduction. The State has a strong role to play in the economy, being responsible for directing strategic sectors, redistributing surplus to the most vulnerable, and safeguarding stability. Democratisation is also a key concept, and relates to greater access and control by the State and the people to the means of production. Public investment, and promoting private and foreign investment are also important. Tourism is also sometimes mentioned as sector to be developed.

Others

Elements that surface from both the SDG and Buen Vivir review and do not necessarily fit the WISE boxes very well, are governance and the functioning of the State. The importance of South-South cooperation is mentioned frequently, sometimes Latin American integration is being referred to as well. Moreover, some policy goals are e.g. digital and transparent public management and fighting corruption. The process of policymaking is also a major point that is made, striving for and implementing participatory practices and bringing government and people closer together.

3.4 United States

The Biden-Harris Administration that came into power in 2021 has formulated six priorities (The White House, n.d.):

- COVID-19: contain the COVID-19 crisis, address the communities who have been hit hardest, and launch a national vaccination programme
- Climate: a whole-of-government effort to reduce climate pollution in every sector of the economy and increase resilience to climate impacts
- Racial equity: a whole-of-government approach to embed racial justice across Federal agencies, policies and programmes, and to deliver criminal justice

reform, end disparities in healthcare access and education, fair housing and restore Federal respect for Tribal sovereignty

- Economy: build back the economy better from the pandemic and create millions of jobs by strengthening small businesses and investing in the jobs of the future
- Health care: protect and expand access to quality, affordable health care, building on the Affordable Care Act
- Immigration: reform the long-broken and chaotic immigration system, such that it welcomes immigrants, keeps families together and allows people across the country to contribute to the country more fully

In concordance with this, some landmark policies were passed with large budgets that integrate elements of the WISE framework, such as tackling the economy, disadvantaged communities, and climate action at the same time: the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA; formerly known as the Build Back Better Act). BIL represents an investment of \$1.2 trillion into infrastructure, including roads, bridges, rails, public transit, and water and internet infrastructure. This should strengthen supply chains and make sure companies get goods to market more quickly, which lowers costs and eases inflationary pressures. Investments are also made into clean energy and cleaning up pollution. These investments should be done such that they create well-paying union jobs with high labour standards. The IRA presents an additional \$370 billion of investment in among others climate change mitigation and health care. Both Acts give priority to investments in specific communities and areas that have been disadvantaged. These bills do not have a specific wellbeing framework or lens, although improving health and health care, and road safety are important goals.

On the other hand, the Federal Plan on Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (ELTRR) for Social, Behavioral, and Community Health does provide a wellbeing framework. It was drafted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and contains 78 recommendations for federal agencies to guide long-term investment over the next 10 years using the ‘Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being Framework’ (*Federal Plan For Equitable Long-Term Recovery And Resilience For Social, Behavioral, And Community Health*, 2022). This is a framework for conceptualising holistic wellbeing and the Conditions that give rise to it, consisting of 7 domains: ‘Thriving natural world’; ‘Basic needs for health & safety’; ‘Humane housing’; ‘Meaningful work & wealth’; ‘Lifelong learning’; ‘Reliable transportation’; and ‘Belonging & civic muscle’.

In short, the policy strategy aims to help federal agencies to better coordinate and align steady-state resources in pursuit of wellbeing.

Another policy area that has received attention that emerges from the analysis is nature. On Earth Day 2022 the government announced a National Nature Assessment and Natural Capital Account. In its communication about it, the starting point is a critique of GDP and its lack of acknowledging and counting nature: “Economists have long known that GDP has blind spots. It tends to capture the economic benefits that people have to pay for. Because many of the benefits that nature provides seem ‘free,’ they are not visible in our economic models and indicators. GDP also tells us little about future opportunities.

In short, nature’s role in generating economic benefits today and tomorrow falls into these big blind spots. That’s going to change.” The aim of the National Nature Assessment is to create a holistic picture of America's lands, waters, wildlife, ecosystems and the benefits they provide to the economy, now and anticipated changes in the future. The Natural Capital Account will connect changes in nature with changes in economic performance. In 2021 already, America the Beautiful was launched, a decade-long \$10 billion challenge to pursue a locally led and voluntary, nationwide effort to conserve, connect and restore lands, waters, and wildlife.

Finally, it is important to note that the USA is a federal country, meaning that individual states have a significant degree of autonomy and power. Moreover, in June 2022 the Supreme Court in a ruling limited the Environmental Protection Agency’s ability to regulate carbon emissions from existing power plants, which impacts the federal government’s authority to regulate not only other areas of climate policy but other policy areas as well (Vogue et al., 2022). For a better picture of the US policy sphere, individual states should be studied as well.

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is integrated in a limited way into the US policy strategies analysed in the scope of this paper. The policies mainly refer to health, (road) safety, housing and quality jobs, but compared to the other WISE dimensions are mentioned less often and less elaborately.

The aspect of wellbeing is most explicit as a leading policy goal in the ELTRR’s framework on health and wellbeing. Main components are: basic needs for health

and safety, humane housing, meaningful work (and wealth) and belonging and “civic muscle”.

Inclusion

Specific communities and groups are prioritised in the policy strategies analysed or the communication about them: low-income communities; communities of colour, Tribal, indigenous, Black, Latino, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities; disadvantaged, underserved and rural communities; seniors; farmers; small businesses.

Some components that appear in specific sectors are: those impacted most by environmental pollution (legacy pollution) and loss of jobs (due to closure of fossil fuel industry), and the coverage gap in health insurance and high drug prices that lead to racial and ethnic health inequalities.

The IRA also entails tax laws and enforcement such that high-income and corporations pay (more) taxes, while taxes of families making less than \$400,000 per year do not rise.

Sustainability

When talking about sustainability, the policies refer to environmental sustainability. Key components are related to climate change mitigation (energy investment) and adaptation, referred to as resilience, and a thriving natural world.

From the perspective of sustainability as future wellbeing, investment in infrastructure is also part of sustainability and this is the main aim of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The ELTRR’s health and wellbeing framework also lists reliable transport and lifelong learning.

Economy

The studied policies focus on greening industries, improving the economy, competitiveness, and economic growth. Emphasis is put on American manufacturing, domestic sourcing, and American jobs. Investments should lead to good well-paying (middle-class) union jobs.

3.5 European Union

The European Green Deal (EGD) is one of the 6 EU Commission priorities¹⁰ and sets the framework for all following EU policy strategies analysed in this paper. In essence, the EGD provides a roadmap to achieving a green and sustainable transformation in the union. The EGD takes a strong sustainability approach, putting climate, biodiversity conservation, environmental protection, zero pollution and circularity objectives at the core of the programme (Barbieri et al., 2021).

It also encompasses an increasing emphasis on ensuring an inclusive transition that considers social factors, such as the impact on vulnerable groups and jobs, calling for a transition that leaves no one behind. The years of 2030 and 2050 are the critical milestones to reach its objectives. This way, although the EGD is still a growth strategy, it offers a broader framing the integrate aspects of wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability to different extends.

The social dimension of the EGD primarily encompasses the distribution of benefits and costs of shifting to a more sustainable economy. The underlying perspective acknowledges that a transition comes with social impacts and hence those needs to be tackled – rather than a social or wellbeing as core compass. Accordingly, policy actions are envisioned to support vulnerable and poor people who may be disproportionately by the transition, through securing their active participation in the labour market, decent work, access to education and training, income, social protection systems, and affordable access to essential services.

Moreover, the aspect of justice among Member States also emerges as a key concern. The EU Commission addresses a socially just transition from the angle of providing more financial resources and support for the green transition to countries most in need, and flexibility to fit different fiscal spaces. It also put in place a Just Transition Fund for areas with carbon-intensive industries, and a Social Climate Fund to address social impacts that arise from the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS)¹¹. These efforts align with the Commission's priority of 'an economy that works for people', which focus relies on creating green jobs, equipping workers with necessary

¹⁰ The 6 priorities are: 'A European Green Deal; a Europe fit for the digital age; an economy that works for people; a stronger Europe in the world; promoting our European way of life; a new push for European democracy'.

¹¹ The EU ETS is a cap-and-trade system implemented as a key tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the EU.

skills, supporting businesses in transitioning to a low-carbon and circular economy, and investing in sustainable infrastructure.

Another prominent aspect arising from the analysis is EU's concern about becoming a key geopolitical player, which is closely linked to the priority 'a stronger Europe in the world'. Issues such as security and strategic autonomy arise and take the spotlight. This is partly driven by international developments, such as the United States's agenda and the rise of China and green technology. Strategic autonomy refers to building capacity to act/sustain strategic sectors autonomously or independent from other governments. Under this umbrella, and sometimes used as synonymous, other concepts emerge such as 'open strategic autonomy' and 'resilience'. Both this case and the above demonstrate how the different EU priorities are cross-cutting and hold varying levels of influence over the EU's discourse and action. On top of that, some priorities might potentially overshadow WISE considerations, necessitating a deeper understanding of geopolitical objectives and their interaction with WISE goals.

