

20th Anniversary Conference “Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe”

Looking Back and Moving Forward in Challenging Times: Trends in Well-being, Quality of Life, and Social Monitoring and Reporting

Villa Vigoni, Lovenio di Menaggio, October 5–7, 2026

Call for Papers

For its 20th anniversary conference – coinciding with the 40th anniversary of Villa Vigoni and the 75th anniversary of German-Italian diplomatic relations – the European Network on Social Monitoring and Reporting invites contributions looking back and moving forward with a focus on the two topics of: (1) Developments and long-term trends in well-being and quality of life in Europe, (2) Past, present, and future of social monitoring and reporting in Europe. What are the key insights, experiences, good and best practice examples of current and past social monitoring and reporting activities and what are the challenges of and opportunities for future monitoring? The core mission of social monitoring and reporting is to measure individual and societal quality of life and material and subjective well-being in all the important areas of life and to (comparatively) assess social change, long-term trends and progress towards “good life” and “good society”. Well-being, quality of life and the European social monitoring and reporting landscape have changed over the past years. On the one hand, the availability of data on quality of life, well-being and happiness has substantially improved, including new longitudinal and comparative surveys, expanding research output and contributing to better and more adequate measures for monitoring well-being, quality of life and societal progress. On the other hand, some long-standing, national social reports and monitoring activities disappeared, like the French *Données Sociales*, the British *Social Trends*, or the Dutch *Social and Cultural Report*, while, at the same time, new actors emerged and new monitoring tools have been initiated (for instance bottom-up, community-based well-being measurement frameworks).

These developments are taking place against the backdrop of profound technological, socioeconomic, institutional, cultural, and (geo)political transformations and challenges that European countries and the whole world are currently facing. This includes the return of geopolitics with wars, rising nationalism, economic protectionism, high uncertainty and a loss of power of Europe vis-à-vis the United States and other big powers but also rising conflicts and polarisation within and between European societies. Democracy seems to be in retreat in Europe (and beyond) with rising authoritarianism, (right-wing) populism and declining trust in political institutions and democracy. Furthermore European citizens and societies are confronted with threats to well-being and quality of life due to economic stagnation, inflation, cutbacks in welfare state spending, precarious and/or unsecure work, and adverse impacts of climate change and migration. A particular challenge for current and future social monitoring and reporting is the increasing blurring of fact and fiction, real and fake, in public discourses and debates fueled by AI and social media.

This call for papers invites contributions exploring developments and long-term trends in well-being and quality of life in Europe as well as of social monitoring and reporting. Issues that may be addressed include (but are not limited to):

(1) Developments in Well-being and Quality of Life in Europe: Long-term Trends, Determinants and Divisions

- Studies examining societal trends and long-term social changes in well-being and quality of life, exploring where European citizens and societies, young and old generations, are standing now compared to the past.
- Studies analysing how current technological, socioeconomic, institutional, cultural, and (geo)political developments and transformations are impacting on well-being and quality of life in Europe.
- Evidence-based studies dealing with the use of and attitudes towards AI, and with the impact of AI for quality of life and well-being.

- Studies analysing the impact of fragmentation, disparities, inequalities, conflicts and polarisation within and between European societies and regions on well-being and quality of life in Europe.

(2) The Past, Present, and Future of Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe

- Studies contributing to a systematic stocktaking of social monitoring and reporting activities in Europe (see Noll&Berger 2014, Noll 2018 for earlier stocktaking reports). How have topics, tools, concepts and approaches to social monitoring and reporting changed over the past years? Who are the producers (i.e. governments, official national and supra-national institutions, scientific institutions, civil society actors) and who are the target groups of these reporting activities, and how and why has this actor structure changed? What are new ways, forms and tools for social monitoring and reporting?
- Analyses examining the place of social indicators, and social reporting and monitoring in academia and scientific research, and/or policy-making, and exploring how the job of social monitoring and reporting has changed over the past years.
- Studies dealing with the impact of AI for research on and monitoring of quality of life and well-being. What are promising AI based tools and indicators for social monitoring and reporting?
- Papers dealing with the use, availability, and quality of data for social monitoring and public debate, reflected from a long-term perspective. This includes papers exploring the issue of the construction of social reality by social reports and social monitoring tools through the processes of interpreting statistical data. What are and have been the different ways of translating statistical data into narratives and diagnoses by different actors, monitoring tools, or reporting domains. What are new and promising ways of “adding meaning to numbers” for future monitoring and reporting?
- Studies looking back to the 20 years history of the Villa Vigoni social monitoring and reporting in Europe conference series and dealing with the challenges of and opportunities for current and future monitoring and reporting activities.

We invite contributions using national as well as cross-national perspectives or specific case studies. Comparative approaches and the use of large, internationally (e.g. EQLS, ESS, EU-SILC, GGP, GGS, ISSP, SHARE, WVS/EVS) and possibly longitudinal (e.g. Comparative Panel File) comparable datasets is encouraged.

Submission procedure: The deadline for submissions is **May 31, 2026**. Please submit your abstract in English (no more than 500 words) to Christian Suter (christian.suter@unine.ch). The abstract should include the title of the contribution, all author(s) names and affiliations as well as contact information. It should contain clear information on the research methods, data sources and analytical tools to be used. Decisions about the acceptance of submissions and hospitality grants (see below) will be made by the conference committee. Authors will be notified by **June 30, 2026** of abstract acceptance/rejection.

Venue and hospitality grants: The conference will be held at Villa Vigoni, Lovenjo di Menaggio (Italy), October 5–7, 2026. There is no conference fee. Thanks to the support of the World Society Foundation (Zurich, Switzerland) accommodation costs at Villa Vigoni for one author per accepted paper will be covered by the conference organizers. For more information on the venue see: <https://www.villavigoni.eu>.

Conference committee: Jeroen Boelhouwer (SCP, The Hague), Peter Farago (formerly FORS, Lausanne), Laura Kestilä, (National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki), Tadas Leončikas (Eurofound, Dublin), Heinz-Herbert Noll (formerly GESIS, Mannheim), Christian Suter (University Neuchâtel), István György Tóth (TARKI, Budapest).

For information on previous conferences see: <https://www.tarki.hu/villa-vigoni-conferences>.

References

- Noll, H.-H. & Berger, C. 2014. Stocktaking Report on Social Monitoring and Reporting in Europe. E-Frame Project, Grant Agreement No 290520, SSH.2011.6.2-1; Deliverable D5.GESIS, Social Indicators Research Centre, Mannheim.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263089129_Stocktaking_Report_on_Social_Monitoring_and_Reporting_in_Europe
- Noll, H.-H. 2018. Social Monitoring and Reporting: A Success Story in Applied Research on Social Indicators and Quality of Life. *Social Indicators Research* 135(3):951–964.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323259317_Social_Monitoring_and_Reporting_A_Success_Story_in_Applied_Research_on_Social_Indicators_and_Quality_of_Life

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