Title: Monitoring child well being in the European Union: measuring cumulative disadvantage

Author 1: Geranda Notten (presenting author)
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa
gnotten@uottawa.ca

Author 2: Keetie Roelen
Institute of Development Studies, Brighton
k.roelen@ids.ac.uk

Abstract:

The European Union (EU) is currently developing child specific indicators of well being that will be used, together with the Laeken indicators on poverty and social exclusion, to monitor progress towards achieving inclusive economic growth as specified in the Lisbon agenda. To date, however, none of the proposed indicators is sensitive to cumulative disadvantage i.e. the degree to which a child simultaneously experiences a range of unfavourable conditions. From a well being perspective information on cumulative disadvantage is highly relevant for any population group: if 10% of the population lives in poor housing conditions and an equal percentage lives in a high crime / vandalism neighbourhood, persons experiencing both conditions, *ceteris paribus*, are worse off than persons experiencing only one condition. For children this distinction is even more pertinent: children’s current well being is a key determinant of their future well being; more often than not, well being in one domain (i.e. health) is complementary to well being in another domain (i.e. education); and, children also have little control over, or responsibility for, the factors determining their own well being. This paper develops and tests a range of potential candidates for national benchmark indicators of cumulative disadvantage that can be used in the European Union to monitor child well being. Ideally, the measure should be intuitive / relatively easy to interpret and it should be sensitive to cumulative disadvantage and changes therein. For the purpose of this paper we add another practical requirement, namely that the measure can be calculated from existing data. This paper uses the 2007 wave of the EU-SILC data to test a range of cumulative deprivation measures including 13 deprivation indicators in 4 EU member states: Germany, France, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The behaviour of the measures is tested by means of various sensitivity analyses. Given the potential policy uses, the results are analyzed both from a European and a national perspective. Our preliminary analyses show that though all measures are sensitive to the inclusion of deprivation indicators, changes in the indicator threshold and changes in the cumulative deprivation thresholds, a few interesting candidates stand out.