Related to this agenda is the industrial dimension of the transition. Industrial policy is increasingly being narrated in strategic terms, featured as a tool to mobilise the investment needed to green the economy and restructure towards resilience, as it is laid out in the Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP). The plan also foresees creating a favourable environment for clean technology deployments and manufacturing inside the EU. It stands on four pillars: a predictable and simplified regulatory environment, faster access to funding, enhancing skills, and open trade for resilient supply chains. Indeed, access to supply chains and raw materials is seen as key to ensure EU's move towards a green and digital future.

Policy action is therefore foreseen to create a conducive regulatory framework that strengthen the EU's industrial value chains, and to avoid dependencies, i.e. build resilience. Materials long-term environmental and social impacts, especially beyond the EU are not fully considered. Demand-side solutions (as it is also the case for energy and consumption in general) also are missing within the policy strategies analysed¹².

¹² However, we point out to the fact that reducing energy consumption was considered within REPowerEU, the EU's response to the impacts of the invasion of Ukraine. As part of this initiative, the EU 'Save Energy' plan was introduced, which followed a two-pronged approach: 1- achieving immediate energy savings through voluntary choices, and strengthening structural, mid- to long-term energy efficiency measures (COM, 2022a).

Energy is also a prominent focus in the EU policy arena, particularly since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The energy transition encompasses multiple aspects within the EU: phasing-out carbon emissions, increasing renewable alternatives, improving energy efficiency. The need to alleviate energy poverty is recognised in some of the policy strategies analysed, and various measures has been put in place to address this issue. The linkages between energy poverty and wellbeing, e.g. quality of life and stress, has also been acknowledge by the EU (Widuto, 2022). Both energy and industrial efforts integrate the aspect of sustainability especially as aim to do so in line with streamlining circular economy principles and practices, such as the reuse, refurbishment, and repair of products, across multiple sectors of the economy.

In addition, the EGD specifies that the “European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) will guide action in ensuring that no one is left behind”. The EPSR plan is an expel of a socially oriented initiative with concrete actions and headline targets to be achieved by 2030 in the areas of employment, training and reduction of poverty and social exclusion. Still, wellbeing seems to remain underdeveloped in comparison to aspects of inclusion and especially sustainability in EU policy strategies.

This can be partially attributed to the fact that social policies are primarily legislated at the Member State (MS) level. On top of that, whereas the EU plays a vital role in guiding MS in their action and policies, it is important to recognise the significance of the national and regional level. This has several implications, such as policy implementation and MS ownership of EU guidelines, regulations, and directives, to avoid them becoming mere rhetoric. Additionally, it is important to note that there is an increasing number of initiatives at the national level that align with the WISE framework. For example, some countries have made notable progress in integrating SDGs, such as Spain, or wellbeing into policy making, such as the Netherlands and Italy.

Overall, policy strategies reviewed play a role in raising awareness, stimulating political consensus over goals, and exerting a degree of public pressure.

The EU has a longstanding commitment to the SDGs, and there has been progress towards its integration in EU policymaking. In 2019, SDGs were integrated into the European Semester, a framework for the coordination of EU Member States’ economic and fiscal policies. The EU also has annual reports assessing short and long-term SDGs statistics on the region. Moreover, the EU Commission has a portal

that links EU policies with SDGs at the goal level¹³. However, most efforts mainly take the form of monitoring each country's SDGs performance. Although the SDGs are recognised in some policy strategies, they often receive only nominal acknowledgement without assuming a central role in shaping policy objectives and actions.

Finally, although the review does not go deep into this, there are some tools used in the EU that can serve as an entry point to discuss a WISE framework. One example is foresight. The 2020 Strategic Foresight Report (COM 2022b) identified 'developing monitoring frameworks for measuring wellbeing beyond GDP' as a key area of action for the EU. Moreover, the EU has in place its New cohesion policy, which seeks to improve economic, social, and territorial cohesion in the union. It focuses on five policy objectives: competitive and smarter Europe, a greener economy moving toward net zero carbon, mobility to connect Europe, a socially inclusive Europe, and Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories.

Box 1. Examples of European country initiatives

There are many national initiatives and policies at the country level as well. Here are three prominent examples.

France

In 2015, the French government introduced the New Indicators of Wealth. This legislation mandates the publication of an annual report, alongside the draft budget bill, utilising alternative indicators to GDP (Beyond-GDP, 2023). The objective is to modify the statistical framework used to formulate national economic policies. The dashboard encompasses 10 key areas and 15 underlying indicators that pertain to the economic, social, and environmental spheres.

Moreover, France has published its 'Green Budget' in 2021, aiming at assessing the green impact of all state budget expenditures, and reflect on climate change, biodiversity, and the fight against pollution (Siebert et al 2022). This way, the Green Budget supports aligning national policy frameworks and financial flows on a pathway towards more environmentally sustainable development.

¹³ <https://knowsdgs.jrc.ec.europa.eu/policies-sdgs>

Italy

Italy has introduced equitable and sustainable wellbeing (BES) among its economic and social policy objectives (Istat, 2023). In this context, a set of 152 indicators were linked to the national economic policy and budget planning and evaluation tools. These indicators are distributed across 12 domains relevant for the measurement of wellbeing, such as health, subjective wellbeing, landscape and cultural heritage, environment, and politics and institutions.

The Netherlands

Since 2018, the Netherlands has published the Monitor of Wellbeing, which serves as a means to assess the government's performance yearly (Beyond-GDP, 2023). This assessment goes beyond measuring economic growth solely based on GDP and incorporates a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing. The initial Monitor of Wellbeing consisted of over 100 indicators that gauge the quality of life in the present and its implications for the wellbeing of future generations and individuals residing elsewhere. Starting in 2019, the monitor has also integrated the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, as there is significant alignment between the wellbeing indicators used by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and the global SDG indicators. As a result, the Dutch government now faces scrutiny each year regarding its progress in terms of wellbeing and SDGs.

United Kingdom

The UK's Measuring National Wellbeing (MNW) programme was initiated in 2010 with the purpose of monitoring and assessing the overall state of wellbeing in the country. Its objective is to provide comprehensive measurements of wellbeing at a national level. Biannual progress reports are published, encompassing various domains such as health, natural environment, personal finances, and crime. These reports utilize both objective and subjective data to capture a holistic understanding of wellbeing.

The UK Parliament also counts with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Future Generations Committee (APPG), an essential body that focuses on internalising concerns and priorities of future generations into the formulation of policies and decision making processes¹⁴.

¹⁴ There are many European and non-European countries that have put in place institutions for future generations. For more information see: [https://zoe-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Building Our Common Future ZOE Report 2022.pdf](https://zoe-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Building_Our_Common_Future_ZOE_Report_2022.pdf)

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

The term wellbeing is often present in the text of policy strategies analysed in this paper, although mostly not in a holistic way. Quality of life and prosperity are also terms that resonate within this aspect. Key wellbeing components are: education and skills, health, long-term care, infrastructure (such as transport and building restorations), access to energy, other essential services, social protection. There is also some focus on income, especially referring to the cost-of-living crisis and recent inflation in the EU. In addition, the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as underpinning the wellbeing of people is sometimes mentioned.

A key component of wellbeing is employment. Preserving jobs is a clear priority for the EU, and it is mentioned across policy strategies whether with a more social perspective, environment, or economic one. This also relates to support and training (e.g. up- and re-skilling), job quality, feeling safe and secure in the job, and work-life balance. In addition, health also appears as a main component, and refers to health prevention, and better healthcare and infrastructure. This is in part a reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic and an aging population.

Inclusion

Inclusion is emphasized throughout most policy documents examined, and the EU Commission often claims that the transition can ‘leave no one behind’ (see e.g. European Commission, 2020). The terms ‘just transition’ resonates with policymaking in the EU. The definition of a just transition is usually underpinned with a focus on the labour market and businesses. This way, key inclusiveness components are: social inclusion, job creation, equal opportunities, special attention for gender, under-represented groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, Roma people) and youth (especially in relation to jobs and skills), affordable transport, tackling energy poverty, income support. In addition, digital advancements and innovation are seen as key drivers of inclusion.

Another cluster of components relates to inclusiveness between territories, which key components are: territorial cohesion, avoiding social fragmentation, access to innovation and technologies, distribution of industrial development, special attention to rural areas (especially in relation to the agricultural sector), fiscal flexibility, financial support for most vulnerable countries and regions.

At the global level, some support for social cohesion is mentioned (especially for Western Balkans, and Africa). This is mostly focused on efforts to reach international agreements, coordination, and mutual support.

Sustainability

Sustainability emerges as very prominent aspect in the policy strategies analysed. Within sustainability, the environmental dimension holds greater significance. Key sustainability components are: reducing greenhouse gases emissions, phasing-out carbon-intensive industry, protecting biodiversity and enhancing natural capital, speeding up investment for clean technologies, renewable energy, energy efficiency, circular economy and recycling, creating green spaces.

There is also reference to research and science, investment in infrastructure (such as transport and digital infrastructure), and health security.

