Web-COSI "Web COmmunities for Statistics for Social Innovation"

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Summary

This report describes the purpose, activities undertaken and results achieved of the European Wikiprogress University Programme. The Programme has been set up to: (i) foster a network of educational institutions and students with an interest in issues related to the 'Beyond GDP' agenda; (ii) increase the opportunities for students to contribute to Web-COSI activities, Wikiprogress and the Wikiprogress community, and (iii) establish a platform for the sharing of information and educational resources of particular interest to students. In 2014, the structure of the Programme has been established with partnerships with selected educational institutions, which has led to increased student involvement in Wikiprogress activities. In 2015, efforts will be made to further expand the network and projects associated with the Programme, and to enhance the content available on the platform through crowd sourcing.

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Introduction

The overarching purpose of Web-COSI is to work towards the goal of 'Statistics for All', or in other words, to encourage people from all sectors of society to be more involved in the development and use of improved measures of people's lives, taking into account well-being, inequalities and sustainability. Various activities undertaken as part of Web-COSI partners' have approached the objective of engaging citizens from different angles. The Wikiprogress University Programme has been established as a structured means of better involving one groups of citizens in particular – students – in the discussion around 'beyond GDP' statistics, and in activities to foster their use and impact on policy and society.

1. Purpose of the activity

1.1 To foster a network of educational institutions and students with an interest in issues related to the 'Beyond GDP' agenda

The movement for improved measures of people's lives (and not just economic productivity) – often referred to as the 'Beyond GDP' movement - takes into account a number of issues related to individual and social well-being, quality of life, happiness, inclusiveness, and sustainability. It is also a multidisciplinary movement, which involves a wide range of different conceptual, methodological and professional approaches to the issues of well-being and progress measures and their use, including: statistics, economics, policy analysis, psychology, sociology, urban planning, environmental science, IT, communications, journalism, and philosophy.

For many of these disciplines, the 'Beyond GDP' or 'well-being' framework provides a new way of thinking of social problems, which has implications for the application of traditional professional tools and methodologies. However, the way many of these subjects are taught do not always necessarily sufficiently stress the links between the skills and frameworks being taught and the implications for people's well-being. For example, the standard economics curriculum taught in universities has come under a great deal of criticism for being based on outdated principles that do not sufficiently take into account issues of well-being, inequality of sustainability. There is currently a movement to reform economics curricula[1] that has come about at least in part because of pressure from students themselves.

The students of today are the decision makers of tomorrow, and involving students in the discussion about the meaning and measurement of well-being, and of the design of policy to foster well-being, will not only have an important impact on future policy outcomes, but also helps the voice of younger people have more influence today. The primary purpose of the Wikiprogress University Programme, therefore is to provide the means of establishing a network - of both interested educational institutions, and of then students themselves - around these issues. The Programme will function on the same principle as Wikiprogress itself – providing a unifying platform around which people from very diverse backgrounds and disciplines can come together to find common ground in the pursuit of better measures and policies for people's lives.

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[1] See, for example, the CORE project, led by the Institute of New Economic Thinking, amongst others: http://core-econ.org/

1.2 To increase the opportunities for students to contribute to Wikiprogress and the Wikiprogress community

Wikiprogress has always been open to anybody who wants to contribute to it, but the Wikiprogress University will provide a more structured way for students in particular to get involved. It is important to have students be more actively involved in Wikiprogress because they tend to be well-informed about the issues, and have more flexibility in terms of time, as well as more time and enthusiasm for contributing to voluntary, collaborative projects such as Wikiprogress. Furthermore, in general, Wikiprogress is increasing its efforts to engage young people through Web-COSI activities, and targeting students provides another way to do this.

