



**Dear Reader,**

Please find below information on the latest Sounding Board Meeting of our project EuroREACH – A Handbook to Access Health Care Data for Cross-Country Comparisons of Efficiency and Quality.

Sincerely yours,

Willem Stamatou  
Publications Officer

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## Projects

### **EuroREACH 2nd Sounding Board Meeting, 22-23 October, Brussels**

The European Centre, coordinator of the FP7 funded EuroREACH project, hosted the 2nd Sounding Board Meeting as a two-day event in Brussels. About 20 experts from universities, ministries, research institutes and the European Commission engaged in a lively debate with all project partners on how to improve access to and use of health care data to enhance comparative research on the efficiency, equity and quality of health systems.

The European Centre presented a draft version of the project's final outcome, the "Health Data Navigator". This web platform will feature a compendium of national and international health data sources with a particular focus on patient-level and disease-oriented data. Moreover, it provides a toolbox guiding researchers, e.g. on what theoretical framework to use and on how to link individual-level data when comparing health system performance across countries.

Following our Brussels meeting, the Health Data Navigator will be complemented by an interactive forum which will enable the research community to exchange experiences, share knowledge and engage in a debate on health system performance assessment.

Our web platform will be presented at the project's final conference taking place in May 2013 in Vienna and be made available to the public thereafter.

Read more about: [EuroREACH project](#), [Event Agenda](#)

For further information please contact: [Maria M. Hofmarcher](#)



## Events

### Upcoming Events

#### How Sustainable Are the Austrian and Hungarian Welfare States?

On Thursday 15 November Professor **Alexia Fürnkranz-Prskawetz** (Vienna Institute of Demography and TU Vienna) and Dr **Robert Ivan Gal** (Demographic Research Institute, TARKI Social Research Institute, and Corvinus University Budapest) will hold a European Centre International Seminar discussing the sustainability of the Austrian and Hungarian welfare states by means of National Transfer Accounts (NTAs).

NTAs introduce age to National Accounts (NAs). Whereas NAs describe flows of the components of national income among institutions, such as government, households and the corporate sector, NTAs apply a complex procedure splitting national income among overlapping generations. Labour income is earned by active cohorts but it also finances the consumption of inactive cohorts, such as children and the elderly, through various channels. NTAs describe the intergenerational resource reallocations in detail and thereby put the welfare state in perspective by presenting it as an institution of life-cycle income-smoothing by inter-age reallocations. In addition, the state is just one of the actors organising income-smoothing; historically speaking, a relatively new one compared to households and market actors.

A retrospective application of the method points to two consequences of state intervention. First, reallocations to the elderly are more easily exported from households to the state than reallocations to children. Consequently, the composition of reallocations to children is largely different from the composition of reallocations to the elderly. Children are a cost to parents, the elderly are a cost to taxpayers. This proves even more explicit if time transfers are also considered. Second, the rate of per capita reallocations to the elderly compared to the per capita reallocations to children changed dramatically over time.

For further information please contact: [Pieter Vanhuysse](#)

To register for future international seminars please go to: [Website](#)

#### Gesundheit im Dialog / Health Dialogue, 15 November, Vienna

Maria M. Hofmarcher, Director Health and Care, will participate as a discussant in a high-level annual event called “Gesundheit im Dialog” / Health Dialogue. This year’s focus will be on “eHealth in Austria – Reality or Dreams of the Future”.

Read more about: [Event](#)

For further information please contact: [Maria M. Hofmarcher](#)



## Past Events

### **Minimising Misery: A New Strategy for Public Policies instead of Maximising Happiness?**

Orsolya Lelkes in her presentation at the ISQOLS conference in Venice raised the issue whether public policy should focus on minimizing unhappiness rather than maximizing happiness. She showed that unhappiness varies a great deal more across social groups than happiness does. While misery appears to strongly relate to broad social issues (such as unemployment, poverty, social isolation), bliss might be more of a private matter, with individual strategies and attitudes, hidden from the eye of a policy-maker. The social cost of unhappiness may be also reflected in the immense cost of mental health problems. Preventing avoidable unhappiness, however, needs to be complemented with other strategies for promoting happiness, perhaps on a more decentralized level, given the different causes of bliss and those of misery.

Conference details: XIth ISQOLS Conference: Discovering New Frontiers in Quality of Life Research. Ca'Foscari University, Venice, 1-4 November 2012

For further information please contact: [Orsolya Lelkes](#)

### **Do the Elderly Live at the Expense of the Young**

Bernd Marin participated in a live TV discussion on the above topic on Wednesday 24 October. He delivered the following statement: "Nicht die Alten leben auf Kosten der Jungen, sondern die Mehrheit der Inaktiven und Versorgungsempfänger zu Lasten der Erwerbstätigen" / "Not the elderly live at the expense of the young, but the majority of inactive persons and beneficiaries at the expense of the workforce".