One of the main tools presented to become more sustainable is the EU emissions trading system (ETS). The Fit for 55 package aims at setting more ambitious targets to the ETS, and expand current sectors covered by it (electricity and heat generation, energy-intensive industry sectors, and commercial aviation) to new sectors (maritime transport, new ETS for buildings, road transport and fuels for additional sectors).

Economy

All EU policy strategies within the scope of this review are still underpinned by, or pushing for, a strong economy and economic growth. The EU seeks for an economic model based on economic growth decoupled from resource use and based on the principle of climate neutrality.

Key economy components are: (open) strategic autonomy, resilience, digitalisation, strengthening industrial competitiveness, strengthening markets and infrastructures, moving towards a resource-efficient economy, value chains and access to raw materials, incentivising investment, macroeconomic stability. There is still a focus on supporting growth-enhancing investments. The notion of 'competitive sustainability' emerges within the EGD and subsequently integrates into other policy initiatives. Sustainable competitiveness holds growth, innovation, and investment in green industry as key drivers.

3.6 Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo)

‘The Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo) is a collaboration of national and regional governments interested in sharing expertise and transferrable policy practices to advance their shared ambition of building Wellbeing Economies’ (Wellbeing Economy Alliance, 2023). The group was formally launched at the OECD’s World Forum in Incheon, South Korea, in 2018 (Scottish Government, 2022). Currently it comprises six members: Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Wales, Finland, and Canada.

The WEGo policy strategies provide a variety of examples in for how countries and regions are seeking to build economies of wellbeing. All governments have sought to complement GDP with a set of alternative indicators and dashboards, with Finland also moving in that direction (Finnish Government, 2023). Most make explicit reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, while some are linked to budgets or action plans. Policy strategies developed over the past years also reflect the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such were either set back massively, e.g., Scotland (Scottish Government, 2020), or largely preoccupied with the public health crisis itself, e.g., Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022).

Aotearoa New Zealand and Canada are the outliers in the dimension of inclusion. Both countries place a strong focus on the indigenous communities that have been left behind, which in turn means that their plans capture more equity components and follow more inclusive processes than the other WEGo members (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022; Government of Canada, 2021). The conception of what wellbeing means in their policy strategies was informed by consultative processes on the needs and beliefs of such people and the processes aimed at ensuring that diverse perspectives of marginalised communities would have a say in their own wellbeing.

This is reflected in, for instance, Aotearoa New Zealand’s decision to provide targeted financial assistance in 2022 and 2023 to help with the cost-of-living crisis, while also ‘supporting Māori and Pacific aspirations.’ (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022, 2023) The budget further includes reforms to the health system, bolstering and transforming a ‘badly-injured’ institution, as well as massive climate investments for the present and the future, in addition to a growth strategy revolved around small business growth.

A direct result of the Wellbeing Budget has been what we might call the ‘network effect’, i.e., a ‘nudge’ to the country’s closest and only large neighbour Australia,

which is now capitalising on the learnings and the mainstreaming of the policy strategy in Aotearoa New Zealand and has moved towards creating a similar budget under the new Labour government (Aldane, 2022). Indeed, technocratic solutions complementary to the GDP dominion may be more attractive to policymakers as they can gain wide political support, whilst they subsequently open the door for broader structural changes. This illustrates how a Wellbeing Budget might be a first step in measuring what matters and might even open room to embed WISE aspects into policy discussion. The Living Standards Framework, though it is much more expansive than the WISE framework, is quite similar in its goals and aspirations, and provides the basis for the Wellbeing Budget (The Treasury, 2021).

In contrast, a central weakness of a budgetary approach is the annual timeline, which can prevent long-term planning. Nevertheless, Aotearoa New Zealand also has a strict advantage in that it has embedded its framework, which itself is based on further frameworks (Health Quality and Safety Commission New Zealand, 2021; The Treasury, 2021), into its annual budget, meaning that it has credibility beyond just local or ministerial levels. Multi-layered structures like this are hard to discard from one year to the next, while all levels of civil society know in real time if any budgetary changes will affect their causes, so as to respond in cohesive ways and create an additional level of protection and insurance for the plans to move forward.

Iceland's 2020 Climate Action Plan is one that is heavily focused on environmental sustainability with two overarching goals: '1) to phase out fossil fuels in transport, and 2) to increase carbon sequestration in land use, by restoration of woodlands and wetlands, revegetation and afforestation.' (Government of Iceland, 2020) Altogether, the country aims to become carbon-neutral before 2040, reduce LULUCF emissions by 515% (below 2005 levels), as well as 43% in EU-ETS Aviation and heavy industry, 66% in ESR emissions for waste management, 5% in ESR emissions for agriculture, 67% in ESR emissions for energy production and small industry, 42% in ESR emissions for ships and ports, and a 11% increase in ESR emissions for F-gases and chemical use.

Wales conceptualises wellbeing through its different thematic priorities and goals, and might thus be encapsulated in the idea of a 'Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, equal and globally responsible, with cohesive communities, vibrant culture and a thriving Welsh language.' (Wales, 2015) In terms of a promising, successful, and WISE future, Iceland is among the contemporary leaders, but Wales is perhaps the region with the greatest chance of success, as it has embedded the very goals of its

policies into laws, and has enacted policies that are ‘red lines’, such as a total ban on construction of new roads. Wales’s approach of ‘legislating for sustainable development to be the central organising principle of each organisation’ is the pivotal characteristic that drives policy and ensures its success in the region (Welsh Government, 2019). We might then consider the institutional dimensions that bind countries to their plans, as well as the existing institutional infrastructure which either aids or hinders progress. For example, in Wales, under such strict conditions, inaction and failure to meet the goals as laid out in the programs is unconstitutional. The climate and the wellbeing of people are known to be non-negotiable to the functioning of the economy. For Wales, a wellbeing economy is not under construction or a distant plan, but rather institutionalised and not as susceptible to the political cycle.

In Finland, the concept of wellbeing is synonymous with welfare (this is also the case linguistically) (WHO, 2023). Reforming the welfare state and putting more resources into the health system, as well as addressing future challenges such as an ageing population, or falling productivity, are at the heart of the nation’s priorities (Prime Minister’s Office, 2016). Finland stands out amongst the rest of the WEGo, as it incorporates a foresight approach into its framework, looking beyond contemporary issues. One such example is the focus on issues of the high prevalence of gender-based violence, and the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, but also on the rising risk of floods over the coming decades, using ‘soft’ governance plans such as flood maps to prepare for such threats. The component of foresight and the integration of WISE aspects not just in the present, but also while keeping in mind the lives and reality of future generations is integral to any true WISE policy. Foresight distinguishes countries focusing on specific contemporary problematics to those that are planning for a wide-open future, in which future generations will suffer new problems.

The Scottish National Performance Framework provides a case study into the technicalities of introducing wellbeing to policy (Scottish Government, 2023a). In March of 2023, the website experienced prolonged technical issues, whilst of the 81 indicators measuring the 11 outcomes, there wasn’t any data for 18 of them. The impact of the COVID pandemic further exacerbated the issue, as fieldwork was suspended, resulting in incomplete data and an equally incomplete understanding of the situation. A similar limitation can be observed in the case of Iceland, where the country has sought exceptions in the aviation sector to maintain competitiveness, despite having specific indicators designed to measure its performance in this very

sector (Gualandi, 2023). This highlights the inherent weakness of relying solely on indicators without a comprehensive framework.

Scotland is also the earliest case study of a WEGo trying to branch out into alternative indicators and measures of progress. The framework has evolved over the years and Scotland is now aiming to provide the Scottish population with a good education and skills that will enable them to contribute to society, while also ensuring that people can realise their full potential, living in inclusive, empowered and safe communities. The population will be healthy and active, free of discrimination, open and connected, wealth will be shared more equally, whilst Scotland itself will have ‘thriving and innovative businesses with quality and fair work for everyone.’ (Scottish Government, 2023c)

Finally, WEGo governments continually seek ways to collaborate with one another and draw insights from their peers’ frameworks to inform their own approaches. Though these talks largely take place in private settings, it is our understanding that there are strong efforts beyond just good will to share experiences and collaborate on aspects of wellbeing. A fundamental question for the survival and thriving of the wellbeing economies is also the stepping down of the ‘bastions’ championing the approach at the very top of politics, with Jessica Ardern, Nicola Sturgeon, as well as Sanna Marin all leaving their posts in recent months. CSOs and NGOs on the ground have been accelerating their efforts in response, and the situation in Scotland looks to be stable, but it is unclear if the same can be said about Finland or Aotearoa New Zealand.

Box 2. Other examples of Beyond-GDP frameworks around the world: the case of Bhutan

The Centre for Bhutan Studies has developed the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index using the robust Alkire-Foster methodology, which employs a multidimensional approach (Beyond-GDP, 2023). GNH is commonly explained through its four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. These pillars are further divided into nine equally weighted domains. Within each domain, a selection of two to four indicators has been made based on their ability to provide consistent and valuable information over time, high response rates, and minimal correlation. Objective indicators carry greater weight within each domain, while subjective and self-reported indicators are assigned relatively lighter weights.

