

International conference on Policies for Happiness and Health

**Department of Political Economy and Statistics
University of Siena, March 19-21, 2018**

Abstract presentation by Ruut Veenhoven, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organization

Delphi study on Ways to Greater Happiness

A main aim of empirical happiness research is to identify ways to greater happiness and to feed that information to governments and individuals. Since its take-off in the 1970s, empirical happiness research has produced some 25.000 findings. What do these data tell about ways to greater happiness? One approach to that question is asking experts using the technique of a Delphi study.

In the first round of this Delphi study 14 experts suggested strategies for improving life-satisfaction. In a second round, experts rated these strategies for a) effectiveness, b) feasibility and c) cost-effectiveness. They considered 56 strategies policy makers can use to raise average happiness in a nation and 68 ways in which individuals can raise their own happiness. Experts were informed about the average ratings made by the panel and about the arguments advanced. Then, in a third round, experts made their final judgments.

Summed ratings for average effectiveness and feasibility of the strategies ranged between 8,4 and 4.9 on scale 2-10, which means that most of the recommendations were deemed suitable. Agreement was slightly higher on policy strategies than on individual ways to greater happiness. Policy strategies deemed the most effective and feasible are: 1) investing in happiness research, 2) support of vulnerable people and 3) improving the social climate, in particular by promoting voluntary work and supporting non-profits. Individual strategies deemed most effective are: a) investing in social networks, b) doing meaningful things and c) caring for one's health.

Limitations of this approach are discussed