View the [TV Discussion](#)

For further information please contact: [Bernd Marin](#)

### **Older Workers In Europe: The Perspective of Labor Market Policies and Generational Solidarity**

On 23 October, Katrin Gasior and Pieter Vanhuyse gave a keynote address in Leibnitz (Styria, Austria) at the Paktetreffen 2012 conference on 'Older Workers in Europe: Labor Market Policies and Generational Solidarity.' Centred around the theme of "Generational Solidarity in Working Life", the Paktetreffen 2012 conference was organized by the Styrian Employment Pact, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK), and the Austrian National Coordination Center for Territorial Employment Pacts, and was financed by the BMASK and the European Social Fund.

Read more about: [Conference Programme](#)

For further information please contact: [Katrin Gasior](#), [Pieter Vanhuyse](#)



**“How Does Austria’s Primary Care for Kids Compare when Looking at Cost, Efficiency and Satisfaction?”** *6. Jahrestagung “Politische Kinder Medizin”, 19-20 October 2012, Klagenfurt, Austria*

Maria M. Hofmarcher was invited to give a talk on the economic dimension of comparing primary care for kids. In her presentation she made reference to two main sources: firstly, OECD data on per capita spending for ambulatory care of 0 to 14-year olds and secondly, a child index developed by Bradshaw and Richardson (2009). The latter compares child well-being across European countries using data from several domains that determine well-being, e.g. health.

Maria M. Hofmarcher found that on a very macro level child well-being is largely in line with a country’s wealth. Nonetheless, Austria ranked surprisingly low relative to Europe’s top performers, i.e. the Nordic countries and the Netherlands, even though per child spending in 2006 was 20% higher in Austria than it was in Germany and surpassed the Dutch level by more than 70%. This points to potential for more cost effectiveness, e.g. by revisiting the skill-mix in primary care provision.

However, the study by Bradshaw and Richardson (2009) also showed that health care is only one of many factors determining a child’s well-being. To take the example of one other important factor, namely family benefits: while Austria spends an equally large overall amount on families as Europe’s top performers (~3-4% of GDP), a relatively small fraction is spent on in-kind benefits, which, however, have been shown to contribute positively to child well-being. Consequently, Maria M. Hofmarcher concluded that improved child well-being requires horizontal policy action encompassing among others family support and health-care services.

For further information please contact: [Maria M. Hofmarcher](#)

**Care Sector in Crisis?** *Long-run effects of the economic crisis on the long-term care sector need to be considered*

Andrea Schmidt, in her presentation at the Linzer Forum, argued that policy-makers in almost all European countries have been faced with the need for budgetary cuts as a consequence of the current economic and financial crisis. Such a systemic shock also has significant implications for public spending in the health care and long-term care sectors. For example, user co-payments have increased in some countries, coverage was reduced, and salaries of health care staff were cut down. In the long-term care sector, this may create detrimental effects, for example, on the equity in the access to long-term care services for older people as well as the brain drain of high-qualified long-term care staff. While the crisis may represent an opportunity to improve the integration of the health and long-term care sectors, the impact of budgetary cuts in the longer run thus needs to be carefully considered.

The implications of policy measures in the crisis were discussed during a presentation by Andrea Schmidt together with experts, policy-makers, and practitioners on 18 October 2012 at the Linzer Forum in



Upper Austria. The presentation was based on the European Centre's forthcoming publication "Facts & Figures on Healthy Ageing and Long-term Care – Europe and North America".

For further information please contact: [Andrea Schmidt](#)

**“Frage China – Frage Österreich”: Gesundheitssysteme im Vergleich / Similarities and Differences of the Austrian and Chinese Health Care Systems, Diskussionssendung mit Internetschaltung nach Beijing, BR alpha, 10 October 2012, Vienna**

Maria M. Hofmarcher participated in a discussion about similarities and differences of the Austrian and Chinese health care systems. Topics covered included reforms in the area of financing and delivery of health care. China only recently began to expand insurance coverage through broad mandating and investment in infrastructure. By now almost 98% of Chinese people are covered and entitled to basic health care services.

Currently the Chinese government aims at right-sizing hospital infrastructure through payment reforms including payments for pharmaceutical care in hospitals. While reforms in China largely focus on expanding access to care and improving welfare to promote a “harmonious society”, many health care systems in Europe are required to better economize resources, especially in light of the current debt crisis. For example in Austria the GDP share spent on health is high when compared to other developed countries but health outcomes could be improved in many areas. In addition, health care spending growth has exceeded GDP growth in the last two decades resulting in pronounced increases of public spending on health in total government outlays.

Although the overall fiscal environment in Austria is solid when compared to other European countries, the Austrian government currently prepares for implementing a fiscal envelope for the public health sector regional governments and sickness funds to better align resource use with emerging health care needs.

Further readings:

- Cheng, Tsung-Mei (2008) ‘China’s Latest Health Reforms: A Conversation with Chinese Health Minister Chen Zhu’, *Health Affairs*, Vol. 27, No 4.
- Gönenç, R., M. M. Hofmarcher and A. Wörgötter (2011) “Reforming Austria’s Highly Regarded but Costly Health System”, OECD Economics Department [Working Papers](#), No. 895, OECD Publishing.
- Hofmarcher M. M. (forthcoming 2012) ‘Austria: Health System Review’, in: *Health Systems in Transition. Austria*.