WISE aspects integrated into policy strategy documents

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is generally understood as being intricately tied to the physical and mental health of both the individual as well as the community, and thus policy strategies put a strong focus on health as a determinant of a good life. Other components relate to: basic goods and services (such as housing and food), financial security, a healthy environment (e.g. clean water and air, green and blue spaces), education, employment opportunities, safety. Non-material wellbeing is also mentioned, usually in reference to opportunity and time for personal relationships with friends and family, culture, heritage, sports and recreation. Less common components are respect, freedom from discrimination, post-disaster rebuilding, cost-of-living crisis, child wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of indigenous peoples.

Finland integrates a more holistic view of wellbeing and has pushed the concept forward in three distinct ways. For one through the integration of the SDGs into a national framework, whereby the concept closely links to health (Prime Minister's Office, 2016). Secondly, when Finland assumed the presidency of the Presidency of the Council, it sought to mainstream an economy of wellbeing, which would foster sustainable and inclusive growth (Council of the European Union, 2019). Finally, through former Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government programme of an 'inclusive and competent Finland', the former Prime Minister painted wellbeing as a function of equality and health (Finnish Government, 2019). Finland is a particularly interesting case, as the wellbeing economy flows from and rests on the generous welfare regime that Nordic states are characterised by. In Finnish, the words wellbeing and welfare are the same.

Inclusion

Inclusion is integrated into policy strategies for all the WEGo, though some plans do not necessarily incorporate it in a holistic manner (e.g., Government of Iceland, 2020). Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand pay special attention to indigenous and affected communities, and their access to basic services and needs (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022; Government of Canada, 2021; Health Quality and Safety Commission New Zealand, 2021). Inclusion is further integrated into policymaking processes as both countries are co-defining what wellbeing means in conjunction with their communities. In Aotearoa New Zealand, for instance, \$16 million will be dedicated to co-developing a just transition framework.

Finland is informed by the Nordic welfare model. Key components are: urban-rural divide, the wage gap, and lately the provision of health and social services. Inclusion and wellbeing appear as closely linked qualities of the strategy framework (Finnish Government, 2019; Prime Minister's Office, 2016; WHO, 2023). Iceland and Scotland have opted for an indicator approach, monitoring aspects around poverty, employment opportunities and social aspects. Scotland further considers data disaggregated by gender(s), sexual orientation, etc (Scottish Government, 2023b), while both Iceland and Finland have adopted gender budgeting approaches.

In Wales, one of their guiding goals refers to 'a more equal Wales' (Wales, 2015), and there is an understanding of systemic issues as drivers of inequalities. Educational reform is a key component, not only to integrate minority populations and immigrants, but mainly to produce ethical and informed citizens in the wake of an uptick in hate crimes due to Brexit. Another key component is addressing health inequalities. The Future Generations Commissioner seeks to use every possible lever in reducing poverty and promoting equality, even criticising the government in doing so (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2020a).

Sustainability

Sustainability is also very prominent in the policy strategies. WEGo efforts in creating wellbeing economies are motivated by the failure of governments to respond to the climate crisis, but also as learnings from the 2008 global recession (WHO, 2023). The understanding that environment is a crucial aspect in people's livelihoods, as well as the home of not just current, but also future generations is present in policies from most WEGo members, especially Wales (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2020b).

Iceland, Scotland, Finland, and Wales have utilised the SDGs as a starting point and built an economic framework that aims to promote sustainability in all domains of the economy (WHO, 2023). Wales also monitors biodiversity and soil, natural green spaces, knowledge of nature, water and air quality and use of natural resources through numerous indicators such as levels of NO₂ pollution in the air, or the global footprint of the country. Aotearoa New Zealand also has environmental concerns as a key component in its policies, especially related to relief from environmental catastrophes (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022, 2023). Canada includes the environment as one of the five pillars in its vision for a wellbeing economy and adopts an indigenous point of view in arguing for the security of nature (Government of Canada,

2021). Related components are air quality, clean drinking water, conservation areas and greenhouse gas emissions.

Economy

Although the WEGo have not truly moved ‘beyond GDP’, the dominant narrative in policy strategies is that of a mutually beneficial and reinforcing relationship between economic growth and wellbeing. WEGo still use traditional economic indicators. However, policies seek to transform the economy itself. A common key driver of changes in the economy is a stronger welfare state. Other components that are integrated in some policy strategies are: adjustment to an ageing population, (falling) productivity, trade deals, and development assistance.

Iceland, for example, seeks to facilitate a massive industrial transformation, seeing as its sustainability plans are catered to high-polluting industries (Government of Iceland, 2020). Aotearoa New Zealand also mentions debt levels, new debt measures and adjusting the country’s trajectory on a year-by-year basis (Aotearoa New Zealand, 2022). Canada has opted for an inclusive growth approach, especially focusing on the lower social strata (Government of Canada, 2021). This way, policies integrate both traditional economic indicators (e.g. household incomes, GDP/capita, productivity, household wealth) as well as aspects of 21st century economies such as the prevalence and participation in precarious or gig work.

Others

A central question to the wellbeing approach is that of measures of subjective and objective wellbeing. The distinction is often hard to pick apart, but an illustrative example would be the actual number of physical attacks, measured against the perceived safety of the population: both are important, while they remain largely inconclusive on their own. Wales approached this dilemma by, for example, monitoring the percentage of adults/children with two or more healthy lifestyle behaviours, as well as measuring people’s feelings on satisfaction with their surroundings, their self-reported loneliness as well as their perceived safety (Wales, 2015). Similarly, Iceland has a wide suite of objective indicators, supplemented by people’s level of trust in government and others, as well as their own feelings on safety, amongst other variables (Government of Iceland, 2020).

Another crucial question that emerges within the policy strategies analysed, is the question of how policy strategies centered around wellbeing will fare under different administrations. This will be explored in the Discussion section (see section 4.3).

4. DISCUSSION

This section looks at the review of policy strategies as a whole, and explores what the main insights are that we can draw from it. It is structured as follows: the first part examines the narratives that emerge from the analyses. The second part delves into the WISE framework, exploring components that are common across regions and insights into wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and the framework itself. Lastly, the third part explores the governance dimension of policy.

It is important to bear in mind that the review conducted in this paper, which serves as a background for this discussion, is based on an analysis of policy strategies following a descriptive analytical approach. It enables us to gain valuable insights into WISE in public policy. However, while we look at main relevant policy strategies, our findings are limited to those that we have examined. In addition, the review has focused on official policy documents, and not on how policies have been implemented and what the results have been.

Therefore, information should not be interpreted as a representation of the status quo in practice. It should also be understood that policies are constantly evolving and that during the WISE Horizons project's duration new key policies may be developed, existing policies may be adjusted or phased out. Further research is necessary to understand the outcomes of policy strategies in real-world implementation and to review key policy changes during the project's duration.

4.1 Narratives

4.1.1 Beyond GDP?

Efforts to move beyond GDP can be found in the review, with some policy strategies incorporating metrics related to wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. For instance, the 8th Environmental Action Programme in the EU calls for a beyond GDP monitoring framework that focuses on ensuring living well within planetary boundaries. Other examples are Rwanda, that utilises natural capital accounts (e.g. land, minerals, water, & ecosystems), and Finland whose quality of life metrics includes indicators such as 'earth overshoot day' and 'working life barometer'.

There are also some policy strategies that can serve as an entry point for a WISE framework, and consequently thinking about moving beyond GDP. The EU put forward

the EU Green Deal (EGD) aiming at net-zero emissions while leaving no one behind. The African Agenda 2063 has a set of aspirations which do not focus on economics, but rather aspects of wellbeing, inclusiveness, sustainability, and governance. Ecuador and Bolivia have enshrined *Buen Vivir* in their constitution and Ecuador's statistical office has put effort into a *Buen Vivir* measurement system. The US put in place an Equitable and Long-Term Recovery and Resilience plan (after the COVID-19 pandemic) with a vision towards thriving people and places, wellbeing and resilience, guided by a framework of Vital Conditions for Health and Wellbeing. China's key policy strategy has under its umbrella the goals of realising a modernised society while strengthening people's wellbeing. WEGo governments are explicitly informed by a wellbeing economy framework, which aims to change the purpose of the economy to one that creates and ensures a good life for people and planet.

However, economic growth continues to be a central goal in virtually all policy strategies. In a nutshell, the analysis suggests a dual process in which WISE aspects are growing in relevance while at the same time policy strategies are still very much focused on growth and on how components of wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability lead to, or interplay with, growth.

Across the policy strategies examined in this paper, growth has been characterised by a range of diverse adjectives. In the EU, common terms are 'net-zero, 'decoupled from resources', 'regenerative'¹⁵. In China, an important description is 'high-quality development'. Still present in these regions, but also more encompassing of Africa and Latin America, are terms like 'green', 'increased resource-use efficiency', and 'reduced CO₂'. In the US, growth mostly appears as 'economic growth' itself. **The terms 'sustainable' or 'inclusive' (or sometimes 'shared') growth appear to be more encompassing of all regions.**

Key drivers of government efforts towards WISE aspects, particularly those related to a green transformation, include active participation in global (environmental) governance and an emphasis on competitiveness and autonomy. Policy strategies also often assume that modernisation and digitalisation are catalyst for more environmentally friendly growth.