1.3 To establish a platform for the sharing of information and educational resources of particular interest to students

There is a need to provide accessible and engaging educational resources around the 'beyond GDP' and well-being agenda. Many of the issues that form the foundation of the movement for improved measures of people's lives - such as the meaning of well-being and quality of life, the role of statistics and knowledge in policy-making, the role of citizen engagement, and the evaluation of sustainability – are complex and multidimensional. To people who are new to the concept of 'beyond GDP' statistics and their importance, it is not always easy to find accessible ways to explain the key points. The final aim of the Wikiprogress University Programme is therefore to collate educational resources that are particularly accessible for newcomers to the issues.

2. Set up of the activity and its execution

2.1 Identified relevant educational institutions and networks

The first step was to gain a better sense of which educational institutions and networks would be an appropriate fit for the programme. This proved to be not straightforward as there are very few courses which focus explicitly on 'well-being', 'progress', or 'quality of life'. Exceptions include:

- The Masters Course established by the Universitá degli Studi of Florence jointly with Istat, Italy entitled "QoLexity: Measuring, Monitoring and Analysis of Quality of Life and its Complexity".

- The module on "Assessing Social Progress" which is available as part of undergraduate degree courses on Government and Social Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK.

- The MSc course in "Wellbeing in Public Policy and International Development" at the University of Bath, UK.

On the other hand, there are many, many courses that cover aspects of potential relevance to the well-being and progress agenda, such as every course on economics, urban planning, and policy; and many courses on psychology, journalism, data analysis, etc. Rather than getting overwhelmed, the decision was taken to start small, with only the courses that we knew for sure had an interest in engaging with well-being issues, with the plan that as the University Programme became better established we could start to branch out to include more courses and networks.

2.2 Established partnerships with selected institutions

The next step was to begin to establish relationships with selected institutions. The relationship with the Universitá degli Studi was particularly important. Contact was made very early on with the QoLexity Masters Course of the Universitá degli Studi of Florence, Italy, as the course director Filomena Maggini is on the Advisory Board of Web-COSI.

Throughout the year, Ms. Maggino was in regular contact with the team to give advice and feedback and over the summer of 2014, Wikiprogress welcomed a student of the QoLexity course to be part of the team in the OECD offices in Paris as an intern. Contact was also established with the University of Bologna and the Gran Sasso Science Institute.

2.3 Delivered seminars for European courses

A major element of partnerships between Wikiprogress, Web-COSI and academic institutions were the delivery of seminars as part of taught courses. In 2014, the following seminars were given as part of the Wikiprogress University programme:

- "Communication and the policy use of indicators", Seminar given by Donatella Fazio, Istat, for the QoLexity Masters Course at the Università degli Studi of Florence, Florence on 26 September 2014.

- "Transferring Knowledge into Policy and the role of Wikiprogress", Seminar given by Kate Scrivens, OECD for the QoLexity Masters Course at the Università degli Studi of Florence, Florence on 6 November 2014.

- "The R&D projects funded by the European Union: The recent experience of the Web-COSI project at the statistical and economic research frontier". Seminar given by Donatella Fazio, Istat at the University of Bologna on 27 November 2014.

- "Citizenship to monitor quality of life and evaluate progress in cities", Seminar given by Kate Scrivens, OECD for the Doctoral Programme of the Gran Sasso Science Institute, 12 December 2014.

2.4 Designed and set-up 'Wikiprogress University Programme' platform

In order to establish an online space to gather information related to the University Programme, a special section was designed and set up on the Wikiprogress site, as part of the new Youth Portal (see Web-COSI Deliverable 3.5, Report on Engaging Citizens). Following feedback from young users of Wikiprogress, including the intern from the QoLexity course, the new section was designed to be as visually engaging as possible, with the use of attractive photos showing young people. The Wikiprogress University Programme platform[2] consists of three sub-sections:

1. Opportunities
2. Educational resources
3. Courses and Training

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[2] See the platform at: http://wikiprogress.org/index.php/Wikiprogress_University

Opportunities

The opportunities section groups the different ways for students and educational institutions to get involved in Wikiprogress under four headings:

- *University partnerships*, such as the type established with the Universitá degli Studi of Florence and the Gran Sasso Science Institute.