For further information please contact: [Maria M. Hofmarcher](#)

View [TV show of this discussion](#) through FireFox



## **Is the grass always greener on the other side? Mobility of patients and health care professionals across EU borders still characterised by major differences in quality standards**

The European Centre – together with partners from Hungary, the Netherlands, Estonia and Finland – organized a session on the mobility of patients as well as of health and long-term care professionals to and from Eastern European countries at the International Conference on “Challenges for Health and Health-care in Europe” at Aalborg University (Denmark).

The recently published EU Directive on patients’ rights in cross-border healthcare as well as the accession of member states from Eastern Europe have intensified the debate about patient mobility in the EU. In fact, these developments have created opportunities for health and long-term care professionals from Eastern Europe, e.g. in terms of better training, career opportunities and higher salaries in other EU countries. At the same time, patients are able to move across borders for medical treatments, for example due to better availability of services or lower prices for treatments (e.g. in dental care).

However, both the phenomena of professionals’ migration and patients’ mobility entail also challenges as to ensuring high quality of care and patient safety. After all, health and social care legislation largely remain a national responsibility in the EU which makes it more difficult to agree on common professional standards. Despite the introduction of a common regulatory framework at EU level, some uncertainties thus remain with regard to patients’ lack of information, quality management in health care provision, as well as to nationally and historically rooted values of ‘care’.

The European Centre jointly organized the session in the context of the FP 7 ECAB project with partners from the Health Services Management Training Centre of Semmelweis University (HU), Maastricht University (NL), Praxis Center for Policy Studies (EST), National Institute for Health and Welfare (FIN), London School of Economics (UK), and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicines (UK). The Conference took place 1-2 November 2012 in Aalborg, Denmark.

For further information please contact: [Andrea Schmidt](#) or [Juliane Winkelmann](#)  
Read more about the [project](#) or visit the website: [www.ecabeurope.eu](http://www.ecabeurope.eu)

## **Publications**

### **Book Chapter**

#### **Measuring Happiness on a National Level**

Orsolya Lelkes in her book chapter on ‘Measuring Happiness on a National Level’ argues that there is an emerging consensus that “well-being measures” need to be a primary focus of policy-making. This consensus appears to be explicit on an international level, including the OECD, the UN, the World Bank and the



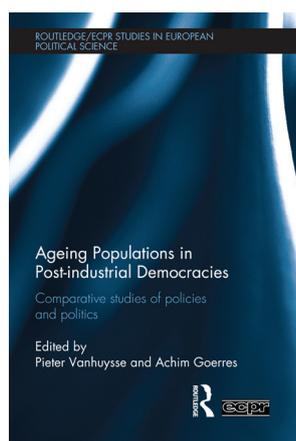
European Commission and Eurostat, and more prevalent in national politics in some countries, including e.g. France and the UK. This policy effort is supported by the available large-scale data of ever higher quality.

The chapter presents evidence on the level of self-reported happiness across European countries based on a sample with around 50,000 individuals, and also variation of happiness levels across groups. Lelkes argues that the social patterns of happiness provide a useful basis for the assessment of public policies.

Lelkes, O. (2012) 'Measuring Happiness on a National Level', in: E. Kapferer, A. Koch and C. Sedmak (eds), *Logics of Change. Poverty, Place, Identity and Social Transformation Mechanisms*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

For further information please contact: [Orsolya Lelkes](#)

## Book Review



### Ageing Populations in Post-Industrial Democracies reviewed in Canadian Public Policy

This new Routledge book in the ECPR's European Political Science series on the policies and politics of population aging, edited by Pieter Vanhuysse and Achim Goerres, was reviewed by Professor Roderic Beaujot (University of Western Ontario), in *Canadian Public Policy* Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 443-444. Excerpts below:

'This is a great addition to the Studies in European Political Science series. ... A main theme of the book is the interplay of demographic and fiscal considerations with political variables in the evolving adaptation to aging populations. There is no consensus on the relative importance of these considerations. In some regards, the similar demographics and fiscal constraints among European countries push in the same direction, but at the same time there is path dependency based on existing institutional and policy frameworks in each country. ... Robert Hudson argues that the economic crisis of 2008/09 and fiscal constraints have shifted "the perceived stakes of action on behalf of pensioners" from "positive-sum to zero-sum or even negative-sum" territory (p. 14). Similarly, on the side of this convergence hypothesis, Achim Goerres and Pieter Vanhuysse observe in the introductory chapter that the increase in life expectancy and the relative size of the elderly population bring into question the very basis of the welfare state'.

Read more about: [Ageing Populations in Post-Industrial Democracies](#)

For further information please contact: [Pieter Vanhuysse](#)



## Newspaper Articles

[Marin, Bernd \(2005-2012\) Various articles in: Der Standard, in: Die Presse, in: Format, in: Kleine Zeitung, in: Salzburger Nachrichten, in: Der Falter, Vienna, Graz, Salzburg, 2012](#)

For further information please contact: [Bernd Marin](#)

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