¹⁵ Although this term only appears in the 8th EAP.

Box 3. Structural challenges in moving beyond GDP

International cooperation is a relevant topic when discussing moving beyond GDP. A change will entail rethinking international cooperation, with classifications of development that go beyond per capita GDP, to properly capture the sustainable development levels of countries, especially middle-income countries.

The case for this is also argued by the OECD’s “How’s life in Latin America” report (OECD, 2021). Currently, Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility depends on a GNI per capita threshold. Therefore, middle and higher-income economies can be excluded from concessional finance from multilateral financial institutions (like the World Bank and the IMF), even though they still face important structural challenges, might have lower performance in some 2030 Agenda objectives despite good performance in others, and face within-country inequalities that can result in a GNI per capita that exceeds the threshold while a large part or even a majority of the population still falls short of it. As the OECD report states, “development is a multifaceted process” and while economic growth can play an important role in driving some dimensions of development, “certain key wellbeing outcomes are loosely or even negatively related to aggregate incomes”. In other words, development challenges exist on a continuum and do not disappear after countries achieve a certain level of GNI per capita. On the contrary, structural challenges can be exacerbated due to the sudden loss of financial aid after “graduating” from ODA eligibility.

4.1.2 Non-anthropocentric views

Alternative perspectives on framing wellbeing – and consequently also inclusion, sustainability, and the economy – also emerge in the analysis. These alternative frameworks stem from diverse cosmological settings, cultural heritage, and/or indigenous knowledge. While they do provide valuable examples of going beyond-GDP, we explore it in a separate section as they go beyond traditional anthropocentric views that underline the concept of (beyond) GDP itself.

An important feature common to these worldviews is the recognition that humans are part of and fully interrelated with the whole of Nature. The most prominent example explored in this review is the concept of *Buen Vivir*, present in some countries of Latin America. *Buen Vivir* emphasises social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of life over material wealth. The concept is explicitly described in terms of critiques against economic growth, capitalism, neoliberalism and related development concepts, instead proposing a view of sufficiency.

Furthermore, within *Buen Vivir*, holistic wellbeing is key, promoting a harmonious (and inseparable) relationship between humans and nature. Wellbeing of nature is valued, not in a utilitarian perspective, but for its own intrinsic worth (Durand, 2018). One of the most notable and concrete consequences of this, is bestowing rights to nature. Ecuador is the first nation to recognise nature as having constitutional rights and Bolivia introduced the first national-level legislation to give rights to nature, the Law of Mother Nature in 2010.

Aotearoa New Zealand is another example. In the country, the indigenous Māori concept of *te tai waiora* refers to the interconnectedness of land, water, and people, also further highlighting planetary wellbeing as a pre-condition to people's wellbeing. The concept is used to guide policy towards more sustainable practices.

Moreover, in (Southern) Africa, there are concepts like *ubuntu* and *botho* that emphasise the interconnectedness of society and people. Ubuntu, a South African concept, promotes the idea that an individual's wellbeing is intricately tied to the wellbeing of the community. *Botho*, a similar concept in Botswana, refers to required personal values to realise the full potential as an individual and as a part of the community.

Box 4. *Buen Vivir* as an anti-capitalist approach to development

Ecuador's statistical office INEC in their introduction on measuring *Buen Vivir* (Léon, 2015), characterises the concept as "critical of economic growth, opulence, consumerism and productivism". It "questions the principle of 'more is better' of capitalist societies that leads to unlimited wealth accumulation and proposes a sufficiency principle: only enough must be taken from nature to subsist." It is mentioned that "indicators are a component of the visions and values of society and ideology" and that *Buen Vivir* "demands for its implementation, as it is a more general and far-reaching concept, a review of existing statistical and accounting schemes, in favour of more comprehensive systems that reflect economic characteristics, social and environmental aspects, and the relationships and interrelationships between human beings, nature and the development process." *Buen Vivir* "arises as part of a protective countermovement against the social and environmental damage of the neoliberal utopia of the self-regulated global economy. *Buen Vivir* seeks to develop and promote democratic policies that protect human society and nature from the self-destructive tendency of the free market."

However, despite the recognition and relevance of these frames, there is often a lack of enforcement or active follow up. While they are often acknowledged, they might

not always be effectively implemented or integrated into policymaking and decision-making processes. This can hinder their realisation and the benefits of a more systemic transformation.

4.1.3 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) play a crucial role in shaping global narratives. They are designed to address challenges that extend beyond national borders and go beyond the traditional focus on GDP¹⁶. However, while the SDGs are still relevant worldwide, their level of progress and influence varies across regions.

In Latin America and Africa, the SDGs take a more prominent role than in the US, the EU, China, and are frequently more thoroughly incorporated into National Development Plans. However, whereas in general there is progress in implementing SDGs and uptake into the institutional sphere, they are not on track to be realised by 2030. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in setbacks, increasing the challenge of meeting the SDGs.

Regarding the WEGo governments, SDGs also remain an important element to most policy strategies. Wales, for example, has passed the SDGs into law, leading to an integration of these goals not just within its wellbeing framework, but also its institutional functioning.

In contrast, in the EU, although the SDGs are acknowledged in the EGD, they are not used to inform policy as a core framework. Governance mechanisms in this sense are more related to observing and reporting, through e.g. annual assessment report and efforts to link the contribution of reforms and policies to progress towards delivering on SDGs.

In the policy strategies reviewed for the US, the SDGs were not mentioned at all. This does not have to mean that they do not play a role, as the SDGs were not specifically reviewed¹⁷. However, in the headline policies such as the Inflation Reduction Act and

¹⁶ Please note that critiques of the SDGs are not covered in this review, but they do clearly exist. At the Beyond Growth conference held in the European Parliament in May 2023 for instance, panellist at the Beyond Europe session Lebohanga Liepollo Pheko stated: “The MDGs and SDGs are designed to maintain the status quo”.

¹⁷ The US does for instance collect national statistics for the SDGs (<https://sdg.data.gov/>).

the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the SDGs did not feature, meaning that at least for such major policies they do not seem to play a role.

In China, the 14th Five-Year Plan and Vision 2035, as the leading policy strategy, is committed to achieving SDGs in line with its economic and social development goals, with the focus on eradicating extreme poverty, building an ecological civilisation, and contributing to global climate and sustainability governance.

Common to most governments across the different regions is the use of SDGs as a monitoring tool to track performance. Therefore, the analysis suggests a lack of commitment and effective integration of SDGs with policy- and decision-making, particularly in policy strategies of wealthier countries.

4.2 Exploring WISE

Wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability have different meanings around the world. This diversity stems from several factors, such as path-dependent trajectories and different national contexts, which have both material and immaterial implications to what these concepts might mean. Other elements that play a role in shaping these and become clear from the analysis are cultural backgrounds and heritage.

This has some implications. The main one is that policy strategies cannot be seen in a vacuum and must be understood within the context of each region's unique features and challenges. For example, while in the EU and the US environmental sustainability may be closely tied to greening industry, in Latin America focus may also consider challenges of deforestation and the extraction of natural resources for export purposes. Moreover, countries hold different historical contributions to environmental and social challenges, which also interplays with policy strategies and their respective actions and targets. Their level of risk exposure to crisis also varies.

The following analysis attempts to be sensitive to variations in historical factors (age of countries/ governments, colonial past, etc.), political and governance context, strategic locations, demography (e.g., population size, density, migration), development and unmet material needs. However, we acknowledge our limitation in fully capturing all these dimensions.

Box 5. Understanding context: lessons from Iceland

Iceland provides an illustration to why context is relevant. Comparing Iceland’s 2020 Action Plan to that of other WEGo members on the subject of renewable energy and gender equality, it may seem less impressive. However, this is only because the country already has an extensive reliance on renewable energy and notable achievements in various indicators like gender equality. This serves as a reminder of the significance of context, highlighting the need to also comprehend the context policy strategies operate within. This example also underscores that emphasis on a particular aspect can indicate different things in different places, e.g. it might indicate a strong performance with a focus on further improvement, or conversely, a poor performance, indicating a greater potential impact of WISE-integrated policy.

4.2.1 WISE Aspects

The analysis reveals a significant integration of social and environmental considerations in policy. However, the reviewed policy strategies lack a comprehensive WISE approach. While wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability are addressed, they are not fully integrated in a holistic manner. Instead, the focus is often on incremental improvements rather than substantial structural changes in society and the economy.

Some common policy concerns arise when looking at the different regional analyses. Firstly, policy strategies acknowledge that the times are changing, and the **terms ‘transformation’, ‘transition’ or ‘reform’ are frequent in the policy debate of all regions** – or at least not uncommon.

