

Press Release

New figures show UK far behind other countries on Social Progress

29 June 2016 - A new report published today ranks Finland at the top of the Social Progress Index. The UK, ranked 9th compared to 11th in 2015, is still lagging behind other European countries such as Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands and Norway as well as Canada and Australia.

The Social Progress Index is the first comprehensive framework for measuring social progress that is independent of GDP. Too often we assume that GDP is a reliable indicator of progress, but GDP only tells us how busy our economy is. GDP does not assess the economy's contribution to wellbeing or the effect it is having on the environment which is why alternative measures, like the Social Progress Index, are so important. Finland, ranked 1st in social progress, ranks 22nd in GDP per capita, and a comparison between social progress and GDP across all countries shows considerable variation in performance among countries for comparable levels of GDP per capita. This demonstrates that economic performance alone does not explain social progress.

Matthew Crighton, Convenor of LINK's Economic Group says 'We really need to understand that our economy is doing much less than it could to give us wellbeing and opportunity. If we focus on growth of GDP alone we drive the economy in a direction often incompatible with sustainable development, depleting the natural resources on which we rely for our wellbeing. We need to change the way we think about and manage the economy – it is a means to wellbeing, constrained by the carrying capacity of the environment, not an ends in itself'.

Scotland's National Performance Framework includes a range of indicators against which we can gauge our progress beyond GDP. Scottish Environment LINK members has been working with the Scottish Government on promoting and improving a suite of indicators that can adequately reflect the wellbeing of society and the health of our environment as well as the state of our economy. Given the oft-quoted adage that 'what we measure affects what we do', clear indicators are needed to measure progress towards a more sustainable Scotland.

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Notes to Editors:

- Social Progress Index report, 2016: <http://13i8vn49fibl3go3i12f59gh.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/SPI-2016-Main-Report.pdf>
- The Social Progress Index measures how countries are performing in three areas: 'Basic human needs', 'Foundations for wellbeing' and 'Opportunity'
- The Scottish Government's National Performance framework: <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms>
- Link to Flourishing Scotland page and NPF paper <http://www.scotlink.org/workareas/economics-forum/>



Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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