ESF Evaluation of the European Indicators 2025 Framework

Name: Measuring Sustainable and Inclusive Wellbeing: A Multidimensional Dashboard Approach

Originating entity: European Commission Joint Research Centre

Primary focus: A multidimensional EU dashboard designed to move beyond GDP by integrating economic, social, environmental, inclusiveness, and institutional indicators into a sustainable and inclusive wellbeing framework for present and future generations.

ESF Evaluation Score: 14/20

Introductory Context

The European Indicators 2025 framework, developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, emerges from a growing recognition that traditional economic measures such as GDP are insufficient for capturing the full complexity of human wellbeing. Building on decades of international work on "beyond GDP" metrics, the framework brings together a comprehensive dashboard of indicators designed to assess sustainable and inclusive wellbeing across European societies. It integrates social, economic, environmental, and institutional dimensions, with a particular emphasis on long-term resilience, intergenerational fairness, and policy relevance.

As such, it represents one of the most advanced large-scale efforts to operationalise multidimensional wellbeing measurement at a regional and supranational level

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1. Natural Environment Integration

Score: 5 / 5

This is one of the strongest areas of alignment. The SIWB framework explicitly includes **Nature and planetary boundaries** as one of its six core components, and defines it in unified environmental terms that include biodiversity, land, soil, forests, air, water, climate mitigation and adaptation, sustainable resource use, and green economy and policies . The summary dashboard includes indicators such as the farmland bird index, Natura 2000 protected areas, ecological status of water, water exploitation, renewable energy share, net greenhouse gas emissions, circular material use, and consumption footprint per capita.

This aligns closely with the ESF requirement that a wellbeing model should recognise ecological health as foundational, incorporate biodiversity and environmental sustainability, and support

stewardship and regeneration . The report also explicitly frames policy in terms of respecting **planetary boundaries** and protecting the wellbeing of both present and future generations .
ESF judgement: Very strong alignment. The framework clearly understands that ecological conditions are not peripheral but constitutive of wellbeing.

2. Circular and Regenerative Economics Integration

Score: 4 / 5

The SIWB framework goes well beyond conventional growth economics. It explicitly arose from dissatisfaction with GDP as the dominant measure of progress and seeks to complement GDP through a broader architecture of wellbeing, sustainability, and inclusion . It includes indicators relevant to regenerative and resilience-oriented economics, such as net fixed capital formation, total fixed assets, green economy and finance, circular material use, resource productivity, environmental taxes, material import dependency, and various resilience and transition indicators.

This gives it substantial overlap with the ESF economic domain, which values sustainable economic practices, resilience, circularity, and equitable distribution . However, the SIWB framework still remains more a **sustainability-adjusted dashboard of the existing economy** than a fully regenerative economic philosophy. It measures circularity and environmental pressure, but it does not yet articulate a deeper normative shift toward local livelihood regeneration, community wealth building, reciprocity, or regenerative design as first principles in the way ESF does.

ESF judgement: Strong but not complete. It is post-GDP, but not yet fully regenerative in worldview or intent.

3. Cultural Values and Identity Integration

Score: 2 / 5

This is a clear area of weakness from an ESF perspective. The SIWB framework includes some partial proxies for this domain - trust in institutions, feeling discriminated against, active citizenship, social interactions, inequality measures, and aspects of governance and inclusion. It also recognises that wellbeing has social and institutional dimensions and that fairness, voice, and accountability matter. However, ESF defines this domain much more deeply. It includes cultural identity, diversity, heritage, intergenerational belonging, social cohesion, ethics, spirituality, and the shared narratives that shape meaning and behaviour.

By contrast, the European framework contains almost no explicit treatment of:

- cultural heritage
- intercultural meaning
- spiritual or ethical formation
- narrative identity
- Indigenous or plural ways of knowing

The SIWB model is socially aware, but not culturally deep. It captures fairness and governance better than it captures worldview, identity, or meaning.