Wellbeing and its enhancement are central to many of the policy strategies, though most do not use a holistic approach to wellbeing as a guiding compass. Terms like quality of life and prosperity are applicable/acceptable across all the regions within this study. Common wellbeing components are:

- Labour and employment, including e.g. the improvement of working conditions;
- Income and wealth, especially in Latin America and Africa;
- Health, which in some cases reflects the COVID-19 pandemic or an aging population (e.g. in the US, the EU, and China), while some policy strategies go as far as to understand health and wellbeing as being synonymous (Finland)

- Access to infrastructure, education, housing, nutrition, transport and mobility, access to essential services. Safety also appears but is less commonly mentioned.
- The environmental dimension is also sometimes mentioned, recognising that a healthy environment underpins human wellbeing and the need for protection of environmental disasters or climate change.

Policy strategies are less strong in terms of subjective wellbeing, though we observe a hybrid approach especially in the WEGo governments. They have attempted to integrate the two approaches by monitoring in equal parts subjective and objective wellbeing indicators, such as participation in precarious gig work and feelings of safety. Policy strategies in China and Africa also mention cultural and/or ethical considerations. Another component that appears is work-life balance.

As previously mentioned, (see section 4.1), the wellbeing of nature is also considered in some cases in Latin America.

Inclusion is included in many policy strategies, and in a variety of ways, relating to social, cultural, economic and governance aspects. Common inclusiveness components are:

- Poverty, inequality, and protection of vulnerable groups;
- Unequal impacts of climate change and other environment problems as well as those associated with a green transition, e.g. people impacted most by pollution or loss of jobs;
- Social protection programmes are common, but differences exist between and within continents;
- Equality among young people, low-paid, low-income, and gender; still present, but to a fewer extent is explicit mentioning of ethnicity groups, indigenous people, and people with disabilities;
- Cultural diversity, multiple languages in e.g. education, discrimination, racism, indigenous ways of knowing and beyond are also components that are integrated in some policy strategies;
- Participation in public policymaking, although not so often;
- Innovation, digitalisation, and connectivity as drivers of inclusiveness;
- Businesses and industries negatively affected by restructuring towards more sustainable practices or macroeconomic developments are also sometimes

mentioned, especially in e.g. the US and the EU, and public-private sectors partnerships.

In terms of **spatial inclusion**, inequalities are acknowledged but appear to receive less attention than poverty and vulnerable groups. However, large urban-rural differences exist and are often recognised within policy strategies. In addition, concerns about food production and access to resources also interplay with spatial concerns. Key objectives are territorial cohesion and coordinated regional development.

Inequalities between countries/regions are mostly addressed within overarching institutional settings, e.g. the EU and its Member States. However, integrating equality beyond these borders is still missing in most policy strategies. Related to this, there is lack of recognition regarding overconsumption and overproduction in the Global North and the consequent environmental degradation and stress on natural resources, which negatively impacts development opportunities in the Global South.

Terms like sufficiency are not mentioned in the US, the EU, or China strategies. The WEGo do acknowledge their global responsibility to an extent (Wales, Finland, and Canada), but it is not intuitively clear that they possess a robust understanding of their national plans in a global setting. On the other hand, with *Buen Vivir* the concept of sufficiency is mentioned.

Sustainability is primarily interpreted from the environmental perspective and is covered in many policies. There is also agreement to move towards low or zero carbon development, but the targets in terms of reduction percentage and dates differ. Greater emphasis lies on:

- Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change;
- Low-carbon sectors, especially transport, industry, and agriculture;
- Energy, and renewable energy sources¹⁸;
- Biodiversity as well as general sustainable natural resource management. Many policy strategies recognise air and/or water quality, and conservation of green areas;

¹⁸ However, this can be for times contradictory. In Africa, e.g., regions and countries are planning to develop and exploit fossil fuels (e.g. oil) while increasing the use of renewable energy sources. Another example is the EU's green finance taxonomy, criticized for inconsistencies such as including gas.

- Disaster risk management and reduction also feature in some but not all policy strategies;
- Circularity, and the circular economy.

On top of that, although not always contextualise under a ‘sustainability’ perspective, investment in infrastructure is a common component of some policy strategies and can be linked to guaranteeing wellbeing of future generations. Less frequent aspects are fiscal space and external debt as well as trust in government and institutions.

Resilience can also be understood as a cross-cutting concept between sustainability and the economy, especially if bearing in mind the case of the US and the EU. This can be about increasing climate resilience/environmental sustainability, but also resilience in terms of (economic) autonomy.

Finally, within the dimension of the economy, economic growth continues to be emphasised, as already explored in section 4.1. Common components that are seen as economic goals are green growth, economic diversification, value addition, modernisation, and transformation. The digitisation and innovation capacity of the economy features in most policy strategies, but there is a risk for a growing digital divide both within and between countries. Strengthening the industrial base is also frequently recognised as a key economic driver.

Other elements that often appear are trade, value chains, macroeconomic stability, economic resilience, and autonomy. Related to that, there is a strong emphasis on competitiveness (rather than cooperation) in some policies. Depending on the region, it might be framed towards becoming an important global player (e.g. Africa), or closely linked to maintaining a strong and strategic position in the global economy (e.g. China, the US).

4.2.2 Cross-cutting issues

The analysis of the WISE aspects carried out in this review involved in-depth discussions on whether a policy component should be placed under wellbeing, inclusion, or sustainability. This process highlighted the cross-cutting and interconnected nature of WISE. While certain cases naturally fall within one of the WISE aspects, such as sustainability encompassing efforts to combat climate change, other present a more complex scenario.

Inclusion and wellbeing are often closely linked. The provision of services and social protection (such as health care), for example, relates to wellbeing by creating conditions to live a good life. At the same time, universality, accessibility, and affordability to these services are also common components in policy strategies. Thus, certain issues might be approached from an individual perspective in some policy strategies, while others adopt a more distributional lens, or both. Another example is the consideration of economic resources as essential to daily life as well as an income support to those most in need.

Employment is also a component that was found to be associated with both wellbeing and inclusion. Job creation, in particular, can be viewed as providing the right to work but also as to allow unemployed people to actively participate in the economy by enhancing labour opportunities.

Current and future wellbeing are also intertwined. This is especially the case when looking at infrastructure. Investment aimed at enhancing and improving infrastructure can impact present wellbeing while also yielding long-term effects. Related to this point is also the case of digital infrastructure, which in Africa is framed closer to wellbeing, while in China and the EU is seen as a driver to inclusion (especially across regions). And digital infrastructure is also a provision for the future.

Hence, WISE not only provides a useful framework to support understanding narratives and key focal points within policy strategies but also serves as a tool to examine how specific policy domains and areas are framed and prioritised. For instance, one can scrutinise the integration of health into policy and inquire whether it is regarded as an essential component of wellbeing, if emerging challenges such as aging population or evolving diseases are being considered, and whether different social groups have access to high quality healthcare. Education is another example which cuts across the different aspects of WISE (including the right to education, education for all, and education as an investment in the future).

4.2.3 Other considerations

Other elements emerged from the analysis relate to wellbeing, inclusion, and/or sustainability, but were not so easy to fit under or locate in a specific dimension of the WISE framework. This in part due to their overarching nature, e.g. creating peaceful societies. Others refer to emerging trends, and further attention needs to

be paid on how these might block/hinder advancement on WISE dimensions, e.g. political polarisation. These elements are:

- Peace, and security;
- Policy continuity;
- The functioning of the State, which relates to e.g. transparency, and democracy;
- Cooperation across nations and governments, e.g. South-South cooperation;
- Stability (in a broader sense than only macroeconomic stability, e.g. political instability), and growing concerns on polarisation;
- Interplay of formal and informal sectors and their integration into policy;
- Influence of demographic factors, such as population growth and density, and age structure;
- Diaspora, and (irregular) migration;
- Global integration, power dynamics, trade relationships, and the distribution of labour worldwide.

Besides these, and in parts related, the governance dimension emerged as a key missing dimension of the WISE framework. We explore this below (section 4.3).

On top of that, it becomes evident from our analysis that wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and economy are interlinked and can reinforce each other (win-win) or there can be trade-offs. For example, mineral revenues can be used to increase (current) wellbeing, but this will affect sustainability (future wellbeing). Use of such revenues for sustainability would limit current wellbeing. This further means that for the development of the WISE framework these concepts and their linkages need to be further refined.

4.3 Governance dimension

To achieve the goals foreseen in the different policy strategies, effective governance structures and institutions need to be in place. In this review we do not delve deeply into this topic, but some findings arise from the analyses, and are explored below.

Progress towards WISE aspects depends not only on what is being proposed on paper but how is its design, decided, and put in place. This entails topics such as:

- Funds and resource allocation play a critical role in ensuring effective implementation and successful delivery of policy goals. Governments need to provide the necessary financing and resources to translate plans into results. Budgeting processes and frameworks are key in this regard. The integration of wellbeing into Aotearoa New Zealand's budget for example, or the gender budgeting approaches of Iceland and Finland are clear-cut cases where governments signal to both civil society and the private sector where the money will be flowing, and as such strengthening wellbeing in the process.
- Policymakers need to build the skills and knowledge to effectively address wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. Given the systemic nature of the policy ecosystem and topics, policymakers need to have the capacity for dealing with them in a holistic and coherent manner. This also involves addressing the (often sectoral) structure of government. They also need to build capability to create participatory and inclusiveness processes, and being able to understand and interpret information and data.
- The role of governments and partnerships with the private sector and civil society, including academia, NGOs, and businesses. In Africa, for instance, many governments are reconsidering their development role and partnerships with the private sector and society groups.
- Public participation is essential to achieve wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. This requires ongoing commitment, dialogue, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including indigenous communities and cultural heritage custodians, to ensure their voices are heard and their knowledge is respected.