- Different ways of *contributing to the Wikiprogress platform*, including:
    - Joining our Youth Advisory Board, to provide feedback on how we can improve the site and help us with user testing of new developments and tools on the Wikiprogress site and associated platforms (blog, Facebook, Twitter).
    - Suggesting content for our social media networks, letting us know about interesting projects and news that could be shared with the Wikiprogress community.
    - Volunteering with the Wikiprogress team on a regular basis.

- Joining our online discussions and debates on youth well-being

- Applying for an internship with the OECD Wikiprogress team

Educational resources

The educational resources section brings together accessible content to teach students and other interested people (especially young people) about well-being and progress. This section includes:

- Videos

- Presentations that have been given as part of the Wikiprogress University Programme seminars

- Reports and papers

- Websites

Courses and Training

This section will bring together information about courses and training courses related to well-being and quality of life measurement, and the use of statistics to impact policy and societal outcomes. Currently, courses are listed under two headings:

- Well-being and quality of life measurement

- Data analysis, data visualisation and data journalism

3. The results achieved and the open issues

3.1 Established a model for future partnerships with educational institutions

The experiences with the QoLexity Masters course of the Universitá degli Studi of Florence and of Bologna, the Gran Sasso Science Institute and other educational institutions in 2014 have provided a better understanding of what works well. The model of providing seminars in order to communicate knowledge and exchange views with the students provides a good way of establishing a relationship and a shared understanding that can contribute to future online collaboration. In 2015,

the Programme will be focused on expanding the network to partner with other institutions across Europe through the seminar model, as well as exploring ways to establish partnerships through virtual seminars and events.

3.2 Provided a structure for increased engagement of students with the Wikiprogress platform and associated activities

The structure provided by the Wikiprogress University Programme has given a greater focus and visibility to Web-COSI activities to foster engagement with students, and has provided a more targeted way of involving students in Wikiprogress activities. The Programme has just begun, and 2015 will focus on building on the framework established in 2014. Despite only being officially established at the end of November 2014, the Programme has already fostered significant engagement, by encouraging students taking part in the range of seminars conducted in November and December to participate in the online discussion on Youth Well-being, which took place from 1-15 December 2014 (see Web-COSI Deliverable 3.5, Report on Engaging Citizens). This discussion was one of the most successful ever held on Wikiprogress, in terms of social media engagement, and in terms of participation from young people, in part because of the relationships built up through exchanges with students during the Wikiprogress University seminars, who then contributed to the discussion in different ways.

An objective for 2015 will be to explore ways of recreating the lively student debates that took place at these seminars in an online environment. The proposed online debate on Youth Well-being which is planned to take place in collaboration with CAPS project CATALYST in early 2015 will be an important opportunity to continue to build the Wikiprogres University student network, with greatly increased student engagement. The plan is to build a community of 50-100 students, young people and practitioners in youth well-being to hold an extended debate over the course of several weeks. The University Programme will be the foundation of this exercise.

3.3 Established a platform which can be built upon and added to over time

The intention of the Wikiprogress University platform is to continually add to it over time as the Wikiprogress team finds suitable resources and opportunities, as the network grows. In 2014, efforts were concentrated on establishing the structure and the platform for the Programme, and now that the foundation has been laid, the priority for 2015 will be to implement a communications strategy using the full range of Wikiprogress tools to increase the visibility of the project and to crowd source relevant resources and knowledge to further populate the platform.

Conclusions

2014 marked a beginning for the Wikiprogress University Programme, and it has provided a successful framework to organise Web-COSI's outreach to students and educational resources. It now has a lot of potential to grow, and to foster a network of engaged young people and relevant academic institutions across Europe. Efforts to improve the platform, generate more content, establish wider partnerships, and increase the involvement of students in Web-COSI and associated issues will gather momentum in 2015, now that the setting up of the Programme is complete.