ESF judgement: Limited integration. Some relevant social indicators are present, but the underlying cultural, ethical, and civilisational dimensions of flourishing are largely absent.

4. Human Capacities and Potential Integration

Score: 3 / 5

The SIWB framework performs moderately well here. It includes substantial material on:

- health and healthcare access
- mental health proxies such as suicide
- education and underachievement
- tertiary attainment
- adult participation in learning
- life satisfaction
- volunteering
- digital skills
- social interactions

This means it does recognise that wellbeing depends partly on the development of human capabilities, not just economic outputs. However, ESF's human domain is more expansive and developmentally structured. ESF explicitly includes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of development across the seven levels of **security, relationship, independence, engagement, fulfilment, contribution, and growth**. The European framework does not organise human flourishing in those developmental terms, gives little emphasis to early childhood, and contains almost nothing on meaning, purpose, self-expression, spiritual life, or the inner architecture of flourishing.

So while SIWB captures important surface indicators of health, education, and participation, it does not yet provide a deep developmental model of the human being.

ESF judgement: Moderate integration. Strong on measurable capacities, weak on inner development, human motivation, and the deeper conditions of flourishing.

Overall ESF score

ESF domain	Score
Natural Environment	5
Circular and Regenerative Economics	4
Cultural Values and Identity	2
Human Capacities and Potential	3
Total	**14 / 20**

According to the ESF evaluation scale, a total of **14/20** places the framework in the category of **Moderately Integrated - Good Integration, with minor to significant gaps depending on domain** .

Overall assessment

The European Indicators 2025 framework is a **serious and sophisticated attempt to move beyond GDP** and is unusually strong in its inclusion of environmental sustainability, intergenerational fairness, resilience, and institutional quality . In ESF terms, it is one of the more advanced large-scale

wellbeing architectures currently in circulation.

Its principal strengths are:

- strong ecological integration
- substantial post-GDP economic thinking
- clear intergenerational and systemic orientation
- broad multidimensional coverage across present and future wellbeing

Its principal limitations are:

- weak treatment of culture, identity, and worldview
- very limited attention to spiritual and ethical dimensions
- no developmental model of human flourishing
- little explicit engagement with meaning, belonging, purpose, or early years formation
- mostly descriptive and dashboard-based, rather than transformative in normative architecture

In short, from an ESF perspective, the SIWB framework is **systemically broad but anthropologically thin**. It captures the outer conditions of sustainable wellbeing much better than the inner and cultural conditions from which lasting flourishing emerges.

Recommendations for stronger ESF alignment

To move the SIWB framework toward fuller ESF integration, the following additions would be valuable.

First, it would benefit from an explicit **cultural values and identity layer**, including indicators related to cultural participation, heritage, social trust, belonging, ethical literacy, and plural epistemologies. Second, it would be strengthened by a more explicit **human development architecture**, perhaps by incorporating the seven ESF levels - security, relationship, independence, engagement, fulfilment, contribution, and growth - as a supplementary interpretive layer.

Third, it could move from sustainability toward genuine regeneration by including stronger indicators of:

- local and circular economies
- community wealth building
- reciprocity and stewardship
- regenerative value creation rather than reduced harm alone
- what constitutes a ‘Good Life’

Fourth, it would benefit from asking not only **what is being measured**, but **what worldview is being expressed through the measurement system itself**. That question sits at the heart of the ESF evaluation process .

Concluding Assessment

The **European Indicators 2025 / SIWB framework** should be regarded as a **strong partial ally of the ESF approach**. It already shares ESF’s concern with integration, sustainability, fairness, and future

generations. But it stops short of ESF's deeper contribution, which is to show that flourishing is not only ecological and economic, but also cultural, developmental, relational, and meaning-laden .
A concise way to express the judgement would be:

The SIWB framework is a robust multidimensional sustainability dashboard, but not yet a fully ecosystemic flourishing framework.