Some of the policy strategies examined play an essential (and strategic) role in coordinating and integrating sectoral policies. In Africa and Latin America, National Development Plans provide consistency and a degree of coordination of sectoral policies, while national planning commissions are usually responsible for the development and coordination of the implementation of such policies. In addition, they also provide direction of travel when a crisis hit. This was the case of EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis, in which the Next Generation EU programme set the path for green recovery in line with the European Green Deal. In the case of the WEGo, this wave of wellbeing approaches similarly started as a response to the 2008 financial crisis, and is thus deeply informed by the hampering effects of short-term thinking on societal wellbeing.

Moreover, the integration of frameworks or strategies within robust governance structures presents a compelling argument for their long-term sustainability. When a framework is enshrined in a country's constitution, for example, it not only demonstrates political commitment but also establishes a legal foundation for its implementation. This solidifies the framework's status and provides a clear mandate for action. Similarly, having clear, and all-encompassing policies, such as the total ban on new road construction in Wales, guide action towards the desired outcome by leaving no room for deviation from the set path.

In contrast, other approaches adopt a more aspirational and less prescriptive approach. This might allow for greater flexibility to tailor actions to different contexts. For example, in the case of the EU, targets need to be further contextualised at the national level and hence a single number might not apply well to all Member States. However, this approach also carries the risk of diluting policy effectiveness or watering down its ambitions. Striking a balance between flexibility and adaptation, and commitment, target-orientation and effectiveness is key for successfully promoting WISE aspects in policy and translating them into reality.

These findings suggest that policy strategies that move closer to a WISE framework face several challenges: 1. the dominant narrative of growth, 2. the political cycle, and 3. the gap between policies and their implementation.

The first challenge is evident in the prevailing belief that economic growth should be the ultimate goal of economies, limiting the scope of public policy.

The second one is particularly important, as it highlights the institutional constraints WISE policy strategies might face, even when they may score temporary victories. The political cycle differs between countries/regions and depends on governmental agreement. Policies are also subjected to different levels of sensibility to the political cycle, depending on how they are institutionalised, and each new government might have power to influence it. Even long-established policy strategies such as *Buen Vivir* are subject to this, with for instance Ecuador's (first conservative in two decades) government in power since 2021 venturing away from it. Commitment to such plans need to be constantly re-evaluated, otherwise they risk becoming obsolete and forgotten. Similarly, Aotearoa New Zealand is praised for its Wellbeing Budget approach, but there is no guarantee that any succeeding government will follow the path of the outgoing one.

The third challenge refers to the gap between policies and their actual implementation and results. Policies may be well-designed and ambitious, but if not well-implemented, will not lead to the intended results. The analysis suggests that implementation can be much slower than intended and hence the results are limited (e.g. SDG progress monitoring). **Monitoring and evaluation play a vital role in narrowing this implementation gap.**

5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This review looks at how wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability, and the economy (WISE) are being integrated into policy around the world and provides insights for the development of the theoretical framework for the WISE Horizons project. It offers a global perspective by analysing policy strategies in Africa, China, Latin America, the United States, the European Union, and the Wellbeing Economy Governments. It provides an in-depth discussion on each of these regions (see section 3) as well as an insightful discussion on narratives, terminologies and fundamental concepts that are commonly integrated across regions (see section 4).

The main lessons learned are:

- **The WISE Framework provides a valuable tool to look at policy strategies and initiatives from a more holistic perspective.** Adopting a WISE lens can support governments in developing broader approaches to development or transition pathways and help overcome the bias towards economic growth-oriented policies we still often see in policymaking;
- **Context is key.** The way wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability are integrated throughout policy strategies varies across regions. There is no such thing as a universal approach to a WISE framework, and policies as well as WISE aspects need to allow for context-sensitiveness and country-specific challenges;
- **Non-anthropocentric views are present in some policy strategies around the world, and they provide a powerful alternative to the prevailing economic paradigm,** especially by drawing upon indigenous knowledge and worldviews. However, effective follow-up and implementation of policies grounded in these perspectives is needed to harness its full potential of transformative change;

- Policy strategies need to monitor progress, and, for that, metrics centred around wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability are needed. **The interplay between WISE policies with the creation and use of WISE metrics can form a positive feedback loop towards these goals.**

Several recommendations relevant for advancing the WISE framework are:

- Adopting **a systems lens approach can be helpful to understand WISE aspects.** While each holds its own significance, we need to build bridges between wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability. By delving deeper into the linkages between different WISE components, we can explore trade-offs and synergies between them;
- Related to the above, **a next step in the WISE Horizons project is delving into the determinants of WISE dimensions.** Questions like “What are the factors influencing wellbeing?” will arise. This should also pay attention to major trends and their impacts, e.g. the new opportunities and risks offered by digitalisation;
- **Regarding wellbeing, cultural aspects and heritage needs to be further explored** within the WISE framework. While policy strategies sometimes make references to these aspects, there is potential for greater integration and expansion. This is also the case for life satisfaction.
- **The spatial dimensions of inclusion, especially between countries, need to be further developed.** This is true for policies, as it is mainly not taken into consideration, but we also need a better understanding of spatial implications when it comes to metrics and models;
- **Sustainability is understood mainly as environmental dimension** in the policy documents. Although this is key, our conceptualisation needs to expand to address other long-term social and economic issues;
- **The governance dimension needs to be incorporated into the WISE framework.** This should consider the political cycles between countries and regions, institutionalisation efforts, and a better understanding on implementation – both successful cases as well as failures and challenges. The governance dimension also highlights the importance of Monitoring & Evaluation, and this way connects with WISE metrics. In short, while WISE dimensions mostly address the what, there should also be attention for the *how*;

- In relation to that, **effective governance, peace, and stability are seen as preconditions for improving wellbeing**, and are relevant for future wellbeing as well as the distribution of wellbeing benefits. We need to further explore how these aspects affect the WISE dimensions and their causalities.
- **The demographic dimension also emerged as an important aspect in all regions.** The nature of key demographic aspects and variables varies however, and includes rural-urban settings, age structure (aging or youthful population), population density, migration etc.
- **The WISE framework is not able yet to capture hierarchy among the different WISE aspects**, while the core of the idea is that wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability are societal goals, and the economy is a means. In order to address this, we would need to further look at policy implementation and weighing methodologies in scientific literature, to assess the relative importance and prioritisation of the various categories.

We conclude this analysis by reiterating that there are currently numerous policy strategies around the world which incorporate aspects of wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability in their objectives and actions. However, the findings suggest that there is potential for embracing more comprehensive, holistic approaches to the WISE dimensions within policy. We find that the WISE framework serves as a valuable tool to transcend the conventional focus on economic concepts with their limited scope or those that might be specific to certain locations. This is in line with the need for context-sensitive policies and approaches. By adopting a WISE lens, policymakers, and those interested in policy analysis, can effectively grasp these nuances, and develop holistic strategies with wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainability at their core.

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ANNEX A. COMPLEMENTARY METHODOLOGY ON THE SELECTION OF POLICIES

The selection of policy strategies is based on the scope outlined in the paper, but followed specific procedures to each of the regions. Below, we present the rationale behind each process.

Africa

For Africa, policies are reviewed at the continental, regional and country levels. To understand the development paths that are being pursued, it is necessary to review medium to long-term plans, policies and/or visions and associated short-term policies and strategies.

The following policies have been selected:

- Continental: African Union as the principal continental institution, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);
- Regional: two of the five regional economic communities (REC), i.e., Southern & Eastern African Community (COMESA) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). In addition, the non-binding Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa (GDSA) has been reviewed;
- National/countries: Botswana, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda. If needed, some additional countries may be added later. The current countries have been selected on the following grounds:
 - Availability of a long-term national vision or development plan;
 - Spatial spread within the continent, also considering distance to European continent;
 - Income group category: lower, lower middle and upper middle income;
 - Different geographical conditions: landlocked, coastal countries, climate, and population size & densities; and
 - Different socio-economic and political histories but all currently functioning democracies.

The long-term policies have different end dates (ranging from 2035 to 2063), lengths (15 to 40+ years), and are usually operationalised and implemented through medium

term National Development Plans (most 5 years, some 10 years) and specific sectoral plans such as climate change strategies, green economy/growth strategies, social charters/social protection, and gender & youth strategies. The presence of such plans differs by country or organisation. The visions of countries are aligned to the visions of regional economic communities (REC) that the countries belong to as well as the long-term vision of the AU (Agenda 2063). The membership of the selected countries is shown below.

Table A2. Membership of selected countries for Africa

Countries	AU	AfCFTA	COMESA	SADC	GDSA
Botswana	X	X		X	X
Ghana	X	X			X
Morocco	X	X			
Rwanda	X	X	X		X
Uganda	X	X	X		X
Total # of member countries	54	45	19	16	15

Source: own elaboration

China

For the national level, we selected the mid to long-term policy strategies, special policy frameworks, and development plans in key sectors. First, the five-year plan is the major feature of the governance system in China. The latest plan not only focuses on the current five-year period of 2021-2025, but envisions a long-term perspective for 2035, which is setting the growth targets and expecting a Chinese path to modernization. Furthermore, Chinese government released a “1+N” policy framework for reaching China’s carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals, aligning the targets with requirements from the Paris Agreement. Moreover, there are several ambitious long-term strategies in different sectors, which takes decades to an innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development.

The regional policy strategies focus on the overall patterns of different regions, including the requirements and comparative advantages. China is the world’s third-largest country and resolving the regional differences within the country is an important but difficult task.

China’s regional development strategy is one of the main national strategies. In terms of the special features in different areas, several major regional development policy strategies have been introduced such as the ecological protection and high-quality

development of the Yellow River Basin, the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the coordinated development with Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the promotion of the reform and opening-up in Hainan Province.

We selected the regional policies strategies that are more relevant to the focus of WISE, and covers the different locations of China. Yellow River and Yangtze River are the two biggest rivers in China, located in the north and south of China respectively. Yellow River was ‘the Cradle of Chinese Civilisation’, but it frequently overflows during certain time of the year, and the policy prioritises the ecological conservation. Whereas the Yangtze River suffers from severe pollution because of the rapid economic development, thus the policy strategies emphasize the combination with sustainability and economy. Western regions are less prosperous yet resources-rich compared with eastern regions, the policy aims to promote the coordinated regional development, also with the improvements of wellbeing, inclusion, sustainability and economy. The Great Bay Area is in the south and has been guided to develop with its combined strength, as well as enlarge the international influence. Therefore, the targeted regional-level policies for the project cover the major river basins, urban clusters, and key development areas.

Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is large, covering Central American, Caribbean, and South American countries. Latin American integration is a long-debated topic. Various continental and regional organisations were born from the view of integration, but they exist with varying levels of support and current activity, and some have faded. There is no one principal continental institution, like the African Union. As a starting point of the continental review, the regional commission of the UN was chosen, *Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe*/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL/ECLAC), because of its long existence and clear current commitment from member organisations. The Commission was established in 1948 and all 33 countries of Latin American and the Caribbean are a Member State, along with 13 Asian, European and North American nations that have historical, economic and cultural ties with the region.

The Sustainable Development Goals are an important part of the work of CEPAL/ECLAC, not surprising for a UN body. The SDGs were therefore the main focus of the continental level review, centred around the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development convened by CEPAL/ECLAC.

Many countries have also incorporated SDGs in their National Development Plans, something that has been covered in several reports already. Therefore, the national level implementation and SDG policies have not been reviewed as such, but existing literature was used for the national level review.

The other focus of the LAC review was the concept of *Buen Vivir*, a prominent concept in the sphere of alternatives to the GDP and growth paradigm. Two countries that have incorporated *Buen Vivir* into the policymaking arena are Bolivia and Ecuador. Since these examples are quite well-known and have been studied already, for this part of the review partly the policy documents themselves were consulted and partly existing literature was used.

United States of America

For the United States of America only the federal government level was considered. Policy strategies that have been presented by the Biden-Harris Administration as landmark policies, constitute large investments, and touch upon multiple WISE elements, were included in the review: the Inflation Reduction Act (formerly known as Build Back Better) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Moreover, a combination of nature-oriented policies that was announced with a specific referral to the shortcomings of GDP was reviewed. Lastly, the COVID-19 recovery and resilience plan was included as it has health and wellbeing explicitly as its guiding framework.

European Union

The European Union (EU) comprises the union institutions and Member States. For this review, we opted to focus on the EU level as it lays the foundation for policies, providing strategic direction as well as leading policy coordination efforts.

The selection the relevant policies primarily relied on ZOE institution's existing knowledge and information gathered from ZOE personnel. This involved examining past publications to gather relevant policy strategies, particularly the 'A compass towards 2030' report¹⁹ To identify additional policy initiatives, we looked at the EU Commission, which is the main institution responsible for agenda setting, and policy proposal and design. We considered the Commission priorities for 2019-24, with a particular focus on the European Green Deal (EGD). Within the EGD, we also found necessary to look at action plans that operationalise and implement the EGD. For that, we selected policy initiatives based on 1- the extent to which they address

¹⁹https://zoe-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ZOE_Report_Towards-Europe.pdf

various areas and sectors of society comprehensively and, 2- the level of public attention they have garnered.

Although not all policy strategies selected serve as a good example of what a WISE policy strategy could look like, we included them in the analysis to be able to gain a comprehensive understanding of what (growth) model is being pursued by the EU, and whether/what WISE elements are currently being considered.

Wellbeing Economy Governments

The Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) are a stand-out case in this research, as these governments have joined an institutionalised effort to integrate wellbeing aspects of all kind into their governance. Selecting the countries themselves was thus not an issue. Additionally, making the choice to include WEGO governments as a separate category came about naturally, as they aim to be the leaders in the transition to wellbeing economies, and are the prototypical examples in our analysis.

Currently, there are 6 WEGo members:

- Finland
- Iceland
- Canada
- Aotearoa New Zealand
- Scotland
- Wales

In selecting which policy strategies to analyse, we naturally gravitated towards well-established, well-known ones such as Aotearoa New Zealand's *Wellbeing Budget*, Wales' *Wellbeing for Future Generations Act*, or the *Quality of Life Strategy* for Canada. Similarly, we opted for all-encompassing frameworks which are informed by previous work and are a guiding light for future policies, as in the case of Scotland's *National Performance Framework*, and Finland's *Towards the Finland we Want by 2050*. Iceland is an exceptional case in light of this, and though it is most similar to Scotland's dashboard of wellbeing indicators, the country's plans were a better fit for our review of metrics, rather than policies. Nevertheless, we decided to look at official documents which encompass WISE aspects such as the 2020 Action Plan. Note that adjacent documents to main policy strategies selected were also taken into consideration, such as Aotearoa New Zealand's Living Standards Framework or Iceland's indicators for wellbeing.

ANNEX B. ANALYTICAL STRUCTURE BASED ON THE WISE FRAMEWORK

The main focus of the review is to generate a deeper understanding about the characteristics of the policy strategies and their contents. With that in mind, and based on the WISE framework (see section 1.2) we developed the following structure:

Table B1. Analytical structured used for the analysis of selected policy strategies

Block	Element	Description
Basic data	Governance level	<i>national, regional, etc.</i>
	Where	<i>country, region, continent, etc.</i>
	Name	<i>what's the name of the policy strategy?</i>
	Type of policy	<i>regulation, information, etc.</i>
	Responsible department/office	<i>who is responsible for pushing forward the policy strategy?</i>
	Duration	<i>how long is it planned to last?</i>
	Implementation phase	<i>in which phase is the policy strategy?</i>
	Short description	<i>what is the policy strategy about?</i>
	Goal	<i>what are the goals of the policy strategy?</i>
WISE aspect	Wellbeing	<i>tick the box - is it considered in the policy strategy?</i>
	Relation to wellbeing	<i>Descriptive analysis - what is considered and how? Add key aspects, words, etc.</i>
	Inclusion	<i>tick the box - is it considered in the policy strategy?</i>
	Relation to inclusion	<i>Descriptive analysis - what is considered and how? Add key aspects, words, etc.</i>
	Sustainability	<i>tick the box - is it considered in the policy strategy?</i>
	Relation to sustainability	<i>Descriptive analysis - what is considered and how? Add key aspects, words, etc.</i>
	Economy	<i>tick the box - is it considered in the policy strategy?</i>
	Relation to economy	<i>Descriptive analysis - what is considered and how? Add key aspects, words, etc.</i>
	Other comments on WISE aspects	<i>any other relevant comment on the policy strategy</i>
Wider context	Trade-offs & synergies	<i>what trade-offs and/or synergies can be perceived between WISE aspects?</i>
	SDGs	<i>add references to the Sustainable Development pillars</i>
	Metrics used	<i>does the policy strategy relate to any metrics (index, indicator, dashboard, etc)?</i>
	Relation to beyond GDP narrative	<i>does the policy strategy have beyond GDP/post growth at its core?</i>
	Other comments on wider context	<i>any other relevant comment on the policy strategy</i>

Source: own elaboration based on the WISE Framework

The initial block of the structure pertains to the ‘basic elements’, which encompasses more technical information. The second block deals with the ‘WISE aspects’, determining whether these elements are present in the analysed document and, if so, what is considered and how it is approached. The third block relates to the ‘wider context’ and serves as a means of establishing connections with the broader project, WP1, and other narratives aligned with beyond GDP, such as the SDGs.

This structured was utilised to examine the selected policy strategy documents. The detailed findings of this analysis can be accessed in the supplementary excel file.



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